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The State of Things

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1.
The last pavilion, built
by South Korea in
1995, was constructed
as a temporary
structure, but never
destroyed.

Afterword / Angela Vettese

The State of Things

**The State
of Things**

**Marta Kuzma
Pablo Lafuente
Peter Osborne**

What is the state of things today? The openness of the question is almost vertiginous, yet it finds its focus in the exigencies of the day. The growing intellectual requirement to address the broadest, geopolitical or world-historical context of current events gains meaning only from the demands of specific situations. We live once again, in so many parts of the world, in what Hannah Arendt, at the close of the 1950s, called 'dark times', in which 'the public realm has been obscured and the world become so dubious that people have ceased to ask any more of politics than that it show due consideration for their vital interests and personal liberty.'[1] Yet the range of possibilities unleashed by the expanding scope, the interdependency and the sheer novelty of so many recent events – financial, political, ecological, military – is extraordinary, both locally and globally, however deep the crisis they inscribe. If there is a certain metaphysical-political pathos, a certain foreboding, in the act of addressing 'the state of things' (you do not address the state of things when things are good), there is nonetheless also a strong sense of possibility, of a changing world to be both discovered and made.

This world is a very different place from the one in which, having become a US citizen, Arendt composed her reflections during the 1960s. Technological changes in communications and production; geopolitical changes in the relations between 'blocs'; socio-economic changes in institutional forms (the antagonistic becoming-capitalistic of all social relations, in particular)… All these things have coalesced to produce a quite different discursive field for thinking about politics. Art is different too. Institution-ally recognised art has changed fundamentally since the beginning of the 1960s: it has become far more diverse and also more conceptual; it requires greater discursive support to be intelligible and it functions largely as a specialised sector within a thriving culture industry; it is subject to intensified demands for contemporaneity and, in particular, it has become essential to its contemporaneity that it enter into active relations with forms of non-art. Criticism has become less authoritative, but its intellectual importance has thereby grown; it is still criticism that is the main discursive link between art and other social practices, outside of advertising and marketing (with which much of art journalism so often itself converges). But criticism itself must change too.

How can criticism address the globally extended discursive context of contemporary art, while maintaining the intellectual values of reflection and criticality? How can it discuss the existential question of the present, whilst keeping in touch with the deepest movements of history? These lectures, commissioned by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway for Norway's official representation at the 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, attempt to provide a partial answer to these questions, by addressing aspects of the world-historical conjunctures making up the present, as background to the art of the 54th edition of the Biennale, and as a context against which the contemporaneity of that art might be measured.

1.
Hannah Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts About Lessing', *Men in Dark Times*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p.19.

In What Time Do We Live?

Jacques Rancière

I have been asked to speak in the framework of a series titled 'The State of Things'. Such a title suggests a preliminary remark. Strictly speaking, the state of things is a fiction. A fiction is not an imaginary tale. It is the construction of a set of relations between sense and sense, between things that are said to be perceptible and the sense that can be made of those things. A 'state of things' includes the selection of a number of phenomena that are said to be characteristic of our present, the use of an interpretive frame within which they take on their significance, and the determination of a set of possibilities and impossibilities which derives from that given and from its interpretation. In that sense, a 'state of things' is a form of what I have proposed to call a 'distribution of the sensible': a set of relations between the perceptible, the thinkable and the doable that defines a common world, defining thereby the way in which and the extent to which this or that class of human beings takes part in that common world.

Every description of a 'state of things' gives a major part to time. There is a simple reason for this: a 'state of things' presents itself as an objective given that precludes the possibility of other states of things. And time is the best medium for exclusion. When Plato describes the first components of its Republic, he says that artisans must not be in another place than their workplace, because 'work does not wait'. As a matter of fact, work often keeps people waiting for it. It is time that does not wait and this 'impatience' of time turns the forms of experience of the everyday into forms of experience of a hierarchy of positions. I will come back to this aspect. But there

is a still simpler way in which time works as a principle of impossibility: the very simple separation of the present and the past.

A formula like 'Times have changed' seems quite innocuous. But it is easy to turn it into a statement of impossibility. 'Times have changed' does not simply mean that some things have disappeared. It means that they have become impossible: they don't belong any longer to what the new times make possible. The empirical idea of time as a succession of moments has been substituted by an idea of time as a set of possibilities. 'Times have changed' means: this is no longer possible. And that which a state of things readily declares impossible is, quite simply, the possibility to change the state of things. That impossibility thus works as an interdiction: there are things you can no longer do, ideas in which you can no longer believe, futures that you can no longer imagine. 'You cannot' clearly means: you must not.

Our present gives us a good illustration of that point. Whoever asks what has changed in our world since the turbulent 1960s is offered a ready-made answer, encapsulated in one word: 'end'. What we are said to have lived is the end of a certain historical period: not only the division of the world between a capitalist bloc and a communist bloc, but also a vision of the world revolving around class struggle, and more widely a vision of politics as a practice of conflict and a horizon of emancipation; not only a lot of revolutionary hopes or illusions, but utopias and ideologies in general, or, in the most comprehensive formulation, 'grand narratives' and beliefs about the destiny of humankind; not only a period of history, but 'history' itself understood as the time of a promise to be completed. The time in which we live can thus be described as the time that comes after the end, a time 'post'.

I think that we must have a closer look at that narrative of the end and ask the question: what exactly has come to and end? What are exactly those 'grand narratives' that are said to be over? A grand narrative means a plot that proposes the understanding of the global evolution determining the transformations of our lived world. What is said to be over is the optimistic narrative making history both a principle of intelligibility of the 'state of things' and the scene of a possible transformation of that 'state of things'. That narrative entailed two main theoretical articulations. The first one linked the evolution with its knowledge: the evolution produces the knowledge of the evolution, which, in turn, allows those who know to impact on the evolution. The second one linked the 'state of things' with the possibility of its destruction: the same reasons that account for the existing order are the reasons for which it will be superseded. The future will happen for the same reasons that keep it from being present. The most accomplished form of that narrative was given by Marxist theory: the same necessity that has produced the state of things named 'capitalist exploitation' has also produced the knowledge of that state of things, the knowledge of the historical necessity which entails the destruction of capitalist exploitation. That knowledge provides both the intelligibility of the phenomena of our lived world and the weapon in the struggle for a new world.

In short, the idea of the grand narrative entails a sense of historical evolution, a sense of the intelligibility of our lived world and a sense of its possible transformation. My point is that what is described as the end of that narrative, what is presented as the 'time in which we live', is in reality a rearrangement of those elements. Our time – meaning the dominant description of the state of things that constructs the frame of our present – has not rid itself of the historical necessity. Nor has it rid itself of the Marxist mode of intelligibility of our lived world. It has only disconnected them from the sense of the possible with which they were linked. The celebrated end of the grand narrative changed only one articulation in that narrative: it changed the way in which it staged the relation between the possible and the impossible. But, even in doing that, it remained faithful to its logic.

First point: the sense of the historical necessity. The so-called 'postmodern discourse' has readily described our time as a time of disorientation. The belief in a historical promise is said to have been lost, along with the faith in any promise of future. But a belief is not a mood. Nor is it an aspiration to an ideal paradise. A belief is just the presupposition that makes a state of things work. There may not be many singers imagining a world with no greed or hunger today, but the faith in the rationality of the historical evolution that links greed and hunger has not disappeared for all that. The dominant narrative about the contemporary world proclaims the global triumph of world capitalism and global liberal democracy over Marxism. But that triumph itself has to take up the core of Marxist belief: economic necessity, or more precisely, the equation between economic necessity and historical necessity. Once upon a time, the mainstream discourse stigmatised that Marxist equation as 'historical determinism', and counter-posed to it the freedom of people freely exchanging their products in the free market. Now, with the interweaving of all markets in the global economy, this 'freedom' is clearly viewed by its champions as the freedom to submit to the necessity of the global market. What was yesterday the necessity of the evolution leading to socialism becomes today the necessity of the evolution leading to the triumph of this global market. Not surprisingly, this displacement has been advocated by many formerly Marxist, socialist or progressive scholars and thinkers who turned their faith in the historical achievement of revolution into a faith in the historical achievement of 'reform'. What reform means, since the times of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, is the reconstruction not only of work relationships but also of all kinds of social relationships in accordance with the logic of the global free market. All forms of destruction of the welfare state, social security, labour laws, etc. have been justified by the necessity of adapting local economies and local legislation to the constraint of this inescapable historical evolution. Thereby all forms of resistance to those destructions have been deemed reactionary attitudes of parts of the population still clinging to the past, afraid of the historical evolution that will destroy their status and privileges, and consequently standing in the way of progress. In the nineteenth century, Marx denounced those artisans, petty-bourgeois and ideologues fighting against the devel-

opment of capitalist forms which threatened them with death, thereby preparing the socialist future. In the same way, any struggle to resist this logic of 'reform' has increasingly been denounced, not only by governments but also by left-wing intelligentsia, as the backward resistance of egoist workers eager to defend their privileges and to sacrifice the future to the short-sighted defence of those privileges.

The plot of the historical necessity is always there, all the more 'necessary' as this necessity has become the law giving its seal to the ever-increasing identification between the power of the states and the power of the market; all the more so necessary as this necessity has been disconnected from the faith in an immanent principle of self-destruction. Accordingly, the narrative that both justified the system of domination and announced its death has been divested of its second function. It has become the mere justification of that order and the demonstration that any form of struggle against that order is both reactionary and impotent.

The same goes for the second aspect of the grand narrative that I mentioned: its capacity to work as a form of intelligibility of our lived world. The strength of the grand Marxist narrative mostly rested on its capacity to provide an explanation for all the phenomena of our lived world that made them readable as effects of the global process. More precisely, it rested on its capacity to identify the effect of the process with the dissimulation of that effect. The core of that logic was the Marxist analysis of the commodity as both the completion and the dissimulation of

the process of exploitation. The Marxist tradition of the twentieth century endlessly elaborated on the identity of the process of commodification of social relations and of the construction of a whole world of images and appearances structuring the thoughts, desires and behaviours of the individuals: Theodor Adorno's critique of the aestheticisation of everyday life, Clement Greenberg's denunciation of *kitsch*, Roland Barthes's analysis of mythologies, Jean Baudrillard's analysis of consumer society, or Guy Debord's denunciation of the spectacle are some of the landmarks on the long history of that elaboration. All those analyses contributed to the constitution of what can be called a critical common sense, a whole network of descriptions and interpretations of the lived world which served as a common matrix for sociological analysis, artistic practice and political denunciation. The demonstration of the colonisation of the lived world through the processes of commodification, ideological inversion and the spectacle was supposed to provide a demystification of the illusions that subjected the individuals to the rule of domination and thereby to empower those who struggled against that rule by giving them the knowledge of its functioning. It is clear that this body of descriptions and interpretations has not vanished with the postmodern 'loss of belief'. On the contrary, it is more active than ever. Every day we can hear innumerable voices denouncing the way in which everything – everyday life, art, politics, sex, communication and so on – has become mere commodity and spectacle. The body of interpretation has not changed. What has changed is the way it was staged and the sense of the possible that it entailed. The denunciation has

simply been disconnected from its horizon: the perspective of a revolutionary change that made it work, at least in the imagination, as a weapon in a struggle. On the contrary, it now works as the demonstration that commodification and the spectacle have entirely completed the colonisation of individual life so that the reign of the commodity and the market is nothing else today than the reign of mass individualism. In such a way, what was denounced as the vice of the system subjecting the individuals has been increasingly denounced as the vice of the individuals themselves. Capitalism is said to be nothing else than democracy, which in turn is said to be nothing other than the reign of the narcissist individuals, greedy for any form of consumption and enjoyment.

This statement lends itself to two forms of narrative: there is the narrative of repetition that describes the system eternally reproducing its conditions without any possibility of disruption. But there is also the narrative that describes the so-called 'democratic reign' of the commodity and the spectacle as the big disaster, the disruption of all social bonds and the destruction of the symbolic order structuring human societies. The critical discourse about commodification and the spectacle thus becomes the resentful denunciation of a world that the greedy democratic individuals lead to the apocalypse. The inverted plot becomes thus a spiral that denounces all forms of struggle against the existing order as accomplices of the disaster. This is how the anti-capitalist students' movements of the 1960s and more specifically the French movement of 1968 were accused, in retrospect, of having paved the way for the triumph

of the market. Through their criticism of authority and authoritarian institutions, so the argument goes, they attacked the only institutions that were able to limit the power of the market, such as religion, family or the schools. By doing so, they opened all the doors to the empire of the market; they allowed our societies to become free aggregations of unbound molecules, whirling in the void, deprived of any affiliation, entirely available to this empire. This is also how the spokespersons of French 'Left' intelligentsia stigmatised the riots which burst out in 2005 in the poor suburbs of Paris, populated mostly by families coming from Maghreb and from Black Africa. They explained that the desire of the young rebels was just to eliminate all that stood before them as well as the objects of their desires, the images of consumer society's ideal goods that they saw on TV. So the inhabitants of the poorest suburbs turned out to embody the narcissism and hedonism of consumer society. And this so-called 'democratic hedonism' could be staged as the forerunner of a new totalitarianism.

So the two main aspects of the modernist grand narrative are still here. The 'end' of this narrative is in fact a new montage of its elements and an inversion of its meaning. It proposes two alternative versions of the same global plot: either the progressive and optimistic plot, mixing the Marxist historical necessity with the faith of economic liberalism in the invisible hand that makes evil ultimately serve good; or the pessimist and reactionary version that shows us democratic humankind destroying itself through its passion for consumption. The two versions may look contradictory: how is it possible at the same time

to stigmatise the backward elements that resist the necessity of the instauration of the global market and to accuse them of criminal complicity in the disastrous triumph of the same global market? But both lead to the same result: they conclude on the impossibility of resisting the law of time. Both make time a principle of impossibility. They do so because, in spite of the opposite directions that they follow, they set to work the same narrative about time. They construct a time that is unique and linear and always goes the same way. This time is said to determine what is possible and what is not. But it is not the whole story. That homogeneous time is also a principle of inner differentiation: it is a time that makes those who live in it unable to master it, unable to understand what it makes possible or impossible, always walking too slowly or too fast to be contemporaneous with the intelligence of the process. Both construct at once a global one-way time and an inner differentiation of that time that makes the individuals who live in it unable to understand how it proceeds and where it leads.

In that sense, both narratives show the combination of alternative models of historical time in modernist narrative. On the one hand, that narrative thrived on the model of time forged in the age of Enlightenment that makes human history a one-way process moving from wilderness to civilisation, just as the child moves from ignorance to knowledge. It also thrived on its belief in the global harmony that makes evil serve good, with egoism and misery ending up contributing to the common prosperity. But, on the other hand, it retained something of the antique vision of historical time as a succession of cycles, starting from a golden age and being gradually corrupted until the last stage of decadence and a revolution initiating a new cycle. The counter-revolutionary thinking of the end of the eighteenth century created a specific intertwinement of the plot of historical necessity with the plot of decadence. That plot made French Revolution the accomplishment of a process of dissolution of the social bonds inherent in modernity. Such process had torn to pieces the old fabric of material and spiritual bodies that gathered, protected and educated individuals – religion, monarchy, aristocracy and corporations. It had made society an anarchic whirlpool of disaffiliated individuals available for both industrial exploitation and political terror.

The point is that such narrative was more or less accepted as an adequate description of modern society even by those who were at odds with the ideology of the counter-revolution. From this point on, the thinking of historical time mixed the narrative of progress with the narrative of decadence. The Marxist narrative combined the progressive plot about the development of the common wealth through its private appropriation with the counter-revolutionary plot about the common social fabric torn to pieces by individualism. Still now, the same Marxist principles can nurture both the apocalyptic discourse about the destruction of humankind and the statements of a new revolutionary thinking. The development of immaterial production and cognitive work has been interpreted either as the development within capitalist production of a communist form of property bound to explode the capitalist relations of produc-

tion, or as the last step in the dispossession of human labour when even the cognitive power of the human psyche has been captured in the process of industrial production, objectified as a technical power outside of human brains. Conversely, the apocalyptic discourse about the destruction of all social bonds leading to the self-destruction of humanity has been rephrased as the last step of nihilism, a prelude to the coming insurrection making the future emerge out of the impossibility of any future. But the most important element is not this endless dialectic of progress and decadence. It is the temporal plot that makes it possible: the plot that makes time at once a homogeneous principle of possibility and impossibility and a principle of division of times and capacities. The opposition between the champions of the historical necessity and the prophets of the impending disaster rests, in the last resort, on the same conjunction between the plot of the homogeneous, one-way time, and that inner splitting that determines the impossibility for the individuals to be contemporaneous with the time of the process and the knowledge of what it makes possible. 'One step forward, two steps backward' – this is not only the title of a well-known book by Lenin. It is the core of the modernist narrative and of the science that it presupposes: the knowledge about the divergence between the time of the global process and the time of the lived world of the individuals. On the one hand, it is the strategic knowledge about the ways of making them coincide. But, on the other side, it is the exploitation of the power that lies in the assertion of the non-coincidence. This double-edged knowledge was once the privilege of the revolutionary avant-garde. It has now been appropriated by the forces of domination. And this appropriation is at the core of the construction of the 'time in which we live'.

This is, for me, the blind spot in most of the discourses about 'our time', including those that pretend to provide a radical critique of that time. They all presuppose an immediate identity between the global time and the time of the individuals. They construct it, in the simplest of manners, as the identity between the time of capitalist production and the time of individual consumption. That identity is presented as the reign of an absolute present in which everything – production, consumption, information, production of images, etc. – goes at the same accelerated speed. I would like to oppose to those analyses about the reign of the present an entirely different view: our time is not framed by the sole speed of the development of capital. It is framed by the institutions which make the coincidence and non-coincidence of times their own affair. Our world does not function according to a homogeneous process of presentification and acceleration. It functions according to a regulation of the convergence and divergence of times.

We can distinguish at least three main procedures of that regulation: the first one establishes the divisions of time; the second organises the imaginary convergence of times; the third constructs the divergence between the time of the individual and the time of the global process. The first is the establishment of the calendars that set a rhythm for the time of public life, which also means that they constitute the time of the common as such. Let us think for instance

about the function of the elections. It is possible to dispute endlessly whether they embody a real power of democratic choice or if they are the mere artifice of 'formal democracy' masking the reality of domination. But the first point about elections is the way they construct the visibility of the time of the political, which, in the end, is reduced to two periods: the pre-electoral and the post-electoral time. In such a way, the time of the political coincides entirely with the time of the state. Let us remember the promise made by Hosni Mubarak at the beginning of the protests, the promise to change the result of the last elections, to give a better representation to the opposition. Acknowledging the electoral fraud was still a way of asserting the power of the state as the mastery of time, including the power of changing the past.

A second procedure is about the construction of long-run convergences of times. We are often told that we have done away with the times and the politics of state interventionism. But what about the way in which our states create supranational institutions harmonising the time of economy, the time of the institutions and the lived time of the individuals? Let us think for instance of the Bologna Process of harmonisation of higher education systems. It is not simply a question of legibility and equivalence of diplomas. That equivalence becomes the point around which a whole fictional adequation between the time of education and the time of the global economic process is constructed, through the adequation between the acquisition of skills by individuals and the opportunities of employment provided by the adequation of those skills to the forms of eco-

nomic growth. This is a fiction. But again a fiction is a reality: it structures the relationships between the time of the individuals and the time of the system.

The third procedure is the construction of the divergence of times, which means the construction of the barrier separating those who know from those who don't know. I think that it is from that angle that you must consider the role of the media. This point of view is quite different from the mainstream denunciation of the media. The latter tells us that they are the reign of the absolute present: they overflow us with images, making us live every event as if we were present, thereby nurturing an emotional relationship to the event that makes us unable to understand it. But it is not true. On the contrary, the media cannot show us an event without splitting it, without introducing a distance between the fact and its meaning. In my country, France, a new doctrine has been formulated about journalism. It says that its role is not to provide information, because people already know about the events from other sources; it is to 'decipher' the information. Concretely, this means that the same things that are supposed to be well known as empirical facts immediately become enigmas as effects or causes in a causal plot, and as symptoms of the evolution of our world. This is why any event is immediately turned into the object of comment and discussion by experts. An interesting case appeared there some years ago about a woman victim of a savage anti-Semitic attack by a group of black and Maghrebi in adolescents when she travelled with her baby in a suburban train, without any reaction of the commuters. The wild nature of the

attack and the indifference of the commuters gave rise to a multiplicity of comments about the sad evolution of our civilisation, until it turned out that the woman had entirely fabricated the story. This may be an extreme case, but it shows us the construction of the divergence of times and capacities through which the system of information takes part in the regulation of the relations between times, which structures the distribution of the sensible today. The forms of critical thinking that dominate today basically follow the dominant plot all the more easily, as the logic of domination has integrated the logic of its critique, asserting at once the homogeneity of a global process of historical evolution and the inner split that makes those who live in 'this' time understand the way they are carried along by the global process.

This is why, in my view, a way out of that logic should be a way out of its time, a way out of the plot of the homogeneity of time and of the incapacity of those who live in it. It has to call into question the thesis of the homogeneity of time. There is no global process subjecting all the rhythms of individual and collective time to its rule. There are several times in one time. There is certainly a dominant form of temporality, a 'normal' time that is the time of domination. Domination provides it its divisions and its rhythms, its agendas and its schedules in the short and the long run: time of work, leisure and unemployment, electoral campaigns, degree courses in education, etc. It tends to homogenise all forms of temporality under its control, defining thereby what the present of our world consists of, what futures are possible and what definitely belongs to the past – meaning the impos-

sible. This is what 'consensus' means: the monopoly of the forms of description of the perceptible, the thinkable and the doable. But there are other forms of temporality, dissensual forms which create distensions and breaks in that temporality. We can distinguish two main forms. I will call them 'intervals' and 'interruptions'. Intervals are created when individuals and collectives renegotiate the ways in which they adjust their own time to the divisions and rhythms of domination, in which they adapt it to the temporality of work – or the absence of work – to the forms of acceleration and slowing down dictated by the system. At the beginning of this essay, I evoked the role that Plato gives to time in the determination of the place of the artisans in the community. Their 'lack of time' was said to fit their specific 'aptitude' – which meant in fact their inaptitude to be elsewhere and to do anything else. But the point is that if work does not wait, one does very often wait for it, so individuals and collectives are determined by this fact to dissociate their time from the 'time that does not wait', and to distance themselves from the 'aptitudes' – and inaptitudes – that adjust them to that time. In my work on workers' emancipation, I set out to illuminate the ways in which nineteenth-century artisans constructed their forms of subjectivation in relation to a broken temporality determined by the accelerations and stoppages of work. Instead of being subjected through them to the will of their masters, they could take advantage of them to incorporate in their time of workers what had always been the contrary of work, namely, leisure. A very old distinction, already formulated by Aristotle, opposed rest, which is an interruption in the time of work, to leisure, which is

the use of time of those who are not subjected to the constraint of work. Emancipation then meant using the breaks in the time of work to blur the distinction between the time of rest and the time of leisure. In that sense, the redistribution of times went along with a redistribution of the aptitudes and inaptitudes tied in with the possession or dispossession of time. The reappropriation of the intervals was tantamount to the experience of living in several times at once and sharing several worlds of experience. That repartition created a breach in the logic of domination, by separating the 'aptitudes' from their destination. From this point on, giving one's arms to exploitation could become a means of refusing it in one's mind; exercising one's capacities for the tasks it commanded could become a way of training them for other uses. This is what emancipation means: the practice of dissensus, constructing another time in the time of domination, the time of equality within the time of inequality. That experience of living in several times at once had been more or less erased by the Marxist vision of the education of the working class through the discipline of the factory. But the contemporary forms of work put again on the foreground the issue of the intervals of work and of their transformation into intervals of subjectivation: constant shifts from employment to unemployment, development of part-time work and all forms of intermittence; multiplication of people taking part both in the time of salaried work and in the time of education, or in the time of cultural creation; multiplication of people doing other jobs than the one for which they had been trained, of people working in one world and living in another world (this is also what 'immigration' means). Rather than

trying to find a unique figure of the worker, such as the 'cognitive' worker, we should investigate the multiplicity of the lines of subjectivation and the forms of rupture produced by the reappropriation of all those intervals that make the seemingly outdated temporality of emancipation come again on the agenda. Thirty years ago, I published a book called *Proletarian Nights* (*La Nuit des prolétaires: Archives du rêve ouvrier*, 1981) in order to analyse the forms of nineteenth-century workers' emancipation in France as a matter of time. One week ago, an Indian artists' group, the Raqs Media Collective, exhibited in Paris a video work called *Strikes at Time* (2011), made out of the experience and words of contemporary part-time workers and part-time writers with whom they had read the Hindi translation of the book.

There are intervals and there are interruptions: moments when one of the social machines which structure the time of domination breaks down and stops. It may happen with trains and buses; it may happen with the school apparatus, or with any other machine. There are also moments when crowds take to the streets in order to oppose their own agenda to the agenda of the state and the temporality of exploitation. It is from this point of view, I think, that we must consider the Arab insurrections of the beginning of 2011, and also such European movements as that of the 'indignados' in Spain or the protest of the 'geraçao à rasca' in Portugal. What those movements have in common is that they weave another combination of times which disrupts the dominant – consensual – combination of convergence and divergence. On the one hand, they oppose a time of

the immediate presence of the people to the time of the 'people' organised by the state. In Tunisia and in Egypt, the movement affirmed that presence as incompatible with the time of the power. In Spain, the occupation of the Puerta del Sol made evident the opposition between the time of the electoral process and the time of 'real democracy'. This conflation of times also implies a short-circuiting of the time of the dominant media. The role of the social media – Facebook, Twitter or others – in those movements has been stressed. If they could send so many people to the streets at once and give them a new courage and a new sense of dignity, it is also because they short-circuited the time of the 'normal' media, that time which constantly makes people feel their incapacity, as it constantly reproduces the distance between events and their meaning. Thinking does not take so much time, nor does gathering the courage to take to the streets – this is the lesson that those events oppose to the dominant logic of explication that separates the present from itself. This means that what the 'new media' or the 'social media' provided is not only a form of acceleration. It is also a redistribution of capacities, new forms of expertise that can be appropriated by anybody and help constitute a people of the anonymous, a people of the indeterminate individuals, at odds with the people governed by the dominant system. The 'heterogeneity' of the crowds gathered at Tahrir Square or at the Puerta del Sol has been noticed, a heterogeneity which means the impossibility of breaking those gathered into identity groups. It has also been emphasised the way in which global claims about democracy were linked with claims about unemployment, and notably the role

played in the Portuguese and Spanish gatherings by those diploma holders to which the global European politics of education had promised a brilliant future of managers or scholars while the reality of the system leaves them unemployed or gives them only part-time or temporary jobs. This is the other significant aspect of those protests: they denounce the lie of the ideal convergence between the time of individual life and the global economic process that is implied in national and supranational policies of education. As they denounce the lie of temporal convergence, those unemployed diploma holders also illustrate the way in which the contemporary rhythms of employment and unemployment create those intervals in which the capacities that were supposedly destined to the job market can be diverted and possibly used for constructing another time in the holes of the dominant time, another possible world in the existing world. At that point, it is possible to think of a convergence between the time of intervals and the time of interruptions. This means for me that it is possible to find a way out of those forms of criticism that denounce the interruptions as ephemeral outbursts, after which everything returns to the normal order of things, and the exploration of the intervals as an unwitting contribution to the neoliberal logic. Critical as it pretends to be, that monotonous denunciation of any creation of intervals as an adjustment to the logic of the market, and of any interruption as a contribution to the reign of the spectacle, is entirely homogeneous with the dominant distribution of times and capacities. It is a convenient way of forgetting the core of the paradox: emancipation is in fact a way of putting several times into the same times, it is a way of liv-

ing as equals in the world of inequality. The forms of subjectivation through which individuals and groups distance themselves from the constraint of the 'normal' time are at once ruptures in the sensory fabric of domination and ways of living in its framework. That is why it is at the same time so easy to capture them within the ready-made discourse that reduces the contradictions of emancipation to the tricks of domination. It may be more interesting to examine the dynamism of that contradiction and the extent to which it can construct forms of temporality independent of the agendas of domination.

I would like to examine some consequences of those reflections regarding what is called the politics of art. Those politics can also be viewed as ways of handling the convergence and divergence of times. From this point of view, we can distinguish three main figures. The first figure gives a radical form to the demand of convergence. It is the figure of historical Modernism: the figure of identification between the forms of art and the forms of life. The privileged medium for that identification is the medium of time that can turn all differences into manifestations of one and the same global movement. Synchronism of movements was the privileged form of the identification of art and life. An art chiefly embodied that synchronism: cinema, the art of the identity between the human movements and the movements of the machine. A film-maker emblematised that attempt: Dziga Vertov, the film-maker who explicitly thought of cinema as the movement linking all the movements and equalising them by taking them into the same global rhythm. This is how *Man with the Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoppa-ratom*, 1929) took in the same rhythm the movements of a dancer, the gestures of a woman working on the assembly line, the traffic in the streets, the gestures of a manicurist in a beauty parlour, the flight of the airplanes or the tricks of a magician. The synchrony of all movements thus constitutes a homogeneous time without intervals or interruptions, without any difference between life, work and leisure. The result of it is the production of communism as the synchronicity of all movements. Communism is thus the emancipation of movement as such – an emancipation that presupposes that all movements loose their specificity and be torn away from those who perform them, reduced to their mere temporal measure.

The drawbacks of such politics of absolute contemporaneity made for the success of the opposite politics, the one that accentuates the divergence of times and the incapacities that it produces: the critical or dialectical model that found its privileged place on the theatrical stage, even if it proved able to overstep the limits of that stage. It conceived the stage of artistic presentation in general as the place for the construction of a specific time in which the global movement can be modelled and made intelligible. For instance, the fragmented time of the Brechtian plot was intended to allow the spectators to understand History – with a capital H – as the meaning of the appearances and the movement which dispelled them. But what was staged was much more the division of the visible that is encapsulated in two well-known formulas: the Brechtian formula at the end of *Arturo Ui,* 'learn how to see and not to gape',[1] and the sentence of Roland Barthes about Bertolt Brecht's

Mother Courage, 'because we *see* Mother Courage blind, we *see* what she does not see'.[2] But the fact of seeing that somebody is blind has never provided the vision of what he or she does not see. On the contrary, you must already know what he or she does not see; you must know where the movement leads in order to see that he or she is blind. In addition, Mother Courage is not blind. On the contrary, she cynically adapts herself to what she sees as the law of history, namely the law of profit. And the critical art that was intended to teach us through her ignorance may end up joining her cynicism. This is what it often does today, as it endlessly accompanies the exercise of domination while purporting to reveal its secrets to people who don't ignore anything about those secrets.

The exhaustion of the formulas of critical art may give a new visibility to a third politics of art, the one that intertwines different times within little machines or *dispositifs* that construct other possibilities of looking at the present, at a remove from both the unanimist convergence of times and the critical construction of their divergence. I propose to call them 'heterochronies', a term that Michel Foucault coined in parallel to the term 'heterotopias', which he proposed to designate spaces that don't fit in the normal distribution of territories. Heterotopias, he says, are combinations of spaces that are normally incompatible. In the same way, heterochronies are combinations of times that are normally incompatible. Among the heterotopias that are linked with heterochronies, he lists the theatrical box and the cinematographic screen, along with the colony and

the graveyard. Those four heterotopic spaces are literally or figuratively present in a cinematographic sequence that I would like us to consider, because I think it gives us a good sense of what a heterochrony might be. It is a sequence of *Colossal Youth* (*Juventude em marcha*, 2006), a film made by the Portuguese film-maker Pedro Costa. It is the third film of the trilogy that he dedicated to the life of a few marginalised youth and immigrant workers from Cape Verde living in the suburbs of Lisbon. As the film follows their everyday existence, firstly in the shantytown that is being destroyed, then in the new white cubes where they are rehoused, it may first look like a documentary chronicle – the genre that seems suitable for the poor, those who live in the everyday and only meet History through misery, pain or distress. But it soon appears that this 'chronicle' actually is a tissue of heterochronies. I would like us to consider one of the most troubling. It is an episode at the end of the film, showing two persons. The first one is Ventura, the main 'character' of the film, a former mason who, all over the film, has taken on the role of a king in exile rather than that of a poor immigrant. In contrast, his friend, Lento, has offered the face of the coarse illiterate immigrant worker, unable to learn the words for a love letter he wants to send and that Ventura desperately tries to teach him. But, when he opens the door of his flat, after it has been ravished by a fire, he seems to be transfigured. He stands theatrically, his hand in Ventura's hand, in front of an imaginary audience, and their dialogue takes on the tone and the rhythm of the tragic psalmody. Later on, he recites the love letter he had hitherto been unable to learn. But before, he tells us about the fire, and how

he jumped through the window with his wife and his children. The problem is that the Lento we know has no wife and no children. Besides, we have already seen him die, after he fell from an electric pole. The character that we see now is a living dead, an inhabitant of the inferno coming back into our world. His body is now able to condense all the events that happen or may happen to all those who share his condition of living dead – which is the case with the family who was actually burnt to death in that flat during the shooting of the film.

The episode presents us an interweaving of times structured, in the last resort, by the conjunction of two incompatible times: the time of the documentary and the time of tragedy; the time of the immigrant worker, come from afar, who, at the end of a life of work and unemployment, got an identity card and an apartment with water, gas and electricity, and the time of the living dead circulating between the suburbs of our towns and the kingdom of shadows. That conjunction is condensed in the love letter that Lento recites: Pedro Costa composed it by intertwining fragments of letters written by immigrant workers and fragments of the last letter sent by the French poet Robert Desnos on his way to the Terezin concentration camp and to death. This montage of times composes a scene of the Last Judgement, but this last judgement is not a narrative of disaster. Instead, it is a form of suspension of the usual plots that absorbs every situation within the global process and dispossess those who live in 'our time' of the capacity of understanding it. A heterochrony is a redistribution of times that invents new capacities of framing a present.

I have just proposed an illustration of what I call a heterochrony. This does not mean that I have proposed a model of politics of art today. It would be difficult to propose such a model, even for those who are more used than I am to say what has to be done in general. But I think it is possible to investigate the potentialities of forms of art that work at the crossroads of temporalities and of worlds of experience. I think it is possible to explore their capacity to echo what happens in the intervals and the interruptions that tend to distend or disrupt the time of domination. Today, just as yesterday, the tension of living in several times at once remains unsolved. This means that it remains at work.

1.
Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941, trans. Ralph Manheim), *Collected Plays: Six* (ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim), London: Methuen Drama, 1994, p.211.

2.
Roland Barthes, 'Mother Courage Blind', *Critical Essays* (1964, trans. Richard Howard), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, p.34.

Illegitimacy   Leo Bersani

What does it mean to be a man? But first of all, what does it mean to act like a man? And, most importantly, what is the relation between acting like a man and being a man? We have become so used to thinking of masculinity and femininity as cultural constructions, and gender-bending has become, in the world of fashion as well as in queer theory and practice, such a familiar alternative to gender trouble, that it has become difficult if not impossible for us to take seriously, by which I mean literally, the questions just asked. And yet they were taken seriously, and literally, by a writer who has become, for some of us, an icon of the thinking, and in particular the queer thinking, that has made such questions obsolete. I am thinking of Jean Genet, the *avant la lettre* gender-bender *par excellence*. For Genet, the so-called 'real' is, it would seem, inseparable both from the names we give to it and the gestures by which we stage it. And for Genet, masturbation is the master gender-bender; alone in his bleak jail cell, he masturbates the fabulous beings of his great novel, *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943), into existence. And let's not qualify that by saying 'into a merely literary existence'. Genet's fantasmatic performativity is at the same time Genet's ontology. Jean-Paul Sartre showed his ambivalent respect for Genet's masturbatory power by calling him an essentialist. 'Genet's imagination is essentialist', Sartre wrote, 'as is his homosexuality […] He generates each of his characters out of a higher Essence; he reduces the episode to being merely the manifest illustration of an eternal truth'.[1] A Genet character is 'the symbol of a being […], of an idea that remains in heaven'.[2] Platonic idealism, however, as Sartre sees, needs something

else in order to have the creative force of Genet's performativity. 'His essentialism takes on the features of Aristotelian alchemy, because he forces his fiction to furnish him with proof of the powers of language. He wants to convince himself by means of his own tale that meaning changes being'.[3] There is a tension here between the eternal essence that always *is* before the copy or episode that illustrates it and the possibility of linguistically creating an essence, of naming not merely to illustrate an essence but to change being. Gestures function in the same way. 'Resting against the cushions of a carriage', Sartre writes, Divine, the fabulous queen-whore of Pigalle who is at the centre of Genet's novel, 'is in a position analogous to that of an *infanta*; therefore she *is* an *infanta*'.[4] To be like something is the animating force of a metamorphosis; 'as for the medieval clerk', Sartre concludes, 'apparent analogy is [for Genet] a sign of deep identity'.[5]

My interest in Genet might seem incompatible with what I want to present as the question to which my discussion here will offer some tentative answers: how can we become unnamable? The question is relevant if, as I believe, unnamability can operate as an effective form of resistance to networks of repressive power. With Genet, however, we are, or so it would seem far from moving forward in a quest for unnamability. Indeed, the very freedom with which Genet, in his exalted masturbatory fantasies, transforms and creates being through names and gestures subjects being to a kind of nominalist enslavement. The very negation of a non-performative real impoverishes the real by framing it within the semantic confines of a name. There is no unaccountable contingency that might break into the frame, no supplemental reality that might insinuate itself into the margins of essentialised being, no event that might disrupt or exceed the named event. It therefore becomes all the more interesting to note those instances when the demiurgic drive fails. There are comical moments when being fails to follow naming – moments analogous to those when the most carefully elaborated masturbatory fantasy doesn't do the job, is flaccidly rebuffed by the non-responsive equipment it is meant to activate. Divine is smitten with the young male murderer called Our Lady of the Flowers. 'Until then', Genet notes, '[Divine] had loved only men who were stronger and just a little, a tiny bit older, and more muscular than herself'.[6] But something different happens with Our Lady. A 'feeling of power' springs up in Divine; 'she thought', Genet writes, 'she had been virilised'.[7] Her amorous hope 'makes her strong and husky and vigorous. She felt muscles growing', and then, 'bolder still', she wants to box, but she quickly gets knocked about on the boulevard by men whose movements, unlike Divine's, were willed not by an aesthetic of maleness but for their 'combative efficiency'.[8] 'She tried for male gestures, which', Genet somewhat unexpectedly asserts, 'are rarely the gestures of males'.[9]

> She whistled, put her hands into her pockets, and this whole performance was carried out so unskillfully that in the course of a single evening she seemed to be four or five characters at the same time. She therefore acquired the richness of a multiple personality. She ran from boy to girl, and the transitions from one to the other – because the attitude was a new one –

were made stumblingly. She would hop after the boy on one foot. She would always begin her Big Scatter-brain gestures, then, suddenly remembering that she was supposed to show she was virile so as to capture the murderer, she would end by burlesquing them, and this double formula enveloped her in strangeness, made her a timid clown in plain dress, a sort of embittered swish.[10]

So there is, apparently, a maleness beyond male gestures, perhaps something like a real male essence that can't be linguistically, gesturally, aesthetically called into existence, a male being out of the reach of a theatrics of maleness. Maleness may exist, surprisingly, before it is willfully essentialised. 'Existence precedes essence' became a popular Sartrean slogan, and while Sartre's brilliant reading attributes to Genet an anti-Satrean reversal of that formula, Genet may, at least at certain moments, be an existentialist in spite of himself. Males only rarely have the gestures of males; their existence as males may not require an essence of maleness, and no amount of essentialising naming will ever catch up with that existence.

But how, exactly, do males manifest themselves? Is so-called 'maleness' nothing but an unnamable resistance to identitarian and essentialising naming? If, in the case of Genet, we decide not to drop the category altogether, it may be because he can't be reduced to the system of theatrical fantasmatics that seems chiefly to characterise his writing. The failures of language and gesture to coerce being into existence frictionalise fantasy with something we might be tempted to call reality, and the addition of fric-

tion to fiction would make it not entirely inappropriate to call Genet a realist. What is the nature of that friction? In another passage of Genet's novel, we see Divine in a state of fury; she 'would like to weep with rage, to tear cambric handkerchiefs with her nails and teeth'.[11] She has spent the night in a cabaret with the two men who live with her, the black Gorgui, who is 'her man', and the young and pretty assassin Our Lady, with whom, as we have seen, Divine has become infatuated. Gorgui, wearing tails and a white tie, treats Our Lady, in drag for the occasion, as his date; at 5 a.m., going home, they walk down the rue Lepic like a couple, Our Lady holding Gorgui by the arm, while Divine, forgotten and murderously and doubly jealous, stays behind pretending to fasten a garter. Humiliated even more when Gorgui steps aside in order to let Our Lady be the first to enter a taxi, then gets in himself, leaving Divine outside until, already settled, he invites her to join them. Divine, to save her dignity, has to think quickly, but, in order to do so, she has to make a quick gender change. 'For, though she felt as a "woman"', Genet writes, 'she thought as a "man"'.[12] This does not mean that, 'in thus reverting spontaneously to her true nature, Divine was a male wearing make-up, dishevelled with make-believe gestures'.[13] Indeed, her 'femininity was not *only* a masquerade',[14] although, for Genet, it is of course hardly invalidated in being a masquerade. If 'all the "woman" judgments she made were, in reality, poetical conclusions, […] only then was Divine true'.[15] But 'to think is to perform an act. In order to act you have to discard frivolity and set your idea on a solid base. So she was aided by the idea of solidity, which she associated with the

idea of virility'…[16] Not only that: when she is with Mimosa, her Pigalle sister-queen, both of whom use the feminine in addressing each other, Divine 'managed to think "woman" with regard to serious but never essential things'.[17]

Seen in conjunction with the boxing-whistling passage, all this makes for quite a gender-jumble. In desiring Our Lady as a feminised sexual partner, Divine feels 'virilified', but she can't, through her actions, attain the male identity that would, apparently, be the necessary support for her desires. So it would seem that male being is necessary for male sexuality, which would be consistent with an essentialist view of Genet's imagination. On the other hand, if her maleness-tactics don't quite work, desire has already given Divine a certain feeling – an illusion? – of virility. And, in the later passage, man and woman are defined even more assertively in terms of positioning in the scenario of desire. 'No doubt', Genet writes, Divine 'herself was not a woman (that is, a female in a skirt); she was womanly only in her submission to the imperious male'.[18] And, Genet unexpectedly adds, 'it would be curious to know what women corresponded to in Divine's mind, and particularly in her life'.[19] So Divine is too much the queen to reach the maleness necessary to become Our Lady's 'imperious' lover; on the other hand – and this fact, eluded in the first passage but central, as we will now see, to the second – Divine, originally Louis Culafroy, is physically a man. A man masquerading as a woman incapable of becoming the male she must be in order to act on her virile desires. Man needs maleness in order to behave like a man, but the deftly performed

masquerade as woman defeats what is apparently another masquerade needed to make the body conform to its own nature. And there is in Genet a bodily nature outside performance, or, if not exactly a 'nature', something intractably resistant to the real but ultimately limited power of poetry.

I haven't yet cited the most startling sentence of the second passage. While insisting that Divine's femininity wasn't only a masquerade (an 'only' that is, from Genet, somewhat strange), Genet nonetheless goes on to explain: 'But as for thinking "woman" completely, her organs hindered her'.[20] If they weren't enough to allow Divine to attain maleness, they are sufficient to prevent her from being entirely a woman. Genet's worship of the cock brings into his work a strong sense of the body, of both its complicity with and resistance to the comedy of identity. The body provides the masturbatory point of departure for an extravagant identitarian mobility, but it also sets limits to the very masquerade to which, once stimulated, it gives rise. In a universe that celebrates the power of fantasy elaborated and, in a sense, materialised in language, a universe in which naming creates being, the body provides – infrequently, it is true – a gravitational force that contravenes the centrifugal multiplication of words and gestures. It is as if it had its own intentionality, one that erodes the essentialising freedom of the imaginary. As a result, the categories of man and woman, and of maleness and femaleness, while they remain the central structuralising principles of Genet's fantasmatic productivity, also enter into an unresolved (unsynthesised) frictional dialectics of identity, one in which, aston-

ishingly enough, the regal naming of being can go adrift in something like the burlesque strangeness of Divine running, or more accurately stumbling, as Genet puts it, from boy to girl, and back again. Neither one nor the other, Divine is reduced to 'a timid clown in plain dress, a sort of embittered swish',[21] but that pathetically muddled figure has, in its very muddlement, become unnamable, free by virtue of its very failure to be recognised, to be identified.

* * *

The state creates us by naming us.[22] These words, which appear on the final page of Pierre Bourdieu's 1997 *Pascalian Meditations*, condense the lessons of Bourdieu's lifelong work of exposing the hierarchical system of classification by which the social order identifies and legitimises our social existence. We are distinguished – made distinct from one another – by the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours assigned to the social stratum or class to which each one of us belongs. The boundaries separating social modes of being define and limit the field of permissible mobility within the elaborately designed map of social classification by social class. What makes this system of classificatory control work is, according to Bourdieu, its internalisation by those subjected to it. We *recognise* the identity imposed on us as always already ours. 'Objective limits', Bourdieu writes in *Distinction* (1979), 'become *our sense of limits*, the *sense of one's place* that leads us to exclude ourselves from that from which we have been excluded'.[23] Bourdieu criticises the Sartrean view of 'the social gaze [*le regard social*]' as a universal and abstract power of objectification; rather, we should understand that gaze as 'a social power, which always owes a part of its effectiveness to the fact that it finds in the human subjects on whom it fixes itself the recognition of the very categories of perception and appreciation being applied'.[24] The extraordinary inertia resulting from the inscription of social structures on our bodies accounts for the difficulty of escaping from those structures.

The process of identificatory classification is of course also one of legitimation. A name behaves in a certain way; to the extent that we recognise the name socially transmitted to us as ours, as carrying our authentic identity, we endorse the judgements inherent in the classifying system. A hierarchy of distinctions includes non-legitimated groups. The operative distinctions tend, Bourdieu writes, to separate what should be separated and to bring together what, it is judged, should be brought together, and this means that unions outside the definition of what constitutes a legitimate union are classified as unions 'against nature'. The anti-nature argument – which could be thought of as the legitimating alibi for a profound classificatory bias – is of course familiar to us in heterosexist polemics against gay and lesbian marriage and especially gay and lesbian adoptions. Such unions, Bourdieu writes, give rise to 'a visceral and murderous horror, an absolute disgust, a metaphysical fury for everything that *goes beyond our understanding* [*tout ce qui passe l'entendement*]'[25] – an interesting way of formulating a disgust which, while presenting itself as grounded in immutable laws of nature, is in reality a rageful rejection of any social arrangement that threatens the bodily incorporated

principles that constitute how we understand the world, that is, that give to the social world an indispensable intelligibility. From this perspective, gay marriage is a serious, unacceptable transgression of relational classifications outside of which, it is implicitly claimed, we could no longer *make sense* of the social world.

What are the possibilities of escaping from this classificatory prison of sense? The transgression of boundaries is, it seems to me, merely a rearrangement (and not an even provisional erasure) of the social map. It is not, for example, that gay marriage is an inadequate transgression of the social order; rather, the problem is that it is *only* a transgression. It does nothing to question the given institutional legitimation of intimacy; it would make the institution more inclusive without attacking its right to authenticate, to officially testify to its participants' privileged rank in the relational hierarchy. It has been argued that gay marriage could subvert the institution from within, change the terms by which it is, at least officially, recognised and differentiated from other types of relation. But why keep the category if its identifying terms become unrecognisable? What is the limit at which marriage would lose so many of its recognised attributes that it would no longer make any sense to 'get married'? The generally unexpressed truth is of course that marriage, as a heterosexually constituted classification, will have no trouble at all competing against whatever new or, as we like to say, subversive attributes a proud gay and lesbian imagination may bring to it. The historical weight of what has been historically legitimated as marriage will have

no trouble crushing, or assimilating our queer inventiveness, however perverse we may will our inventions to be. We don't need a legislative defence of heterosexual marriage; history has already made it a nearly impregnable fortress impossible to take (even when its particular contractual terms are violated), but which might simply be deserted.

Bourdieu has his own exit from imprisoning names. Toward the end of *Pascalian Meditations*, he writes that objectively imposed and subjectively recognised and incorporated limits can be transgressed to the extent that subversive speech and action, 'attentive to the real chances of transforming the power relation they are able to work to raise expectations beyond the objective chances on which they spontaneously tend to be aligned, but without pushing them beyond the threshold where they would become unreal and foolhardy'.[26] If, as Bourdieu claims, symbolic transgression of a social frontier has in itself a liberating effect of articulating what has until then been the unthinkable, that effect depends on the contested structures already being 'in a state of uncertainty and of crisis' that would create conditions favourable to 'the critical consciousness [*la prise de conscience critique*] of their arbitrariness and fragility'.[27] Effective transgression thus becomes a delicate balancing act between useful and useless aspirations, as well as between moments of structural stability and other moments to be seised and exploited – of structural uncertainty. A productively frictional relation between different fields of analytic research would presumably increase the probability of accurate judgments of when subversive ambitions would or

would not be symbolically practical, as well as of the historically determined waxing and waning of power structures.

The principal adjudicator in all this would be the sociologist, certainly not the classically trained sociologist who is still, at least in the French university, the agent of greatest power, but rather the sociologist best exemplified by, I would suppose, Bourdieu himself. While Bourdieu's work on the repressively creative function of social naming, and the correlative power of defining and legitimating social identities, seems to me invaluable, the discipline within which he did this work could, it seems to me, provide only inadequate formulas of resistance. Bourdieu's emphasis on the subject's complicity with the identity imposed on him or her – we recognise as already ours the names imposed on us – is an important aspect of his work. But any analysis of the psychic processing of social naming must include factors alien to a strictly sociological perspective on the mind, and which, it seems to me, only psychoanalysis can provide. To recognise as belonging to us that which limits and oppresses us is a phenomenon impoverished by the word used to describe it: recognition is the conscious end-term of hidden impulses that complicate it, that make our apparently complicitous recognitions an ambiguous mix of, most notably, an erotically charged desire to be controlled as well as a nostalgic fantasy of lost authentic being that might energise a resistance to available social terms of understanding. What is 'beyond understanding' is not only used as an injurious epithet directed against unacceptable social identities and behaviour; it also designates psychic phenomena that, in failing to make sense, may nonetheless be the object of speculative *psycho*analysis. Those phenomena at once fortify our subjection to an oppressive intelligibility *and* contain versions of virtual being that constitutively resist that given intelligibility. The very recognition of the recognition described by Bourdieu is already an aspect of that resistance, although it is probably also identical, in the logic of the (psychoanalytically rather than sociologically described) unconscious, to that from which it seeks to liberate us. An awareness of these conflicting impulses to resist subjection and to resist that resistance – essentially, a taking into account of the unconscious – is indispensable to the political relevance of social analysis.

How to resist the naming that confers legitimacy? Bourdieu's study of how naming can either legitimise or delegitimise social identities led me to think about the possibly great value of a delegitimised social existence. I don't mean subverting or transgressing the boundaries of legitimacy; rather, we might accept delegitimation as a nullifying of the naming authority itself. The Law that names us, that legitimises or delegitimises the identities it names, is not an agency that can be negotiated with, and to reject its authority may necessitate a potentially irreversible negativising not only of the world but also of the subject him- or herself. This unqualified negativity (I should add that my negativising impulse, somewhat dormant, or equivocated, since the Genet chapter of *Homos* (1995), has been reinvigorated – if that can be said about such impulses – by Lee Edelman's compelling case for 'no future'[28]) has, astonishingly, been repre-

sented in a film I will be discussing in a moment, but first let's briefly pay tribute to the more workable if also more limited strategy of a subversively excessive assumption, or taking on, of the names imposed on us. Michel Foucault, arguing that a psychiatric discourse of the second half of the nineteenth century created the homosexual as a characterological entity – a psychic structure that, having been made visible, could be dissected, manipulated, disciplined – also spoke of a '"reverse" discourse'.[29] By that he meant that, almost contemporaneously with its invention, 'homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same categories by which it was medically disqualified',[30] thus challenging the power structures responsible for its creation. Gay pride and perhaps also gay marriage are expressions of this demand and, while recognising all there is to applaud in the former, the latter may be the logical end-point, as I suggested earlier in different terms, of our remaining, however transgressively, within the discourse that has disqualified us. Our indebtedness to that discourse in our very subversion of it leaves us vulnerable to its appeal, that is, to the versions of legitimacy underlying its disqualifications, versions seductively implicit in the vocabulary and categories that define our *il*legitimacy. That Foucault may have realised something of the sort seems indicated by his injunction, a century after the reverse discourse began to make itself heard, that we invent 'new relational modes' and, most tellingly, by his reminder that we have not yet learned 'how to be gay'.[31] Finally, more spectacularly but also less consequentially, there is Genet's transgressive adherence to the terms that excluded and condemned him. According to Sartre's well-known thesis, Genet *chooses* the evil attributed to him, which means, as Sartre sees, that he has 'to affirm the pre-existence of good',[32] even more, to make himself both the judged one and the judge. 'Incapable', Sartre writes, 'of *carving out* a place for himself in the universe, he *imagines* in order to convince himself that he has created the world which excludes him'.[33] The escape from a judging world in the form of a total, willed immersion in it is at the extreme limit of subversive parody. Genet's demiurgic power would be to reinvent a world already given to him; his self-fashioning, however rebellious its intention, is no less a tautology. In contrast to this, Divine's comic and pathetic stumbling between maleness and femaleness in *Our Lady of the Flowers* at least momentarily nullifies the very categories in which – and this may be her tragic flaw – she seeks to be immobilised.

* * *

What is the subject of Todd Haynes's 1995 film *Safe*? Who is the subject of *Safe*? Carol White, who lives with her husband Greg and her stepson in a well-to-do community in the San Fernando Valley in California, develops an increasingly acute allergy to her surroundings. One morning, in a moment of apparent weakness and fatigue, she stumbles in her living room after walking through her kitchen, where a couple of tradesmen are working and her maid is spraying polish on dishware. Shortly after that, as she is driving on a freeway, fumes from a truck give her a fit of violent coughing. Her symptoms worsen and become frequent: a serious nose-bleed at the

hairdressers, attacks of asthma at a party and in the course of a series of allergy tests and, at the dry cleaners, a seizure that leads to a stay in the hospital. Her doctor can't find anything wrong with her, and a session with a psychiatrist is flatly unproductive. After seeing a flier at her health club that begins with the questions: 'Do you smell fumes? Are you allergic to the twentieth century?', Carol goes to a meeting where a man on the TV monitor speaks about the environmental illness caused when our natural tolerance to everyday chemicals breaks down. This seems to put Carol on the right track: her first attack followed her exposure to the fumes from the truck just ahead of her car, and her nose-bleed occurred after her hair had been soaked in the chemicals used during her permanent. She meets other people also suffering from toxins in the environment, and at another meeting a woman speaks of the need to create an oasis, a safe, toxin-free place. Finally, at the hospital she hears, on her TV set, about Wrenwood, a retreat in New Mexico whose founder, Peter Dunning, describes as 'a safe haven for troubled times'. Carol decides to join the Wrenwood community, where a group of people, all having been afflicted with chemical or affective toxins that made it impossible for them to continue living in the 'normal' world, lead a peaceful, healthy, communally supportive, and apparently contented existence, and where therapy consists of both their physical isolation and the group sessions in the New Age philosophy propounded by Peter. Peter's lesson is simple and radical: we are the cause of our illnesses, we see outside what we feel within, self-transformation will bring global transformation. The success of this

therapy is, with a couple of exceptions (most notably, the at-peace-with-herself-and-with-the-world director of the centre, Claire), far from evident, although we see only one case of rebellious resistance to Peter's teaching. As for Carol, she goes along sympathetically, if passively, with the Wrenwood philosophy until the end of the film, although there is very little sign of any physical improvement. On the contrary: she has to carry an oxygen tank at all times, her face is gaunt and her skin splotched, and finally she has to leave her cabin, still too exposed to poisons from the outside, and take what may be permanent refuge is a small, white, windowless, porcelain-lined, almost furniture-free, igloo-like structure that leaves her sequestered even from the sequestered Wrenwood community – alone with the self that is, she has been taught to believe, the source of both her illness and a possible cure.

It has been argued both that *Safe* is and is not a metaphor or an allegory for AIDS. Haynes's film takes place in 1987, during the worst period of the epidemic. AIDS, very much in the public awareness, is mentioned a few times in the film, and especially in one instance Haynes appears to be encouraging us to see some connection between Carol's affliction and HIV-infection. In an early scene, Linda, Carol's best friend, talks to her about her unmarried brother's recent death; in what we might take as an unsurprising wilful denial, she assures Carol that AIDS was not the cause. In the TV clip about Wrenwood, Peter mentions AIDS as one of 'the diseases of our time', and shortly after Carol arrives at the retreat we learn that Peter himself has AIDS. What I find intriguing

about the implied metaphoricity of Carol's illness is the nonchalantly accepted misfit between the two terms of the presumed metaphor. Rather than voting yes or no in the debate about AIDS as the implicit subject of the film, we might find the bad fit itself the most interesting aspect of the connection. During the first few minutes of the film we can see an extended shot, filmed from above the bed, of Greg's back and Carol's face as they have missionary-position sex, or, more accurately, as Greg thrustingly makes his way toward sexual climax with a patient but clearly unexcited Carol. The scene obviously suggests something about their relation; more interestingly, in purely sequential terms we can't help but note that Carol's symptoms begin to appear shortly thereafter. This certainly does not suggest that Greg has transmitted to Carol a disease of the immune system. Nevertheless, given what we know about the transmission of the HIV-virus, and given the fact that both AIDS and Carol's 'environmental illness' involve damage to and even breakdown of the immune defences, that sequence – sex followed by an immune disorder – can't help but be at least teasingly fraught.

But why? In what way does Todd Haynes's film profit from this inevitable yet largely gratuitous connection? The question of incongruous connectedness becomes more pronounced when we consider the relation between the Wrenwood and the pre-Wrenwood sections of the film. The first part of *Safe* may, with some plausibility, be taken as a serious ecological argument. We are given statistical information about the degree to which the air we breathe has become chemically polluted, a pollution made no

less shocking by the apparent (and perhaps deceptive) tolerance most of us have developed to it. Carol is frequently filmed in long shots; the camera slowly and ominously moves closer to her at the beginnings of her allergic attacks. Otherwise, seen from a distance, she is, visually, little more than a human speck among the objects (such as the furniture in her living room) that occupy much more of the filmic frame than she does. Correlatively, her small, non-assertive voice is no match for the sounds (from radio and TV, and the massive freeway traffic) that also assault her senses. As has frequently been noted, Carol is a remote presence; the distance at which she is kept is psychological as well as visual. Haynes seems to have deliberately made her psychologically empty, without the inner life classical cinema, especially with its close-ups of the human face, has contributed to make us take for granted as a necessary and defining characteristic of the human. But this very emptiness, the psychic absence as well as the physical insignificance, also makes plausible Carol's exceptional vulnerability to the toxins engulfing her. It is as if we were viewing an alien presence with no defences against the world. Carol's thinness as a cinematic character allows her to serve very well as an allegorical model of an always imminent human breakdown in the poisonous spaces created by our industrious industrial activity.

Wrenwood appears to move us into another film. True, there are members of the community who have suffered an environmental illness like Carol's (Claire had lived 'six miles from a chemical factory in Michigan that was leaking something like fifteen gallons of

chemical by-product a day'), but others, as we have learned in one of their therapy sessions, have been psychically poisoned: one by her guilt over her child's sickness, another, it is suggested, by being abused as a young girl. We have shifted to diverse forms of imbalance between the subject and the world, cases in which the subject has been nearly crushed by the strength of destructive energies – both human and non-human – in the world. The first part of the film could (but doesn't) steer in the direction of environmental activism. Wrenwood, more an escape than an activist response, is, in one sense, still within this field of meaning; it is meant to be the oasis, a toxic-free safe place urged as a flight from the environmental illnesses of those in the audience at one of the meetings Carol attends Wrenwood is, literally, a retreat, and the logic of this response is spelled out in Peter's New Age teaching. All is well in the world if we love ourselves; what we see outside is nothing but a reflection of what we feel within. In one scene Peter tells his Wrenwood flock that he has stopped reading newspapers and watching the news on TV; 'media gloom and doom' are antithetical to his conviction, as he tells the one recalcitrant member of the community, that 'the only person who can make you sick is you […] Whatever the sickness, if our immune system has been damaged, it is because we have allowed it to be'. Haynes is certainly not endorsing the most absurd conclusion to which Peter's teaching might be said to point: environmental pollutions can be erased by self-love, a conclusion consistent with Peter's vision of a 'global transformation' reflecting and coinciding with what he calls 'the transformation I revel at within'. It is perhaps because Haynes counts on his

audience immediately retreating from this New Age gibberish that he can afford to present a rather sympathetic portrait of Wrenwood and its founder. There is no suggestion of hypocrisy, or of a plot to financially exploit his followers (Peter's luxurious home, perhaps the sign of his profit-making enterprise, is visible to the admiring residents on a hill overlooking the community), and no doubt is cast on the sincerity of the director's attempts to help the residents cure themselves. Sincerity is, of course, no guarantee of effectiveness, and, as I have noted, Haynes gives us very little reason to believe that the therapy is working. In a written direction placed just before Peter's outdoor meeting with the residents, Haynes indicates that 'although everyone is saying the "right" things, there is a sadness that hangs in the air'. Peter asks a few members of the group to say what made them sick, and he unhesitatingly provides the cues for what are clearly the 'right' answers.

Haynes's tact in his presentation of Wrenwood makes its relation to the first part of *Safe* even more problematic. Had he exposed his New Agers as hypocritical villains, the film might have had an uninteresting coherence: it would have been a case of people in great distress being intentionally deluded, at their material and emotional expense, into believing that they can simply will or love themselves out of their distress. In short, a sad story. More interesting is an incongruity similar, but on a larger structural scale, to the one I noted earlier between connotations of AIDS and environmental illness. The environmental perils of our contemporary, chemically saturated lives are of course not addressed by a New Age recourse to

the power of self-love, but this hardly original message can't account for the power of Haynes's work. That power lies, it seem to me, hidden within the incongruous juxtaposition of the film's three major subjects: environmental illness, AIDS and self-love. A familiar logic might dismiss the film, or at least diminish its status for the very incongruity of its implicit sets of relations. AIDS is an historically contingent syndrome (it could appear anywhere at any time), while environmental illness, to which sex is irrelevant, is a modern ailment due to industrial pollution. And while the inherent irrelevance of self-love to saving ourselves from HIV-infection as well as environmental illness is clear enough, there *is* a way in which Peter's gospel of self-love applies to the different illnesses the film represents or evokes. Not as a cure, but as something more complicated and more sinister. Consoling Carol, who has been crying alone in her cabin the evening of her arrival at Wrenwood, Claire tells her that, unable even to walk when she first moved to the retreat, she helped to cure herself by looking every day in the mirror and saying, 'Claire, I *love* you, I really love you'. In the film's extraordinary final scene, Haynes gives us a close-up of Carol looking at herself in the small mirror on the wall of her igloo home murmuring 'I love you' several times in a barely audible, expressionless voice and with a blank if perhaps futilely expectant face. The bleakness of the grey bare interior of her (final?) safe haven is emphasised by its contrast with the enjoyable evening of a dinner that she and a friendly male resident have made for the group, followed by dancing and a surprise birthday cake to celebrate Carol's birthday. In the little speech she is coaxed into mak-

ing after blowing out the candles on the cake, Carol inarticulately and approvingly summarises the self-love lesson of Wrenwood. A self-love cruelly mocked a few moments later in the igloo mirror scene in which Carol's proclamation of love to herself does nothing to alter the blank, gaunt, devastated features of the reflection unmoved, untouched by this climactic enactment of the Wrenwood cure.

In its apparent retreat from the world, Wrenwood is a parodistically faithful repetition of a major philosophical and psychoanalytic message about the world as dangerously alien to its human subjects. As I have argued in another essay centred on René Descartes, Marcel Proust and Sigmund Freud, a turning away from the world in order to reject or control it through an autonomous subjectivity has been a major theme in modern Western thought.[34] The ontological gap separating the *res cogitans* from the *res extensa* (Descartes), the world as a dismissible distraction in the aesthetic recreation of it (Proust), and the perception of what is outside the subject as a threat to the willed coherence and unity of the subject's inherently fragile individualising ego (Freud): some of the most compelling thinkers of our culture have encouraged us to think of our condition as one of Heideggerian 'thrownness' into a world of enigmatically and dangerously differential otherness. The power of *Safe* lies in its original restatement of this message. Environmental illness is not a metaphor for AIDS; both are contemporary reinforcements and vindications of the individualistic ideology of Wrenwood. Peter Dunning is described to Carol as 'a chemically sensitive person with AIDS'. His sexually contracted illness

is, like his chemical sensitivity, the result of intimate contacts with the world. As we have seen during the AIDS epidemic, the existence of a sexually transmitted, potentially fatal disease lends itself particularly well to a political exploitation of a philosophical, aesthetic and psychoanalytic argument concerning the essential foreignness of the world to its perhaps intrinsically estranged inhabitants. Especially during the early years of AIDS, we were repeatedly told that the best, the safest protection against dangerous relations with others is to renounce intimate relations with them and to practice abstinence. And if abstinence must allow, after all, for some sexual practice, that practice will of course be masturbation, that is, sexual self-love. Thus gays were once again marginalised, this time with apparent scientific authorisation, in order both to save themselves from a world that had become dangerous for them, and to save the world from the danger gays embodied, a perennial danger that had now become biologically detectable in our bodies.

Wrenwood is the perfect servant of a political strategy designed by networks of power (unlocatable, impersonal in the Foucaldian sense of how power is exercised) in order to isolate individuals from political life. In the *episteme* of a culture where Wrenwood thrives, self-knowledge occupies a privileged position in the field of knowability. Peter rejects the gloom and doom in which newspapers and TV traffic, relying on the ideology of individualism (itself grounded in the notion of a fundamental opposition, or difference of being, between the subject and the world, a notion dominant in Western thought) to make a mar-

ginalising or exclusionary strategy of power appear to be an opportunity for a rebellious triumph of individual freedom. Freedom, even autonomy, and at the limit the illusion of self-creation, the realisation of the long-cherished *causa sui* project. *Safe is* 'about' AIDS, in the sense that it enacts as a voluntary retreat from society that banishment from the relational field of intimacy which a homophobic culture was able to present as a hygienic imperative, and which poor mystified Peter sees as an opportunity for self-knowledge and self-love. Peter has learned how to love Peter, which also means that Peter has learned to make of his own peter the principal object of his desire. His cure for dangerous relations – a cure for himself and for others – is the oxymoron of a masturbatory relationality. In the terms I have used in discussing Genet and Bourdieu, AIDS reinforced the delegitimising of gays (HIV became a new delegitimating attribute), at the same time as, ironically, in obeying the now medically authorised homophobic goal of removing us from sexuality (and especially non-monogamous sexuality), the social order granted us a new kind of legitimacy: one earned by our acceptance of a masturbatory retreat, our acceptance of 'Wrenwood' as providing the boundaries of our identity.

Finally, however, we shouldn't forget that it is Carol, not Peter, who is at the centre of *Safe*. Carol the non-teacher, the non-speaker. In her startling, inarticulate passivity, Carol retreats beyond Wrenwood, which is, after all, a community, one in which a peaceful sociality is practiced. She *is* the logic of the film's incongruous juxtaposition of a feminist social critique, a

narrative of the deadly consequences of industrial capitalism, a parabolic representation of AIDS, and a philosophy of self-protective, self-sequestering self-love. Carol makes no conscious political choices; she is, constitutively, a refusal to belong, to be named. Haynes even suggests, early in the film, that, apart from the social and environmental oppressiveness that victimises her, she is in the 'wrong' universe. I am thinking of the two nearly identical sequences in which we see Carol walking and standing alone in her garden at night, scenes accompanied by prolonged, mournful musical chords that, here and elsewhere in the film, add something portentous beyond the film's diegetic literalness. This radical aloneness is emphasised by her verbal stumblings, as if the language that makes her a social being were a violation of an intrinsic being-apart and silence. Carol enacts a shedding of identities that is also a shedding of the film's subjects: that is, the strongly legitimated identity of a middle-class female homemaker, her identity as a victim of industrial waste, her symbolic identity as an immune-damaged carrier of a fatal infection, and, finally, her particular (and particularly thin) psychic identity as a person. Paradoxically, it is Carol's stammering words of self-love at the end of the film which signal the shedding of a person who might be loved. There is no one there; Carol might adopt the title of Haynes's 2007 film about Bob Dylan as the rebuttal of 'I love you': 'I'm not there'. Applied to Dylan, these words refer to such richly dispersed identities that they can't even be embodied in a single actor (Dylan is played by three male actors and, magnificently, by Cate Blanchett); in Carol's case, there is no one to embody. Claire had managed to attach a name to her declaration of self-love: 'I love you, Claire'. Carol stops at a faintly murmured and by now highly problematic 'you'.

Social legitimation by way of naming – conferring an identity – turns out to be the most dangerous toxin. The most serious environmental illness is environmental identity. In a sense, Carol is Haynes's fictive scapegoat created to serve as a model of a non-viable yet somehow also necessary self-negativising. Much less active than Sartre's Genet (who freely chooses the deviant identity imposed on him), Carol doesn't subversively parody the identity assigned to her; rather, she simply disappears from it. As a lesson to all of us tempted by the joys of a hard-won legitimacy (given especially by marriage and children), one which, however, when learned, we may no longer be tempted to subvert, or to change, Carol, at the moment she weakly calls an absent 'me-you' into being, transforms a social cipher and, implicitly, a social outcast into a barely existent body. It is up to us to decide – Haynes has brilliantly done more than enough – if that body harbours some as yet unnamed passion.

1.
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint-Genet: Actor and Martyr* (1952, trans. Bernard Frechtman), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, p.469.
2.
Ibid., p.470.
3.
Ibid.
4.
Ibid., p.471–72.
5.
Ibid., p.471.
6.
Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943, trans. Bernard Frechtman), Paris: Olympia Press, 2004, p.68.
7.
Ibid.
8.
Ibid., p.69.
9.
Ibid.
10.
Ibid.
11.
Ibid., p.139.
12.
Ibid., p.143.
13.
Ibid.
14.
Ibid.
15.
Ibid.
16.
Ibid.

17.
Ibid.
18.
Ibid.
19.
Ibid.
20.
Ibid.
21.
Ibid., p.69.
22.
Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (1997, trans. Richard Nice), Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.245. 'Rites of institution give an enlarged and particularly visible image of the effect of the institution, an arbitrary being which has the power to rescue from arbitrariness, to confer the supreme *raison d'être,* the one constituted by the affirmation that a contingent being, vulnerable to sickness, infirmity and death, is worthy of the dignity, transcendent and immortal, like the social order, that he is given. And acts of nomination, from the most trivial acts of bureaucracy, like

the issuing of an identity card, or a sickness or disablement certificate, to the most solemn, which consecrate nobilities, lead, in a kind of infinite regress, to that realisation of God on earth, the State, which guarantees, in the last resort, the infinite series of acts of authority certifying by delegation the validity of the certificates of legitimate existence (as a sick or handicapped person, an *agregé* or a priest). And sociology thus leads to a kind of theology of the last instance: invested, like Kafka's court, with an absolute power of truth-telling and creative perception, the State, like the divine *intuitus originarius* according to Kant, brings into existence *by* naming and distinguishing. Durkheim was, it can be seen, not so naive as is claimed when he said, as Kafka might have, that "society is God".'

23.
P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979, trans. Richard Nice), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, p.471. 'Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a "sense of one's place" which leads one top exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded.' Quotation modified by the author.
24.
Ibid., p.207. 'The phenomenologists' "body-for-others" is doubly a social product: it derives its distinctive properties from its social conditions of production; and the social gaze is not a universal, abstract, objectifying power, like the Sartrian gaze, but a social power, whose efficacy is always partly due

to the fact that the receiver recognises the categories of perception and appreciation it applies to him or her.' Quotation modified by the author.
25.
Ibid., p.474. 'The sense of distinction, the *discretio* (discrimination) which demands that certain things be brought together and others kept apart, which excludes all misalliances and all unnatural unions […] responds with visceral, murderous horror, absolute disgust, metaphysical fury to everything which […] passes understanding, that is the embodied taxonomy, which by challenging the principles of the incarnate social order, especially the socially constituted principles of the sexual division of labour, violates the mental order, scandalously flouting common sense.' Quotation modified by the author.

26.
P. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, *op. cit.*, p.236.
27.
Ibid.
28.
See Leo Bersani, *Homos*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 and Lee Edelman, *No Future. Queer Theory and Death Drive*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004
29.
Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I* (1976, trans. Robert Hurley), New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.101.
30.
Ibid.
31.
M. Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life' (1994, trans. John Johnston), *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. 1954–1984* (ed. Paul Rabinow), New York: The New Press, 1997, p.137.
32.
J.-P. Sartre, *Saint-Genet*, *op. cit.*, p.468.
33.
Ibid.

34.
See L. Bersani, "'Ardent Masturba-tion": (Descartes, Freud, and Others)', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 38, no.1, Autumn 2011.

Ten Lessons from Ten Peace Proceses

Jan Egeland

I have for a quarter of a century alternated between academic institutions and operational responsibilities in international conflict management. Many times I have been struck by the following paradox: those who are in the middle of a peace effort have little or no time to reflect on what the right course of action is, or consult with academic research – whereas those who research and reflect on the conditions for effective peacemaking have little or no chance to test their theories in the real world of conflicts and negotiations. That is a shame, because many envoys have been too ill-prepared and ill-informed to understand the alternative ways in which they could have approached the parties and the theatre of strife and war. On their side, many academics develop elaborate theories of peacemaking that will not survive outside the laboratories, because they do not know of and address the real-life challenges that the envoys and the parties are confronted with on a daily basis in their messy conflicts.

As the parties invariably will point out when you meet them in their trenches, each conflict, circumstance and actor is unique. A classic mistake that I have committed more than once is to try to transfer a method that was successful in one particular set of talks to a very different negotiation, where it would fail. There are however in my opinion some general lessons that can be drawn from practical experience to the benefit of a more informed, better balanced and more strategic approach in future peace efforts. The toolbox available to the good offices of the third party has to be as full and as critically reviewed as possible, before an effort is made to bring a live conflict to its negotiated end.

I have, on behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations and non-governmental organisations, participated in numerous conflict-resolution efforts and some ten peace processes on four continents during the last two decades. I have more often been a facilitator, organiser or donor representative than a mediator in these talks or negotiations.

We failed more often than we succeeded. Some processes lasted for a number of years, others were short-lived. Some third-party efforts were governmental, some inter-governmental and others were non-governmental in scope and nature. The number of conflict parties varied from two to close to ten – the number of third-party peacemakers varied even more. Some were huge international news stories, others shall remain, at the request of the parties, secret forever. In the following I will list the place and range of the conflicts and subsequently try to outline ten representative lessons learned.

When the Cold War ended and the Berlin Wall fell, there was, suddenly, a new opening for foreign policy activism for new and non-traditional actors. I was in 1990 asked by Norway's Foreign Minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg, to become his Personal Advisor, and soon his deputy and State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With my background from human rights and humanitarian work in Amnesty International and the Red Cross, I was keen to link up with civil society movements and academic think tanks to see if we could help foster confidence-building measures in any of the more than fifty contemporary post-Cold War conflicts.

Upon the initiative of the Lutheran World Federation, the government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan URNG guerrillas agreed in Oslo in 1990 to initiate a series of peace consultations. Over the next six years I represented Norway in the Group of Friends for the Guatemala Peace Process. We hosted numerous negotiations and consultations and, ultimately, I presided over the cease-fire ceremony between the parties to the civil war in the Oslo City Hall in December 1996.

In 1992, with friends and colleagues Terje Roed-Larsen and Mona Juul, I helped initiate and organise the secret 'Norwegian Channel' that lead to the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993. From 1993 to 1997 we repeatedly facilitated new agreements, including an agreement on cooperation on new and additional water resources between Israel, Jordan and the PLO, and contacts between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, as we gradually saw the peace process stall and the enemies of reconciliation win.

In the mid-1990s I was the personal advisor to the UN mediator in the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg, and facilitated the release of prisoners of war and talks between Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims in a period that saw more atrocities and breaches of agreements than good-faith reconciliation and peace implementation.

There were also many other initiatives: in 1994 and 1995 the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted three sessions of direct talks near Oslo between the Sudanese Government and the SPLA guerrilla movement. The talks were inconclusive and we there-

fore decided to defer our channel to the benefit of the regional IGAD mediation effort that Norway helps fund. We also co-initiated a group of 'friends' of the regional Sudan Peace Process that has been in various shapes and forms active until and beyond the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Also in the early 1990s we initiated another long-standing Norwegian peace effort in Sri Lanka. Through a locally based international NGO, Worldview, we undertook several confidence-building contacts, and in 1995 the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) jointly requested Norway to direct the supervision of the cease-fire which entered into force in January. Since then Norway was a key facilitator of the on-and-off talks that came to its bitter end with the crushing governmental military victory in 2009.

From 1999 until the end of 2001 I was the Special Advisor of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to the peace process in Colombia undertaking shuttle diplomacy between the FARC and ELN guerrillas and the government of President Andrés Pastrana. In 2000 we had a high-level group of government representatives and FARC commanders in Oslo for a workshop on methods of peace negotiations, humanitarian law and alternative models of governance and social justice. Also on behalf of the United Nations I helped set up, as Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, the international support structure for cease-fire talks between the Ugandan Government and the Lords Resistance Army in 2006 in South Sudan. The same year I met with Joseph Kony and other top commanders of the LRA in Eastern Congo after a cessation of hostilities agreement had been made with Presidents Museveni's envoys.

There have also been several other conflict-resolution efforts that Norway was able to help fund or host, ranging from the successful Mali reconciliation talks through the Norwegian Church Aid in the 1990s and the 'track-II' inter-community meetings between Greek and Turkish Cypriot business leaders that US Presidential envoy, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and I co-chaired, to talks we facilitated between various parties in local conflicts in the Caucasus in the late 1990s.

Lesson Number 1:
Parties Must Want to End Their Conflict
Perhaps the most fundamental lesson of the peace efforts is that there will be no real and durable peace if the parties themselves do not actively want to end their conflict. There are between thirty and forty ongoing, unresolved armed conflicts in our time and age. In some of these the lack of consistent and coherent international conflict-resolution initiatives are to blame, but in many more the main reason that the conflicts go on is that one or more of the parties are simply unwilling to enter into a compromise solution.

From the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Sri Lanka and Darfur, I have seen long years of futile attempts to get unwilling parties to agree to anything meaningful. External military might may be able to enforce a cease-fire and break the ability of armed actors to continue active combat, but, as witnessed in the Balkans, there will not be the full implementation of the security nor the human rights needed to see real peace breaking out if the leaders or the public opinion among the parties do not want to accept or live up to the viable compromise solution.

This is particularly evident for the less powerful mediators, such as small states, NGOs or UN envoys, that cannot muster the united weight of the Security Council powers. Again and again, from the Oslo Accords follow-up in Israel and the Palestinian territories to the long 'talks about talks' phase in Colombia from 1999 to 2002, I saw how the internal dynamics simply tore apart the internationally supported peace efforts. The handshake of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman Yassir Arafat on the White House lawn in September 1993 was not enough to overcome the strong anti-peace forces among Israelis and Palestinians alike, and to salvage the Oslo peace process even with the strong support of the US-led international community. In Colombia, President Andrés Pastrana and the smaller guerrilla, the ELN, also wanted peace, but the leadership in the bigger guerrilla, the FARC, were clearly unwilling to compromise – as were the brutal right-wing paramilitary groups, which enjoyed protection from elements in the army.

When the Sri Lankan parties refused to compromise there was simply no creative mediation tool that could move them towards agreement. In the Guatemalan talks, the lack of such willingness delayed agreement for years, but the patient mediation of the United Nations and the hundreds of reconciliation initiatives of Norway and other facilitators lasted until the parties had reached, after six years, a mutual interest in ending the conflict.

Lesson Number 2:
The Actors Will Not Behave Rationally

A second lesson is that the various parties and influential actors are pursuing a whole series of less-than-logical short-term objectives that may be very different from the apparently rational interest of stopping the bloodshed and pursuing longer-term peace and reconciliation. The many conflicting parties I have met have nearly all stated that their objective and interest is to end the killing and pursue 'just' peace. Their real interests, as demoted warlords and potential war criminals, may be to prolong the struggle for as long as their exit from struggle and future existence is insecure.

I was once asked by a doctoral student, 'Why did you not get progress by having the parties sit around a round table with a common text that had alternative formulations in brackets?' 'Because, when all essential parties had finally arrived,' I answered, 'it was too hot, too little time until curfew, too much stench from the overflowing toilet, too many accusations of what was said and done by the other side last night, and too much internal tension within and between the parties. All our energy, once again, had to concentrate on avoiding that the key figures broke away from the talks forever.'

Perhaps the main error made by the students of conflict-resolution theory is to assume that the circumstances for the talks are stable and predictable, and that the parties will pursue rational long-term interest. Many guerrilla movements, from Sri Lanka to Colombia, Northern Uganda and Darfur, have been the last to see that their days as a strong and independ-

ent fighting force are counted. Many governments, from Israel to Sudan and to Yugoslavia, have not realised that continued intransigence will undermine the strength and legitimacy of their governance.

Lesson Number 3:
Willing Parties Need External Support

Even when parties are willing to compromise, it is in our globalised world of arm flows, drug trafficking and cross-border raids essential to have the active support of neighbours, international organisations and donors. It is, as a warlord once told me, much easier to start a war than to stop it. It takes big diplomatic, political, security, humanitarian and developmental efforts to design the carrots and the sticks that may translate declared agreements into realities on the ground.

Nearly all contemporary conflicts are fought in, among or against poor and vulnerable communities in Third World countries. The involved parties and actors may have what it takes to go on fighting for many more years, but not what it takes to end the conflict and to build peace. It has been a disease in international diplomacy, from the UN via regional organisations to most Ministries of Foreign Affairs, that too much time is spent on discussing the language in and principles of agreements, and too little time is spent on securing the practical tools and resources needed to secure implementation. The lack of resources includes everything from inadequate military observers to verify cease-fires to lack of reintegration programmes for demobilised ex-combatants.

We tried to remedy this in Norway through several stand-by procedures with and through NGOs and academic and governmental institutions. These can provide hundreds of relief workers, human-rights advisors, constitutional lawyers, military experts, peace mediators and observer teams that since have been dispatched to more than thirty countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, at the request of UN mediators or agencies, post-conflict societies or even parties to armed conflicts.

Lesson Number 4:
States, IGOs and NGOs Can Join Forces

The toolbox of the conflict-resolution efforts increases if inter-governmental organisations, governments and non-governmental groups work together. Such comprehensive efforts can also increase the effectiveness of third-party involvement, although the possibilities for incoherence increase. The overall peace efforts can boast a lot of flexibility in engaging reconciliation actors, and developmental, humanitarian and civil society 'people-to-people cooperation' that promote progress in the political talks between the armed actors.

The participation of NGOs in our governmental facilitation of peace processes did, in the Norwegian case, prove to have several advantages. In our discrete non-governmental peace channels, the news media, which focus on what divides rather than what unites, could easily be held at arms length; time-consuming diplomatic protocol and speeches to the gallery could be avoided, and the conflicting parties could benefit from 'deniability'. Working with or though a NGO helps ensure that while negotiations take place, the par-

ties and the mediator can deny the existence of any such activity. Such deniability exists because the activity involves something other than negotiations. Until a viable compromise has been worked out, parties may point out that humanitarian or other non-threatening NGO activity is the purpose of the contacts.

For example, FAFO, the labour union think tank which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked to facilitate the secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO, operated for a long time in the guise of a study on living conditions in Gaza, the West Bank and Arab Jerusalem. The study provided the ideal cover for the otherwise suspicious increase in visits from Tunis and Israel. FAFO and its Director, Terje Roed-Larsen, were a quiet, efficient and informed operator organising dozens of meetings, booking hundreds of hotel rooms and tickets, and making thousands of telephone calls. The Norwegian government provided the political guidance, the stamp of approval that it was a serious international initiative, and the necessary financial resources. As a government, we could officially keep our distance from the activity. The Israel/PLO meetings in Norway numbered fourteen, and remained secret until after Uri Savir, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and Abu Ala, the Minister of Economy of the PLO, after nine months of intensive negotiations, had initialled the Declaration of Principles in Oslo in August 1993.

The 'Norway Channel' demonstrated how a small country with no aspirations of changing its status can bring parties to a conflict together for talks when these are unable or unwilling to work effectively through the highly publicised process of conference diplomacy.

The non-governmental network of contacts across conflict lines and within influential circles in war-torn societies is nearly limitless. There are only in Norway close to one hundred civil society groups and academic institutions receiving substantial government funding for development assistance, training or human rights activities in well over a hundred countries. Over the years, tens of thousands of Norwegians have acquired field experience from working with these organisations as well as with the government development agency or through UN agencies or peace-keeping operations.

Lesson Number 5:
Define the Right Third-Party Role

There is a great difference between being the mediator, the facilitator or the mere neutral intermediary, organiser or host of talks. The third party should not take a more ambitious role than what is realistic in the given conflict environment or with the resources and the leverage that is at hand for the conflict-resolution effort.

Whereas the major power or the inter-governmental organisation can with credibility take the role of a mediator pushing the parties towards a common compromise, the smaller state or non-governmental organisation may be at their best trying to perform the role of the creative and reliable facilitator. For example, Norwegian facilitation of peace efforts in the Middle East, Guatemala, Sri Lanka or Sudan were more activist than being the 'Geneva-style' technical host of talks, but never did we try any full-scale 'muscle-mediation', as was undertaken by the United States in the Bosnia-Herzegovina negotiation at the

Dayton military base. Nor did we attempt to establish the full international mediation teams that were drafting numerous compromise texts, which the United Nations envoys could place before the parties to the El Salvador and Guatemala talks.

In their successful Central American mediation, the United Nations was helped by facilitators in the Group of Friends, consisting of interested member states. In particular, Mexico and Norway, and to a lesser extent Spain, Venezuela and Colombia, undertook reconciliation programmes among important stakeholders in Guatemala to help achieve the final peace accord in December 1996. The Norwegian facilitation even included providing financial support to the Marxist URNG guerrilla to enable them to participate meaningfully in the negotiations. At the same time, Norwegian human-rights and development assistance to Guatemala increased within many fields. Norway has also made a point of trying to influence and reform the Guatemalan armed forces, which have a long history of human-rights abuse and of military coups. Military delegations from Guatemala have visited Norway, and met high ranking Norwegian military officers, led by a former Chairman of the Military Committee of NATO.

Lesson Number 6:
Define Realistic Goals

The long-term goal should be 'just and durable peace', but the third party is wise to define more realistic short-term and intermediary goals. In a situation when there is no trust between the parties, it is advisable to start up seeking limited humanitarian and functional con-fidence-building measures that can build a stepping stone towards talks about more ambitious agenda items. Especially during an initial 'talks about talks' phase of a negotiation, an exchange of prisoners, the evacuation of the wounded or a vaccination campaign for children in conflict zones may help get the parties believe that the other side can become a credible counterpart and that bigger things can indeed be achieved.

In February 2000 we helped organise, as UN envoys to Colombia, the unprecedented 'Eurotour' to Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy and Spain of six commanders of the FARC guerrilla and an equal number of high-level Colombian Government officials. This was done to prepare for the scheduled peace negotiation later that year in a special zone in Southern Colombia, where the FARC could stay without being attacked. A long series of seminars on experiences from other peace processes, and on alternative models of governance and 'social justice' was organised.

The atmosphere among the two delegations was excellent throughout the long trip, but when the two groups of negotiators returned to the sceptical stay-behind majorities on both sides, the enthusiasm markedly cooled. Colombia became an example of an excessive pre-talks process, where a lot of public 'thematic meetings' and 'consultations' were held while the population at large saw no improvement in the bitter conflict realities prevailing outside of the confidence-building zone.

Similarly, it is important to help implement initial partial agreements if more substantive ones are to follow.

We thus provided on short notice a team of observers for the UN/EU co-chairmen of the peace conference for the former Yugoslavia – Thorvald Stoltenberg and David Owen – when the authorities in Belgrade gave in to foreign pressure and said they allowed internationally monitored sanctions on the Bosnian Serbs in September 1994. Within the first 48 hours, twenty observers were deployed along the Serbia/Montenegro borders. The work of this mission was seen as essential for credible sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs, inducing them to accept the peace plan of the Contact Group, which had been accepted by the Muslim and Croat forces. But the intransigence of the Bosnian Serb side was greater than anyone had expected, and we would see countless breaches of this and other agreements before the Serbs were forced to agree to the Dayton Accords.

Lesson Number 7:
Expect Numerous Setbacks

When an agreement is reached, the uphill marathon for peace has just started. It is so hard to get a compromise deal produced between bitter enemies that the damage potential of spoilers and 'enemies of the peace' is often underestimated. The process that culminated in the Oslo Accords and the subsequent negotiations were, for example, followed by foreseen and unforeseen crises and setbacks. Extremist groups on both sides repeatedly tried to derail the process, mounting terrible terrorist attacks, in Hebron, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and elsewhere. New settlements and border closures were also recurrent obstacles to have the two Oslo Agreements implemented. The process was thus soon way behind the original schedule, and the mutual confidence built during the Norwegian chan-

nel slowly but surely eroded. The counterforces were stronger than we originally expected.

Only two years after the first Oslo Agreement had been signed, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was murdered – shot in the back by a Jewish anti-peace fanatic during a demonstration in favour of the Oslo Accords. After Rabin died, a steep downhill slide took place. Rabin's successor, Simon Peres, lost the elections in May 1996 in part because of a relentless terror campaign launched by Hamas, which shared the same objectives as the Jewish extremist groups. Through a democratic election, Benjamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party took over a platform that was hostile to the implementation of the Oslo Accords. Since the mid-1990s living conditions have eroded and violence and hopelessness have mounted steadily in the Palestinian areas, and the bitterness between the two peoples has worsened.

Early on we saw that the understanding and trust that was reached between Rabin/Peres and Arafat/Mazen did not filter down to the ordinary man and woman as we had, perhaps naively, believed in 1993. Therefore, a new effort was launched in 1995, with the 'Oslo 2 Agreement', to promote co-operation between Israeli and Palestinian citizens in fields such as economics, cultural affairs and education. This people-to-people exercise was intended to do away with the stereotypical images of Israelis as 'brutal occupiers' and Palestinians as 'terrorists'. Norway was asked to facilitate these programmes, and more than a hundred bridge-building projects were initiated with youth groups, business people, academics and local politicians.

Lesson Number 8:
Stated vs Real Interests

It is a precondition for effective third-party interventions that the honest broker commands the trust and confidence of the parties to the conflict. An openness and ability to listen to and communicate with all sides is an essential part of conflict-resolution work. It is, however, equally important to understand that the declared positions of a party are very likely not representing their real interests. Very often the interlocutors among armed groups and negotiation teams will, consciously or unconsciously, exaggerate facts, misrepresent their positions or even lie about their goals to the face of the mediator. It may be an integral part of their negotiation tactics.

'At first I was inclined to believe the parties when they declared that their most sincere wish was to see an end to the bloodshed through a negotiated solution,' I remember that Thorvald Stoltenberg, the UN envoy to the Balkans, commented when we were conducting futile shuttle diplomacy between the Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1993. 'It made me unrealistically optimistic', he confessed. 'But soon you realise that too many of them had their real interests tied to continued conflict and a military solution.'

Indeed, in all of my ten conflict-resolution experiences, most of the leaders have for most of the time claimed their paramount goal was 'to do anything to end the suffering of the people'. In reality, there were always hidden political, economical, religious or purely personal motives that would have a strong influence on how the military, cultural or political leaders acted. For a warlord, a general or a guerilla commander, the prospect of a negotiated settlement can represent a very scary prospect: demobilisation, early retirement, no personal protection, investigations of past behaviour and, increasingly, possible war-crimes charges.

When I met the infamous leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, on the Sudanese-Congolese border in 2005, he knew that I knew that the only issue in his mind was the indictment of the International Criminal Court against him and his commanders for a host of war crimes. Still we discussed the cessation of hostilities, he detailed violations of that agreement by the government and I detailed the atrocities that they had committed against the civilian population. Only at the very end of our talks did Kony's deputy, Vincent Otti, bring up the ICC arrest order, to which I could only respond that I was not able to influence the ICC and their work. When the LRA two years later broke the cessation of hostilities and went underground yet again, the ICC charge was one of their arguments. Kony would want a deal that meant an impunity he cannot be given. Similarly, Serb Bosnian General Radko Mladić was a warlord with a big command structure and loyal soldiers during the war. Later he became a pathetic war criminal on the run. He never ever wanted to any compromise peace agreement.

Lesson Number 9:
Never Underestimate Tension Within
the Parties

A classic mistake in some academic studies on conflict resolution is to assume that we deal with coherent par-

ties with set or even static positions. The tug-of-war is between the parties, and they will meet somewhere towards a middle position. In reality, the internal clashes between doves and hawks, traditionalists and modernists, military and political wings within the parties may be as important for the final outcome as the initial positions of the main interlocutors.

During the Guatemala peace process, as well as during the Oslo peace talks between Israel and PLO, the need for 'time-outs' to reconcile the various conflicting views within the respective sides became bigger, and the breaks away from the table longer. The guerilla, at various points during the long and painful struggle, will have promised their stalwarts a revolutionary future society that will be very far away from whatever their old 'bourgeois oligarch' enemy can offer. Likewise, the government side will have portrayed the other side so often as 'criminals and terrorists' that there is a very clear limit to how far both political and public opinion is willing to go in accommodating the other side. Or, more correctly, it is soon clear that it varies widely how far the various factions are willing to go.

We often saw in the negotiations that an atmosphere of trust and affinity developed among the groups of individuals who spent hundreds of hours working, eating, quarrelling and joking together in the negotiations. This is not the case for the 'home-fronts', which often look upon the negotiating teams and their chief negotiators as soft or naïve. With only seven negotiators at the table during the Norwegian Channel between Israel and the PLO, a degree of

mutual understanding of the difficulties on the other side was developed. Since the inception of the official negotiations in June, the negotiators were, except for the change of one Palestinian mid-way, the same individuals. This provided for continuity and institutional memory, but also for a constant need to consult with the leaderships in Jerusalem and Tunis respectively, which often did not agree with the recommendations from the negotiators.

Similarly, the strong Guatemalan armed forces, as well as the very influential landowner association CASIF, did not like any of the compromise positions formulated by the UN mediators at the Oslo talks in 1994–96. They tried to block, from Guatemala, the signing of some of the partial agreements, even though the President of the Republic had given authorisation to the chief negotiator to finalise the deal. Likewise, there was a clear breach between the commanders and the rank-and-file guerillas, who still fought in the Guatemalan forests and mountains and who felt that the 'city-commanders' who lived in the comfort of Norwegian hotels were selling out the ideals that their comrades had fought and died for.

Lesson Number 10:
Implementing the Deal Is the Toughest Test
As the previous points have indicated, it is extremely hard to make parties to an armed conflict agree to a peace plan. It is, however, often even more difficult to implement the agreement. The many years of bitter conflict are likely to have created a climate of mistrust and suspicion that can be a poison when agreements on minority protection, return of refugees, integration

of ex-combatants and human rights protection and truth-finding of past abuse are to be realised.

The long years of battle are likely to have also raised unrealistic expectations of social and economic progress, security and law and order that are not possible to realise within the time that is usually set in the agreed implementation schedules. The so-called 'peace dividend' takes more time to realise that what is nearly always expected. The immediate post-war period is usually not one of economic growth. The integration of the fighters in civilian life is more costly than keeping them in their uniforms, and the introduction programmes to civilian work and studies are often unable to absorb the men who may only know one thing: how to fight.

The cease-fire and peace-implementation era is therefore more often than not one of massive disappointments for both the former fighters and the civilian population at large. 'Peace' may mean increased criminal violence by disaffected ex-soldiers and ex-guerillas, increased terrorism from anti-reconciliation fringe groups and economic downturns due to ill-fated agrarian reforms and expensive security sector reforms.

The lessons of the unsuccessful implementation of the Oslo Accords, as well as the Bosnian and Central American agreements, have been that the implementation efforts must be planned, in detail, long before the final pieces of the peace agreement itself is finalised. Without delay, massive investments in employment schemes, rebuilding programmes, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, and return of refu-

gees and protection of minorities have to be implemented. The international community, the UN agencies and the IFIs must be brought into the planning of peace implementation long before the armed groups and political leaders sign their agreements.

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Even if only one in a hundred efforts succeeds, coherent, systematic and carefully planned conflict-resolution work will be worth the investment. The world seems to allow more than thirty protracted conflicts to go on and on. The cost of this is too high, both in the suffering of the peoples involved, and for the international community that cannot contain the trafficking of drugs, arms and humans that conflicts generate within the larger community of peoples.

How the Arab Uprisings Beat al Qaeda

Fawaz A. Gerges

A month before he was killed in a US Navy SEAL team raid on his compound in May 2011, Osama bin Laden described the Arab Spring uprisings as a 'tremendous event', according to a cache of letters and documents seized from the al Qaeda leader's hideaway and recently released by American authorities. Bin Laden suggested launching a media campaign to incite 'people who have not yet revolted and exhort them to rebel against the rulers' while hoping to guide them away from 'half solutions' like secular democratic politics.

Contrary to the dominant terrorism narrative in the United States, the newly released documents show that bin Laden was deeply troubled by an apparent loss of Muslim public support, and a few months before his death he considered changing the name of al Qaeda to allow it to better exploit the Arab revolts of 2011. One of the major lessons learned from the small selection of documents (only 17 out of tens of thousands were made public) is that bin Laden, along with his very few surviving top lieutenants, was fully aware that al Qaeda's standing among Arabs and Muslims suffered a major setback and that rebranding his group was essential to its survival.

Indeed, long before the Arab uprisings the bin Laden group – as we might term its remnants – had lost the struggle for Muslim hearts and minds. In many countries, information about al Qaeda suspects now comes from citizens, including family members, friends and neighbours, not from surveillance and intelligence sources. This shift demonstrates a hardening of Muslim public sentiment against bin Lad-

en's men, as the preaching of a borderless jihad centred on terrorism stopped resonating with ordinary Muslims. Contrary to received wisdom in the West, there never was any swell of Muslim public support for bin Laden and his transnational jihadi contingent. More of a fringe phenomenon than a popular social movement, borderless jihad has never enjoyed a big constituency in Muslim societies. Although many Muslims critique US foreign policies, particularly involving the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, only a small segment condones a direct war with the West or the killing of non-combatants.

Yet even more than the killing of bin Laden, the Arab uprisings – in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain – have not only shaken the very foundation of the regional authoritarian order, but unravelled the standard terrorism narrative. As the Arab revolts gathered steam, al Qaeda was notably absent. Neither jihadist slogans and rituals nor its violent tactics found a receptive audience among the millions of Arab protesters.

Al Qaeda offers no economic blueprint, no political horizon and no vision for the future. While millions of Arabs demand effective citizenship, genuine elections and the separation of powers, al Qaeda considers elections and democracy 'heresy' and an 'evil principle'. Out of touch with the aspirations of millions of Arabs who called for political emancipation, Abu Yahya al-Libi, a top al Qaeda chief, lectured them against 'wasting the fruits of liberation' and pursuing democracy, because it is a 'road to hell'. Al-Libi, celebrated as a rising star among al Qaeda's

dying lieutenants, called for the establishment of an Islamic emirate on Quranic laws.

While al Qaeda's chiefs shun political participation and activism, preaching that only violence and terrorism will bring about political change, the new Arab uprisings are basically peaceful. There exists a fundamental clash between al Qaeda's ideology and tactics and the masses. The millions of Arabs who took to the streets openly have shown that politics matters and that peaceful protests are more effective at delivering change. The ballot box and parliamentarianism, not the sword and the caliphate, are their rallying cry, an utter rejection of what al Qaeda stands for. There are few Arab buyers for al Qaeda's sales pitch and the relatively peaceful revolutions represent a hard blow to al Qaeda ideology and violent tactics alike.

Trying to jump on the bandwagon of the protesters and appeal to them, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda's current emir, reminded Egyptians that before he escaped from the country, he 'had participated in many popular protests and demonstrations', including one 'in Tahrir Square in 1971'. Far from it. Several of Zawahiri's contemporary associates have told me that he never believed in political activism as a means to overthrow the secular Egyptian regime and did not even use the mosque for recruitment or mobilisation.

From a very young age, growing up during a period of profound socioeconomic and political change in Egypt in the 1950s and 60s, Zawahiri rejected the political process and waged a crusade against the

Egyptian government, a crusade that took him from a high school in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood in Egypt to the killing fields of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mass protesters in Egypt succeeded in toppling an autocrat by peaceful means where Zawahiri failed to do so by violent means in a lifetime.

Religious-based activists – such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunisia and the Party of Justice and Development in Morocco – are poised to take ownership of the seats of power in the Arab heartland in the coming years. But these Islamic modernists have little in common with al Qaeda, and most accept democratic values in shaping the future political trajectory of their societies. Mainstream Islamists of all colours avoid any association with al Qaeda like a plague. There is no Ayatollah Khomeini waiting in the wings to hijack the Arab revolts and seize power.

Despite repeated claims by Arab autocrats such as Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Gaddafi, Ali Abdullah Salah and Bashar al-Assad, al Qaeda not only did not spearhead the Arab uprisings but is distinguished by its absence. After recovering from the shock, al Qaeda leaders fully embraced the uprisings and welcomed the downfall of their archnemeses in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and now Syria. More importantly, they would like to ride the Arab revolts and take ownership of them. In his posthumous message, bin Laden expressed his 'happiness' and 'delight' with the demonstrators, saying the *umma* (the global Muslim community) had been waiting for the revolution for decades. He said he hoped the 'the winds of change will spread over the entire Muslim world' and liberate it from 'Western domination'.

In his eulogy of bin Laden, Zawahiri celebrated the 'the fall of corrupt and corrupting agents of America in Tunisia and Egypt, and the shaking of their thrones in Libya, Yemen and Syria'. He affirmed his support for the uprisings in Yemen and Libya and called upon the people not to be 'tricked' by American and Western support for the uprisings, particularly the NATO mission in Libya.

Aware of inherent contradictions between al Qaeda's ideology and the protesters', al-Libi, Zawahiri's right-hand lieutenant, described the uprisings as an extension of al Qaeda's prolonged struggle to expel Western influence from the Muslim world, 'a step of many efforts to reach the goal'.

Yet the Arab awakenings have reinforced what many of us have already known: al Qaeda's core ideology is intrinsically incompatible with the universal aspirations of the Arabs – including human rights and dignity, social justice, free elections, peaceful transition of leadership and separation of powers. The millions of protesters have neither burned American and Western flags nor blamed Western colonialism for their predicament. Focusing on internal, not external affairs, the broadly based mass protests called for restructuring Arab societies along pluralistic lines and putting an end to political authoritarianism. The key goal of the demonstrators was sociopolitical and economic transformation through the ballot box, as opposed to the bayonet and suicide bombing.

Bin Laden, Zawahiri and their associates were caught off guard by the storm and have laboured to understand its impact. Of all militants, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-Yemeni militant preacher killed by a US drone bomb in 2011, was candid and realistic, conceding that al Qaeda had nothing to do with the historical developments remaking the region. In an article titled 'Tsunami of Change', which appeared in his *Inspire* magazine in May 2011, Awlaki said that 'we do not know yet what the outcome would be, and we do not have to. The outcome doesn't have to be an Islamic government for us to consider what is occurring to be a step in the right direction.' [1]

Surely, Awlaki does not speak for al Qaeda, whose raison d'être is the establishment of Quranic-based emirates, not parliamentary- and presidential-based governments elected by a popular will. There are few Arab buyers for al Qaeda's sales pitch, and the relatively peaceful revolutions represent a hard blow to al Qaeda ideology and violent tactics alike.

The broadly based peaceful Arab uprisings have demolished al Qaeda's claim that the Islamist vanguard will spearhead revolutionary change in Muslim societies. On the whole, the revolts are peaceful, non-ideological and led by the embattled middle class, including a coalition of men and women of all ages and political persuasions: liberal-leaning centrists, democrats, leftists, nationalists and Islamists who accept the rules of the political game.

What the Arab revolts have shown is al Qaeda's deepening crisis of legitimacy and authority, a cri-

sis more detrimental to its future than the military defeat that it has suffered. Bin Laden and his successor, Zawahiri, neither speak for the *umma* nor exercise influence over Arab public opinion. The documents released by US authorities show that bin Laden, in his last dying days, recognised the gravity of the loss of Muslim opinion, though he was powerless and sidelined to halt the decline.

As the Arab revolts have left bin Laden's vanguard behind, the terrorism narrative has suffered an equally hard blow. The question is not why Muslims hate the US so much, as the conventional wisdom would have it after the September 11 attacks, but why Western pundits and policymakers underestimated the millions of Arabs and Muslims yearning for universal values such as human rights, the rule of law, effective citizenship and open and pluralistic societies?

So what remains of al Qaeda? Very little. Today it comprises roving bands limited to the mountains and valleys of Pakistan tribal areas along the Afghan border (where bin Laden was assumed to be hiding), remote areas in Yemen along the Saudi border, and the wastes of the African Sahara and the Maghreb. Its actions show a consistent pattern of ineptitude. Its leadership relies, increasingly, on half-hearted, inexperienced freelancers or unskilled, late-bloomer recruits.

Only a miracle will resuscitate a transnational jihad of the al Qaeda variety. The question is whether a civil war, which will ensue if democratic change does not come to those who demonstrated for it since

the early spring in 2011, will provide that miracle. Al Qaeda is a parasite that feeds on social instability and turmoil. If democratic transition is aborted in Arab countries, al Qaeda local branches might exploit the ensuing turmoil and spread their tentacles near and far. In particular, Yemen and Libya (and the raging war in Syria) are vulnerable because of their fragility of their institutions, lack of an effective centralised authority, and the presence of militants who subscribe to al Qaeda's ideology. US officials are anxious that extremists who subscribe to al Qaeda's ideology might manipulate the rocky transitions in these countries to establish a foothold and spread their influence.

1.
Anwar al-Awlaki, 'Tsunami of Change', *Inspire*, 29 May 2011, pp.50–53.

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The general tendency of the so-called 'terrorism experts' has been to focus on al Qaeda's violent ideology and neglect the wider context that decisively shapes how ideology operates. It is only by studying the social conditions that give rise to violent ideologies that one can shed light on the drivers behind them.

The Arab uprisings are essentially a reaction en masse to decades of authoritarianism, abuse of power and economic deprivation, as well to the absence of hope as a natural outcome of this structural crisis. Thus, the Arab Spring represents a fundamental challenge to the very conditions that fuel extremist ideologies. Time will tell if the Arab revolts will manage to fill the gap of legitimate political authority. If this happens, Arab opinion with deliver the final blow to al Qaeda and what it represents.

War Against the Earth

Vandana Shiva

We are in the midst of an epic contest – the contest between the rights of Mother Earth and rights of corporations and militarised states using obsolete worldviews and paradigms to accelerate the war against the planet and people. This contest is between the laws of Gaia and the laws of the market and warfare. It is a contest between wars against Planet Earth and peace with Earth.

There are planetary wars taking place with geo-engineering – creating artificial volcanoes, fertilising the oceans with iron filings, putting reflectors in the sky to stop the sun from shining on the Earth, as if the Sun were the problem, not man's violence against the Earth, and the arrogant ignorance in dealing with it.

In 1997, Edward Teller co-authored a white paper titled 'Global Warming and Ice Ages: Prospects for Physics-Based Modulation of Global Change', where he advocated the large-scale introduction of metal particulates into the upper atmosphere to apply an effective 'sunscreen'.[1] The Pentagon is looking to breed immortal synthetic organisms with the goal of eliminating 'the randomness of natural evolutionary advancement'. What is being done with the climate is being done with the evolutionary code of the universe, with total indifference for the consequences.

The Green Revolution, or
Industrial Agriculture as War

Violent thoughts shape violent actions. Violent categories construct violent tools. Toxic minds create a toxic world. And nowhere is this more vivid than in the metaphors and methods on which industrial agri-

culture and food production is based. Factories that produced poisons and explosives to kill people during the wars were transformed into factories producing agrichemicals after the wars. After World War I, manufacturers of explosives, whose factories were equipped for the fixation of nitrogen, had to find other markets for their products. Synthetic fertilisers provided a convenient conversion for peaceful uses of war products. Albert Howard identified this conversion as closely linked to the 'NPK mentality' of chemical farming.

> **The feature of manuring of the west is the use of artificial manures. The factories engaged during the Great War in the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen for the manufacture of explosives had to find other markets, the use of nitrogenous fertilisers in agriculture increased, until today the majority of farmers and market gardeners base their manorial programme on the cheapest forms of nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), and potassium (K) on the market. What may be conveniently described as the NPK mentality dominates farming alike, in the experimental stations and in the countryside. Vested interests entrenched in time of national emergency, have gained a stranglehold.[2]**

After the World Wars, there was cheap and abundant fertiliser in the west, and US companies were anxious to ensure higher fertiliser consumption overseas to recoup their investment. The fertiliser push was an important factor in the spread of the new seeds, because wherever the new seeds went, they opened up new markets for chemical fertilisers. Fertilisers came from explosive factories. In Oklahoma and Afghanistan, in Mumbai and Oslo, they were retooled to make fertiliser bombs. And fertilisers are implicated in the violence against the atmosphere. N_2O – 300 times more deadly as a climate changing gas than CO_2.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) woke the world up to the connection between pesticides, which were war chemicals, and the silencing of the bird song.[3]

The war mentality underlying military-industrial agriculture is evident from the names given to herbicides which destroy the economic basis of the survival of the poorest women in the rural areas of the Third World. Monsanto's herbicides are called 'Round Up', 'Machete', 'Lasso'. American Home Products, which has merged with Monsanto, calls its herbicides 'Pentagon', 'Prowl', 'Scepter', 'Squadron', 'Cadre', 'Lightening', 'Assert', 'Avenge'. This is the language of war, not sustainability. Sustainability is based on peace with Earth.

Pesticides are made to kill. From Bhopal to Kasargod, the toxic legacy of industrial agriculture continues.

In 1984, the worst industrial disaster killed 3,000 when a gas from a pesticide plant of Union Carbid leaked in Bhopal. 30,000 have died since then, hundreds of thousands have been crippled for life, and the Bhopal victims are still fighting for justice.

The Green Revolution has been sold to us as a miracle which increased food production. However, the Green Revolution did not produce more food, because food includes cereals and pulses and oil

seeds and vegetables, not just rice and wheat. And the diversity of crops was destroyed to create the chemical monocultures of rice and wheat. Overall, nutrition per acre went down, and toxics per acre went up. The Green Revolution myth is based on hiding both the food production lost, and the costs of the burden of environmental toxicity that Punjab caries to provide toxic food to the nation.

Today, Punjab is the toxic capital of India. The monocultures of rice and wheat are a perfect breeding ground for pests. And the use of toxic pesticides has kept escalating in Punjab. While pests are not a problem in ecologically balanced agriculture, in an unstable agricultural system they pose a series of challenges to agronomy. The metaphor for pesticide use in agriculture then becomes war. As an introduction to a text book in pest management states:

> **The war against pests is a continuing one that man must fight to ensure his survival.**
> **The war story described some of the battles that have been fought and the continuing guerilla war, the type of enemies we are facing, and some of the maneuvers for survival.[4]**

However, seeing biodiversity as 'enemies' which have to be killed with lethal chemical weapons is wrong for two reasons. Firstly, it fails to control pests. Secondly, the toxics boomerang to harm humans, since humans are part of the food chain.

Pesticides, which started as war chemicals, have failed to control pests. They have in fact led to emergence of new pests, and emergence of resistance in old pests, requiring increased pesticide use. Pesticides create pests by destroying the pest-predator balance.

Having destroyed nature's mechanisms for controlling pests through the destruction of diversity, the 'miracle' seeds of the Green Revolution became mechanisms for breeding new pests and creating new diseases. The treadmill of breeding new varieties runs incessantly, as ecologically vulnerable varieties create new pests which create the need for breeding yet newer varieties. The only miracle that seems to have been achieved by the Green Revolution is the creation of new pests and diseases and with them the ever-increasing demand for pesticides. Yet the new costs of new pests and poisonous pesticides were never counted as part of the 'miracle' of the new seeds that modern plant breeders had gifted the world in the name of increasing 'food security'.

Genetic engineering was supposed to provide an alternative to toxic chemicals. Instead it has led to increase in use of pesticides and herbicides. It has failed as a tool to control and has instead created super pests and super weeds, because it is based on violent tools that rupture the resilience and metabolism of the plant and introduce genes for producing toxins or tolerating higher doses of toxins. There are so far only two tools used to transfer genes from one organism to another – one is the use of a gene gun, the other is the use of a cancer infection. This is biological warfare at the genetic level.

Besides perpetrating violence against the genetically modified plant, genetic engineering also unleashes

violence against the environment and health. Genes for herbicide resistance and Bt-toxin spread to other plants through pollination, creating a new form of pollution which we have named 'biopollution' and 'genetic pollution'. And instead of compensating farmers whose crops were polluted, Monsanto uses pollution to claim 'intellectual property' and accuse the farmers of 'piracy'. This happened to Percy Schmeiser of Canada. The toxins in Bt-crops are killing butterflies and bees, soil organisms and animals. The spread of herbicide-resistant crops has destroyed biodiversity and is causing birth defects. GM crops have been found to lead to allergic reactions, and affect fertility.

When independent scientists bring these impacts to public knowledge, they are hounded out of their jobs and institutions, as happened with Arpad Putzai. This is a war against knowledge and science.

Genetic engineering has also unleashed a war against farmers. Instead of controlling pests, Bt-cotton has led to the emergence of new pets and a thirteen-fold increase in pesticide use. The farmers suffer twice over. Costly seeds and costly chemicals push them into debt trap, and debt pushes them to suicide. 200,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1997. Most of these suicides are concentrated in the cotton belt, and 95 per cent of cotton is now Monsanto's Bt-cotton.

On 8 September 2006, nine farmers' unions of Punjab organised a Public Hearing on Farmers Suicides. I was invited as a member of the citizens' jury. The Diwan Hall of Gurdwara Haaji Rattan was overflowing with a sea of women – all widows of suicide victims. The farmers' organisations had collected information on 2,860 suicides, and mobilised family members to give evidence at the public hearing. This was building on an earlier Public Hearing organised by Navdanya on 1 and 2 April 2006.

42-year-old Sukhbir Singh of Chak Sadoke, block Jalalabad, District Ferozepur ended his life on 26 October 2003 by jumping into a river because he was unable to pay a debt of Rs 1.9 million in spite of selling seven acres of land. He left behind him a widow with two children. 21-year-old Harjinder Singh of Ratla Thark, who lost his seven acres to money lenders, ended his life by consuming pesticides. 60-year-old Jeet Singh of the same village burnt himself to death. 28-year-old Hardev Singh of Urmmat Puria in Hoga drank pesticide on 12 July 2002 when he could not clear his loan of Rs 0,7 million even after selling eight acres. 26-year-old Avatar Singh of Machika Village died on 28 March 2006 after consuming pesticide. 48-year-old Jagtar Singh of Doda in Mukstar left behind a widow and daughter after drinking pesticide to end his life. He had sold two acres to partially pay a debt of Rs 150,000. 28-year-old Raghubir Singh mortgaged four acres, could not clear hid loan, and ended his life on 28 April 2004 by consuming pesticide. His mother, widow and two children are left to struggle. There are innumerable cases of farmers' suicides, and to show how farmers are paying corporate led globalisation with their lives, Navdanya brought out its report 'Seeds of Suicide'.

One by one the women came to share their pain, their loss, their tragedy. The names were different, the faces were different, but the tragedy was one, the avoidable tragedy of poisoning farmer's fields and farmers lives for profit.

Suicide by drinking the lethal and debt creating pesticide took the lives of

Gurjit's husband Budh Singh
Baljit Kaur's husband Thail Singh
Karamjit's husband Bhola Singh
Manjit Kaur's husband Sunder Singh
Gurmeet's husband Gudu Singh
Paramjit's husband Pritpal
Gurdayal Kaur's husband Jarnail Singh
Sukhpal's husband Gurcharan Singh
Jeet Kaur's husband Gurmeet Singh
Malkeet's husband Nishatar,
Tel Kaur's husband Nirpal
Sarabjit's husband Prem Singh
Jagat Kaur's husband Balbir
Surjeet Kaur's husband Dilwar Singh
Kulwinder Kaur's husband Sindoore Singh
Manjir Kaur's husband Chattar Singh
Amarjeet's husband Pappi
Jasbir's husband Nirpesh Singh
Sukhdev Kaur's husband Birpal
Paramjeet's husband Pappi Singh
Sukhdev Kaur's husband Balwant Singh
Daljit Kaur's husband Sumukh
Harbans Kaur's son Gurmeet
Baldev Kaur's son Mewa Singh
Beant Kaur's husband Jailer Singh

Tej Kaur's husband Buttu Singh
Jasbir Kaur's son Jagga Singh
Tej Kaur's husband Mitti Singh
Jasbir Kaur's husband Kishan Singh
Charanjeet Kaur's husband Mahadev Singh

…and there were thousands more. The pesticides, which had created debt, also became the tool for ending indebted lives.

As I heard the widows telling unending stories about how they had lost their dear ones, their land and their hopes in the vicious cycle of debt, my mind went back to 1984, when I started to ask questions about the Green Revolution because of the violence of extremism and terrorism that had overtaken this prosperous and proud land of five rivers ('Punj' means five, and 'ab' river).

And those who survive suicide in Punjab are dying of cancer. There is a 'cancer' train that leaves Punjab for cancer treatment of villagers from Punjab in a charitable hospital in Bikaner. This toxic economy is the 'gift' of the Green Revolution. And this toxic gift was also behind the tragedy of Bhopal. Pesticides are designed to kill – and from Punjab to Bhopal, they have killed thousands.

Our bread basked in Punjab does not have to be an epicentre of toxicity. The people of Bhopal did not need to die. There is a non-violent alternative to the violence of the first Green Revolution and the second Green Revolution. The alternative is biodiverse organic farming, which we practise and promote

through Navdanya. Contrary to the propaganda, biodiverse ecological systems produce more food and nutrition than chemical monocultures.

It is time to give up the false model of food security which is killing our children through malnutrition, killing our farmers through debt, and killing people from Punjab to Bhopal because of the unnecessary use of toxic poisons in farming. We can be free of both hunger and toxics.

There are alternatives to Bt-cotton and toxic pesticides. Through Navdanya we have promoted Organic Farming and 'Seeds of Hope', to help farmers move away from Monsanto's 'Seeds of Suicide'.

Organic farmers in Vidharbha are earning Rs 6,287 per acre on average, compared to Bt-cotton farmers who are earning Rs 714 per acre on average. Many Bt-cotton farmers have a negative income, hence the suicides.

Technologies are tools. When the tool fails it needs replacing. Bt-cotton technology has failed to control pests or secure farmers' lives and livelihoods. It is time to replace GM technology with ecological farming. It is time to stop farmers' suicides.

On 17 April 2011, World Peasant Day, I joined the victims of Kasargod in Kerala for a conference. Shahina, who has lost her brother and is herself severely crippled, opened the meeting with the following words, uttered in a weak and trembling voice:

India is my country. I am proud to be Indian. But the stand of India to oppose the global proposal for the ban of the dreadful poison Endosulfan is heavily painful to me. Pure air, pure water, pure food are the rights of any citizen. Hence ban of this poison is the basic duty of the Government. I feel ashamed in the fact that my country is supporting this, in spite of 81 countries opposing it. I demand my Government to implement the Endosulfan Ban on national level in the forthcoming COP at Geneva. I demand India shall cast the first vote for the ban of Endosulfan.

The Government needs to listen to Shahina's quivering voice and respect the victims of Endosfulan, while making India a proud leader in environmental and health protection by banning Endosulfan nationally and taking necessary steps to ensure that India votes in the Endosulfan ban at the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to be held in Geneva.

The Government of Kerala has already imposed a ban on Endosulfan. A survey done by the Kerala State Health Department has identified 4,000 victims. 175 specialists from 11 departments of medical colleges screened the patients in 17 camps. In spite of these surveys and the scientific knowledge that Endosulfan is a neuro-toxin, a carcinogen and an endocrine disruptor which leads to reproductive disorders and congenital malformation, the pesticide lobby continues to talk of Endosulfan as 'harmless'. Their influence on the Agriculture Ministry has led the Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to block the national ban as well as international ban on Endosulfan. Sharad Pawar has misled Parliament, falsely stating that there was opposition from some states to a national ban. However, RTI activists have found

that no state government has written to the centre opposing a ban.

The corruption of decision-making and the corruption of science by the pesticide lobby and its protectors in government have already caused 1,000 people to lose their lives. It is time for this corruption to stop. Ecological agriculture that we promote in Navdanya is a safe and sustainable alternative that is poison free. Instead of killing people in Bhopal and Kasargod through pesticides, the government should promote life-enhancing organic farming. Organic agriculture is a healthy solution, an environmental solution and a solution to hunger, as our report 'Health per Acre: Organic Solution to Hunger and Malnutrition' shows.[5]

On 26 April 2011, Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan went on a fast to ask the central government to ban Endosulphan. Around the same time, the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP), which was signed in 2001, met in Geneva to take a decision on a ban on Endosulphan. India got an 11-year transition time, while most countries supported a ban. However, the war of poisoning our farms, food and bodies continues. (The Supreme Court of India put an interim ban on Endosulfan in May 2011.)

Genetic Engineering as War Against the Farmers, Biodiversity and Ecosystems

An epidemic of farmers' suicides has spread across four states of India over the last decade. According to official data, more than 250,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995. These four states are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab. The suicides are most frequent where farmers grow cotton and have been a direct result of the creation of seed monopolies, first with hybrids, followed by Bt-cotton.

Increasingly, the supply of cottonseeds has slipped out of the hands of the farmers and the public system, into the hands of global seed corporations like Monsanto. The entry of seed MNCs was part of the globalisation process. Under World Bank pressure and WTO rules India was forced to open its seed sector to global companies. This is how Monsanto entered India and introduced Bt-cotton.

Corporate seed supply implies a number of shifts simultaneously. Firstly, giant corporations start to control local seed companies through buyouts, joint ventures and licensing arrangements, leading to a seed monopoly.

Secondly, seed is transformed from being a common good, to being the 'intellectual property' of Monsanto, for which the corporation can claim limitless profits through royalty payments. For the farmer this means deeper debt.

Thirdly, seed is transformed from a renewable regenerative, multiplicative resource into a non-renewable resource and commodity. Seed scarcity and seed famines are a consequence of seed monopolies, which are based on the non-renewability of seed, beginning with hybrids, moving to genetically engineered seeds like

Bt-cotton, with the ultimate aim of creating 'terminator' seeds which are engineered for sterility. Each of these technologies of non-renewability is guided by one factor alone – forcing farmers to buy seed every planning season. For farmers this means higher costs. For seed corporations it translates into higher profits.

Fourthly, the creation of seed monopolies is based on the simultaneous deregulation of seed corporations, including biosafety and seed deregulation, and super-regulation of farmers' seeds and varieties. Globalisation allowed seed companies to sell self-certified seeds, and in the case of genetically engineered seeds, they are seeking self-regulation for biosafety. This is the main aim of the recently proposed Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India, which is in effect a Biosafety Deregulation Authority. The proposed Seed Bill 2004, which has been blocked by a massive nationwide Gandhian Seed Satyagraha by farmers, aims at forcing every farmer to register the varieties they have evolved over millennia. This compulsory registration and licensing system robs farmers of their fundamental freedoms.

State regulation extinguishes biodiversity, and pushes all farmers into dependency on patented, corporate seed. Such compulsory licensing has been the main vehicle of destruction of biodiversity and farmers' rights in US and Europe.

Fifthly, corporate seeds impose monocultures on farmers. Mixed crops of cotton with cereals, legumes, oilseeds or vegetables are replaced with a monoculture of Bt-cotton hybrids.

The creation of seed monopolies and with it the creation of unpayable debt to a new species of money lender, the agents of the seed and chemical companies, have led to hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers killing themselves since 1997.

The suicides first started in the district of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. Peasants in Warangal used to grow millets, pulses, oilseeds. Overnight, Warangal was converted to a cotton-growing district based on non-renewable hybrids which need irrigation and are prone to pest attacks. Small peasants without capital were trapped in a vicious cycle of debt. Some ended up committing suicide.

This was the period when Monsanto and its Indian partner Mahyco were also carrying out illegal field experiments with genetically engineered Bt-cotton. We at the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology used these laws to stop Monsanto's commercialisation of Bt-cotton in 1999, which is why approval was not granted for commercial sales until 2002. The Government of Andhra Pradesh filed a case in the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP), India's Anti Trust Law, arguing that Monsanto's seed monopolies were the primary cause of farmers' suicides in Andhra Pradesh. Monsanto was forced to reduce its prices of Bt-cotton seeds.

The high costs of seeds and other inputs were combined with falling prices of cotton due to a $4 billion subsidy from the US, and the dumping of this subsidised cotton on India by using the WTO to force India to remove Quantitative Restrictions on agri-

cultural imports. Rising costs of production and falling prices of the product is a recipe for indebtedness, and debt is the main cause of farmers' suicides. This is why farmers' suicides are most prevalent in the cotton belt, which, according to the seed industry's own claim, is rapidly becoming a Bt-cotton belt. Hybrid seeds and Bt-cotton is thus heavily implicated in farmers' suicides.

<u>Ecological Agriculture as Making
Peace with the Earth</u>

Just as the food crisis is a consequence of a food system designed for profits, greed and control, we can redesign the food system for sustainability and food justice.

And this redesigning is precisely what we are doing at Navdanya. Over twenty years of research and practice, we are finding that biodiverse ecological production systems are the solution to hunger and malnutrition, to the agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides, to the erosion of soil, water and biodiversity, and to the climate crisis.

The Green Revolution and genetic engineering have been offered as 'intensive' farming, creating a false impression that they produce more food per acre. However, industrial agriculture is *chemically intensive*, *fossil fuel intensive* and *capital intensive*. The former produce more toxics and greenhouse gases, the latter more debt.

To produce more food and nutrition, we need to design production systems which are *biodiversity intensive* and *ecologically intensive*. Biodiversity-intensive systems produce more food, nutrition and health per acre than industrial chemical monocultures. And by saving on costs of external inputs, they create more wealth per acre for farmers. When measured in terms of contribution to nutrition, health and rural incomes, industrial systems have very low productivity.

Not only is the measure of productivity of industrial agriculture partial because all inputs, including resource and energy inputs are not taken into account. It is also partial because not all outputs are taken into account. Only the production of monoculture commodities is counted.

Green Revolution systems have high 'yield', but low output. And it is output that feeds the soil and people, not the yield of globally traded commodities which are used for biofuel or animal feed.

Instead, ecological agriculture is based on mixed and rotational cropping, and the production of a diversity of crops. Navdanya's work on biodiverse farming has shown that the more biodiversity on the farm, the higher the output.[6]

Perhaps one of the most fallacious myths propagated by Green Revolution protagonists is the assertion that HYVs have reduced the acreage, therefore preserving millions of hectares of biodiversity. Perpetuating this myth, Dennis Avery, a promoter of chemical farming has recently written, 'Is the Green Movement finally ready to face the global need to triple crop yields

and drop its dedication to land selfish organic farming? The planet's biodiversity is at stake.'[7] India's experience tells us that instead of more land being released for conservation, by destroying diversity and multiple uses of land the industrial system actually increases pressure on the land, since each acre of a monoculture provides a single output and the displaced outputs have to be grown on additional acres. And, globally, the chemical-intensive, land-extensive system has had to spread to the Amazon rainforest. This is not land-saving, or biodiversity-conserving. It is land-destroying and biodiversity-destroying agriculture.

The polycultures of ecological agricultural systems have evolved because more output can be harvested from a given area planted with diverse crops than from an equivalent area consisting of separate patches of monocultures. For example, in plantings of sorghum and pigeon pea mixtures, one hectare will produce the same yields as 0.94 hectares of sorghum monocultures and 0.68 hectares of pigeon pea monoculture. Thus one hectare of polyculture produces what 1.62 hectares of monoculture can produce. This is called the 'land equivalent ratio' (LER).[8]

Increased land-use efficiency and higher LER has been reported for polycultures of: millet/groundnut, 1.26; maize/bean, 1.38; millet/sorghum, 1.53; maize/pigeon pea, 1.85; maize/cocoyan/sweet potato, 2.08; cassava/maize/groundnut, 2.51.[9] The monocultures of the Green Revolution thus actually reduced food yields per acre previously achieved through mixtures of diverse crops. This falsifies the argument

often made that chemically intensive agriculture and genetic engineering will save biodiversity by releasing land from food production. In fact, since monocultures require more land, biodiversity is destroyed twice over – once on the farm, and then on the additional acreage required to produce the outputs a monoculture has displaced. Further, since chemicals kill diverse species, chemical agriculture can hardly be promoted as conserving biodiversity.

Not only is the productivity measure distorted by ignoring resource inputs and only focussing on labour, it is also distorted by looking only at a single and partial output rather than the total output.

A myth promoted by the one-dimensional monoculture paradigm is that biodiversity reduces yields and productivity, and monocultures increase yields and productivity. However, since yields and productivity are theoretically constructed terms, they change according to the context. 'Yields' usually refers to the production per unit area of a single crop. Planting only one crop in the entire field as a monoculture will of course increase its yield. Planting multiple crops in a mixture will have low yields of individual crops, but will have high total output of food.

The Mayan peasants in Chiapas, Mexico are characterised as unproductive because they produce only 2 tonnes of corn per acre. However, the overall food output is 20 tonnes per acre. In the terraced fields of the high Himalayas, women peasants grow jhangora (barnyard millet), marsha (amaranth), tur (pigeon pea), urad (black gram), gahat (horse gram), soya

bean (glysine max), bhat (glysine soya), rayans (rice bean), swanta (cow pea) and koda (finger millet), in mixtures and rotations. The total output, even in bad years, is six times higher than industrially farmed rice monocultures.

Not only do biodiverse intensive and ecologically intensive produce more food per acre, they produce much higher nutrition per acre.

For example, a mixed organic farm in the Himalaya produces 9,000 kg of maize, radish, mustard greens and peas. A chemically farmed maize monoculture yields 5,000 kg. This is 1,000 kg more maize than the biodiverse system, but 4,000 kg less food. In terms of nutrition per acre, the biodiverse farming system is much more productive than the chemical monocultures. It provides 305 (g) of Ca and 29.3 (g) of iron compared to the monoculture.

Similarly, a biodiverse intensive system with mandua (finger millet), jhangora (barnyard millet), gahat (horsegram) and bhatt (indigenous soya) gives 1,400 kg of food per acre compared to a chemical rice monoculture, which yields 1,200 kg. In terms of nutrition, the former gives 338 kg of protein compared to 90 kg in the monoculture. The biodiverse intensive system gives 2,540 mg of carotene compared to 24 mg in the monoculture, and 554 mg of folic acid compared to 0 in the rice monoculture. Calcium is 3,420 g compared to 120 g. Iron is 100.8 compared to 38.4, phosphorus is 6,103 compared to 2,280, magnesium is 2389 compared to 1,884, potassium is 4,272 compared to 0.

A baranaja (twelve crop) system produces 2,680 kg of food per acre compared to 2,186 of a maize monoculture. In terms of protein, the production is 4,214 versus 242 kg, carbohydrate 1,622.94 versus 1,447.14, fat 131.8 kg versus 78.7 kg, energy 9,359,470 kcal versus 7,476,120 kcal. In terms of vitamins, baranaj produces 1,360.9 mg versus 1,967 mg beta Carotene in case of maize monoculture, folic acid 2,206.3 mg to 437 mg. Minerals are – calcium 5,052 g versus 218 g, iron 143.9 g versus 50.3 g, phosphorus 9,505 g versus 7,607 g, magnesium 3,604 g versus 3,038 g, potassium 11,186 g versus 6,252 g.[10]

Since providing nutrition and nourishment are the main aims of agriculture, nutrition per acre is a more accurate measure of productivity than yield of a single commodity in a monoculture. Also, the higher nutrition in biodiverse intensive farms further intensifies the ecological processes.

The nutrients produced by plants become food for humans and food for the soil organisms, which in turn feed the plants that feed the humans and the soils. The perennial nutrient cycle continues to be sustained, and can even by intensified through biodiversity intensification and ecological intensification.

A model of nutrients for soils based on heavy inputs of non-renewable NPK impoverishes the soil, our diets and our health. In any case, industrial sources of non-renewable NPK are running out. Ecological nutrients are renewable, they will last forever, and we can actually increase their availability by increasing the biodiversity of soil organisms and plants.

The main argument used for the industrialisation of food and corporatisation of agriculture is the low productivity of the small farmer. Surely these families on their little plots of land are incapable of meeting the world's need for food! Industrial agriculture claims that it increases yields, hence creating the image that more food is produced per unit acre by industrial means than by the traditional practices of small holders. However, sustainable diversified small-farm systems are actually more productive.

Industrial agriculture productivity is high only in the restricted context of a 'part of a part' of the system, whether it be the forest or of the farm. For example, 'high-yield' plantations pick one tree species among thousands, for yields of one part of the tree (e.g. woodpulp), whereas traditional forestry practices use many parts of many forest species.

'High-yield' Green Revolution cropping patterns select one crop among hundreds, such as wheat, for the use of just one part, the grain. These high partial yields do not translate into high total yields, because everything else in the farm system goes to waste. Usually the yield of a single-crop like wheat or maize is singled out and compared to yields of new varieties. This calculation is biased to make the new varieties appear 'high-yielding' even when, at the systems level, they may not be.

Traditional farming systems are based on mixed and rotational cropping systems of cereals, pulses and oil seeds with different varieties of each crop, while the Green Revolution package is based on genetically

uniform monocultures. No realistic assessments are ever made of the yield of the diverse crop outputs in the mixed and rotational systems.

Productivity is quite different, however, when it is measured in the context of diversity. Biodiversity-based measures of productivity show that small farmers can feed the world. Their multiple yields result in truly high productivity, composed as they are of the multiple yields of diverse species used for diverse purposes. Thus productivity is not lower on smaller units of land: on the contrary, it is higher. In Brazil, the productivity of a farm of up to 10 hectares was $85 hectare, while the productivity of a 500-hectare farm was $2 per hectare. In India, a farm of up to 5 acres had a productivity of Rs 735 per acre, while a 35-acre farm had a productivity of Rs 346 per acre.

Diversity produces more than monocultures. But monocultures are profitable to industry, both for markets and political control. The shift from high productivity diversity to low productivity monocultures is possible because the resources destroyed are taken from the poor, while the higher commodity production brings benefits to those with economic power. The polluter does not pay in industrial agriculture, neither in the chemical era nor in the biotechnology era. Ironically, while the poor go hungry, it is the hunger of the poor which is used to justify the agricultural strategies which increase their hunger.

Diversity has been destroyed in agriculture on the assumption that it is associated with low productivity. This is however, a false assumption both at the

level of individual crops as well as at the level of farming systems. Diverse native varieties are often as high yielding or more high yielding than industrially bred varieties. In addition, diversity in farming systems has higher output at the total systems level than one-dimensional monocultures.

Comparative yields of native and Green Revolution varieties in farmers' fields have been assessed by Navdanya, a Seed Conservation Movement. Green Revolution varieties are not higher yielding under the conditions of low capital availability and fragile ecosystems. Farmers' varieties are not intrinsically low yielding, and Green Revolution varieties or industrial varieties are not intrinsically high yielding.

The measurement of yields and productivity in the Green Revolution, as well as in the genetic engineering paradigm, is divorced from seeing how the processes of increasing single species, single function output affect the processes that sustain the condition for agricultural production, both by reducing species and functional diversity of farming systems and by replacing internal inputs provided by biodiversity with hazardous agrichemicals. While these reductionist categories of yield and productivity allow a higher measurement of harvestable yields of single commodities, they exclude the measurement of the ecological destruction that affects future yields and the destruction of diverse outputs from biodiversity-rich systems.

Productivity in ecological farming practices is high if it is remembered that these are based on internal inputs, as very little external inputs are required. While the Green Revolution has been projected as having increased productivity in the absolute sense, when resource utilisation is taken into account, it has been found to be counterproductive and resource inefficient.

What does all this evidence mean in terms of 'feeding the world'? It becomes clear that industrial breeding has actually reduced food security by destroying small farms and the small farmers' capacity to produce these diverse outputs of nutritious crops. Both from the point of view of food productivity and food entitlements, industrial agriculture is deficient as compared to diversity-based internal input systems. Protecting small farms which conserve biodiversity is thus a food security imperative.

Data shows that, everywhere in the world, biodiverse small farms produce more agricultural output per unit area than large farms. Even in the US, small farms of 27 acres or less have 10 times greater dollar output per acre than larger farms. It is therefore time to switch from measuring monoculture yields to assessing biodiversity outputs in farming systems.

Thus both at the level of individual peasant farms and at national level, the Green Revolution has led to a decline in food security. The same applies to the Gene Revolution. What the Green Revolution achieved was an increase in industrial inputs, which, of course, created growth for the agrichemical and fossil-fuel industry. But this increased consumption of toxins and energy by the agricultural sector did not translate into more food.

Today, most of the one billion people who lack adequate access to food are rural communities whose entitlements have collapsed either due to environmental degradation or due to livelihood destruction and negative terms of trade. Food security is therefore intimately connected to the livelihood security of small rural producers. There are proven alternatives to industrial agriculture and genetic engineering, and these are based on small farms and ecological methods. Sound resource-use combined with social justice is the path of sustainability in agriculture that we should be taking.

The higher productivity of diversity-based systems indicates that there is an alternative to genetic engineering and industrial agriculture – an alternative that is more ecological and more equitable. This alternative is based on the intensification of biodiversity – intensifying through integrating diverse species rather than chemical intensification, which promotes monocultures and, unlike its ecological alternative, fails to take all outputs of all species into account.

As Navdanya's work on biodiversity-based organic farming shows, India could feed twice its population through biodiversity intensification.[11]

The UN report submitted to the General Assembly on 20 December 2010 also confirms that ecological agriculture produces more food: 'resource-conserving, low-external-input techniques have a proven potential to significantly improve yields'. [12]

* * *

We can make Peace with the Earth while taking care of human needs. The Rights of the Earth and Human Rights go hand in hand, because humans are part of the Earth, not apart from it. The biggest war of our times is the War against the Earth. The biggest peace-making in our times needs to become making peace with the Earth. And we can begin this peace-making on our farms and our kitchens.

Material Proportionality

Eyal Weizman

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The Humanitarian Present

Having survived the butchery of a gruesome battle, Candide escapes the army and comes upon his long-time tutor Pangloss. The two decide to set out on a sea-journey. A tempest wrecks their ship, killing almost all aboard. Pangloss and Candide are washed ashore in Lisbon upon a plank.

> **Hardly do they set foot in the city … than they feel the earth tremble beneath them; a boiling sea rises in the port and shutters the vessels lying at anchor. Great sheets of flames and ash cover the streets and public squares; houses collapse, roofs topple on to foundations, and foundations are levelled in turn; thirty thousand inhabitants without regards to age or sex are crushed beneath the ruins.[1]**

But master Pangloss, emerging from under a pile of the city's rubble – drawings of which later generations will regard as the 'first media representations of a distant catastrophe'[2] – argues that there is no effect without a cause. He explains to Candide that divine calculations, obscure to the human mind, mean that all that happened is 'for the very best'. For Pangloss, of course, all was always for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Voltaire's grotesque satirical adventure novel continues across seas and continents in witnessing the cruelties, violence and destruction of both the human and divine order: from war in Europe through storms and earthquakes to the colonialism of the eighteenth century in the Americas. Indeed across the Atlantic our two protagonists observe how the Jesuits in Paraguay, claiming to have arrived there to save the indigenous peoples, actually abuse and enslave them. The destruction was also an impe-

tus for the taking of control – the reorganisation of society and economy as the reorganisation of urbanism in Lisbon, but also beyond in the colonies, and colonialism merging the grid and the colony.

Candide was written in the wake of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, tsunami and fire, and in the middle of the Seven Years' War that wreaked havoc across Europe and its American colonies. This destructive sequence prompted Voltaire to challenge and ridicule Leibnizian optimism and with it the concept of 'necessity', which implies that destructive events somehow serve an invisible and mysterious purpose in a world in which the relationship between good and evil is always optimal. Leibniz himself was two decades buried when the Lisbon earthquake struck, but it was he who had proposed the scheme of 'the best of all possible worlds' in order to reconcile all the apparent evils in the world – floods, starvations, wars, storms, tsunamis, epidemics, pandemics, earthquakes, fires and other phenomena we now like to refer to as 'emergencies' – with the idea of divine providence, which is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent – all powerful, knowing and good.[3] Leibniz's attempt to solve this age-old theological aporia involved a conception of God as an economist that managed the world by solving a minimum problem in the calculus of variations. Choosing for the optimum combination of elements involves a constant monitoring of the world, a task undertaken by examinining its smallest of units – which Leibniz called 'monads'. These are substances that contain the imprint of all worldly relations, powers and effects. With this 'divine forensics', God infers from these fragments what is happening everywhere in the universe. The examination is of course not about a crime or other forms of imperfection in the present or past – all things that do exist are necessarily the best possible things – but rather it is the condition for choosing the best next possible world in the future.[4]

Divine examination, evaluation, calculation and choice operate thus within a complex economy in which good and bad could be transferred and exchanged. Because in this economy all bad things necessarily appear at their minimum possible level, the world as lived is always necessarily the best of all possible worlds. 'If a lesser evil is relatively good', Leibniz reasoned, 'so a lesser good is relatively evil… to show that an architect could have done better is to find faults in his work.'[5]

If this description of the economy of divine government is already reminiscent of the logic of contemporary wars, with its own scales of risk and proportionality used to evaluate the desired and undesired consequences of military acts, it is hardly surprising to find in it an early reflection on the concept of 'collateral damage'. Earlier Christian theology has indeed already described all bad things that take place as 'the collateral effects of the good'. In this immanent order of human and divine life, the destructive result of floods are nothing but the collateral effect of necessary rain. In both their theological and military contexts, as Giorgio Agamben observed, the collateral effects are structural rather than accidental. It is through the collateral – flood or

blood – that a government – divine or human – can demonstrate, indeed exercise, its power. [6]

Unlike the calculations of a God, seen by the philosophers and the theologians of the eighteenth century as a perfect mathematician who could undertake instantaneous calculation and immediatly arrive at a precise result, mere humans must of course guess, speculate and hedge their risks as they proceed towards the future as the blind leading the blind. It is for this reason that they ceaselessly seek to develop and perfect all sorts of technologies and techniques that allow to calculate the effects violence and control its consequences. Through them, Pangloss's Leibnizian scheme – or is it Leibniz's Panglossian scheme? – of the 'best of all possible worlds' re-emerges in the progressive tradition of liberalism. Here, in its secularised form, political rather than metaphysical, a similar structure of the argument sets up the sphere of morality as a set of calculations aimed to approximate the optimum proportionality between common goods and necessary evils.[7] But as the general outlook of liberalism shifted from Voltaire's and indeed Jeremy Bentham's focus on the 'greater good' and the responsibility of government to increase happiness to the greatest number of people, to the liberal *canards* of 'just wars', and their increasingly sophisticated technologies for minimising the number of 'necessary' corpses, the search for 'the best of all possible worlds' started giving ground to our neo-Panglossian justification of the 'least of all possible evils'.

Pangloss's Law

Within the frame of international humanitarian law the clearest manifestation of the 'lesser evil' principle is the principle of *proportionality*. This principle is embedded in almost every civil legal code. Different versions of it have been used to describe different types of balancing acts, most often in situations when some rights contradict others, or when individual rights are weighed against public interests, or against administrative or economic policies.[8] Within the context of IHL, however, proportionality is a moderating principle that seeks to constrain the use of force.[9] The principle was implicit in most international conventions on the use of force, but was formally codified only in 1977, in Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions. The protocol's wording prohibits 'an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be *excessive* in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated'.[10] Proportionality thus demands the establishment of a 'proper relation' between 'unavoidable means' and 'necessary ends'. While considering the choice of military means, the principle calls for a balance to be established between military objectives and anticipated damage to civilian life and property. Proportionality is thus not about clear lines of prohibition but rather about calculating and determining balances and degrees. In incessantly calculating for the least of all means *possible*, it embodies something of Pangloss's principle.

The purpose of proportionality is not to strike a perfect balance, but rather to ensure that there is no excessive imbalance. It is about the 'too much' – but how much is too much? Although violence is in constant need of measurement, the principle of proportionality provides no scale, no formulas and no numerical thresholds. Instead, it demands assessment on a case-by-case basis, within parametres that are always relative and immanent. It demands the estimation of aims, impacts and side-effects, intended and unintended consequences – which is also to say, the measurement of 'lesser' and 'greater' evils, their exchange and sometimes even transfer – in an economy of a real or imaginary 'worst case scenario' and in an attempt to keep the overall level of violence to the minimum necessary. By opening a field of equivalence, in which different forms of potential and actual violence, risk and damage become exchangeable, proportionality approximates an algorithmic logic of computation – although, still, in practice, it is rarely computed.

Military lawyers and experts in international humanitarian law are the first to accept the fact that the predictions required for proportionality analysis are always contingent, immanent and prone to subjective interpretations. Contemporary military debates about IHL concern precisely the impossibility of bringing together in practice the legal demand that violence be measured, and the impossibility of doing so. Like the finance specialists who, acknowledging the impossibility of prediction, do little else than calculate, the economists of violence are weighing their options and hedging their risks under the assumption of unpredictability and uncertainty. It is the very act of calculation – the fact that calculation took place – that justifies their action. Indeterminacy, the very principle that makes the economies of liberal capitalism generates profit, or burst after a sequence of failures, is also central to the conduct and potential outcomes of the 'war on terror'.

But along with the growing capacity of technological means also grows the incalculability of their consequences. Some military lawyers think that indeterminacy will always work in their favour. Others, allergic to the idea of vagueness, see in technology an opportunity to dispel inherent uncertainties and incalculability. Daniel Reisner, former head of the International Law Division in the Israeli military, is of the latter kind. In a conversation he described to me the problems of calculating the economy of violence on the proportionality principle, and later his attempts to dispel something of the ethical/legal fog surrounding the question.

> Proportionality is a complex logic with many variables – but how do you compare these? There is no choice but to ask the question, compare and calculate. Proportionality does not tell us what to include in the calculation, what is the equation and what is the exchange rate. Should a man of combatant age be counted as a civilian? If so, does he count for more or for less? How do you count women in relation to men? How do you count the death of children? Does one dead child equal one dead grownup, or does he equal five grownups? As a lawyer I need numbers to work with. I need thresholds in order to instruct the soldiers. Any number could become a useful benchmark. But when the ground of the law is shaking I am also unstable.[11]

The legal definition of civilian does not, of course, involve any distinctions by gender and age; civilian life is civilian life and children are legally considered equal to adults. But lawyers' insistence on the fine details of a necro-economy, and the conversion rates between people of different genders and ages, is explained by the fact that proportionality has become a means to an end: measuring the public legitimacy of an act of violence. In this arena there is indeed a different meaning attached to the killing of children or women.

Lacking any other criterion for measurement, death ratio is one of the gruesome ways in which proportionality is calculated and managed in practice. It has its macabre side effects, too. In a 2002 meeting of a team of experts on law and military ethics, Reisner challenged his colleagues to an experiment. He asked each of them what ratio of 'collateral civilian death' – how many civilians killed – they considered to be legitimate in the context of a specific scenario that he recounted, of an armed militant about to be killed by the Israeli military. Each of his colleagues wrote down a number of civilian deaths they would accept as legitimate under the principle of proportionality. The numbers were then counted and collated, and an average was calculated. It was 3.14 – very approximately the mathematical constant π, whose value is the ratio of a circle's circumference relative to its diameter in Euclidean space. Another instance of calculation, while not referring directly to proportionality, embodies the grotesque logic of necro-economy in practice. In 2002, while still a general in the Israeli military, Itzhak Ben Israel, now a professor of physics at the Tel Aviv University and chairman of Israel's space agency, was in charge of the weapons and technological infrastructure research and development directorate. There he developed an equation based on systems theory in order to predict the necessary number of people the Israeli military must eliminate from a militant organisation by arrest or targeted assassinations in order to defeat it. The formula was $Q=1-(q \ln q + 1/q \ln 1/q)$. In this equation, which seeks to apply the entropic behaviour of molecules in gas state to military and political matters, Q is the probability the organisation will collapse and q is the percentage of militants you kill. To put it simply, if you kill (or neutralise in other ways) 20 to 25 per cent of the members of an organisation, there is an 85 per cent likelihood that the confusion and knowledge-loss caused will lead to the collapse of the organisation. If you kill 50 per cent, the formula has it, there is a 100 per cent probability that it will collapse.[12]

Proportionality's system of calculations approximates models applied in the insurance industry to assess risk. Risk analysis developed indeed as a means of determining the probabilities of bad things occurring, their potential for damage and their spatial or systemic distribution. For the military, risk is the means of determining the probability of destruction and injury to personnel and equipment and their potential severity. Risk is also central to the calculation of proportionality, especially when attempts to minimise civilian casualties is measured against risk to soldiers. The 'trade of' of risk means that reducing risk to the attacking military tends to increase the risk to civilians. One of the primary examples for this

'risk transfer war' was NATO's bombing of Kosovo and Belgrade in 1999. This was mainly due to the decision to conduct high-altitude aerial attacks that reduced the danger to NATO air force, but dramatically increased it for the civilians on the ground. The result – no combat fatalities among NATO forces compared with five hundred civilians killed by the bombardment – was understood by many international law scholars as an indication of a breach of the proportionality principle. This case also demonstrated that the balance expected in proportionality has a territorial dimension. Different calculations, formulas, balances and death ratios are deemed appropriate to state militaries in different zones of action and across different borders.[13]

Calculating Machines for the Reduction of Evil

Could IHL ever produce operational software that guides the behaviour of robotic weapons? Reisner has recently joined a group of software engineers and military officers in an effort to develop what he describes as 'mathematical tools to tackle the problems of proportionality, something akin to an automatic system for military ethics and international law handled by software'.[14] He is aware of actual and potential opposition to this system, both within and outside the military. 'Initially these systems would help officers in decision-making in real-time situations, but in cases of automatic and robotic warfare the calculations and decisions would be taken by the machines themselves, in conformity with the laws of war'. When confronted by a critique articulated on humanist grounds – to the effect that these weapons could not have 'human compassion' or the capacity for 'human judgement', he retorts by pointing to human fallibilities, cruelty and excess. He is convinced that his 'system would not only be as good as humans but rather better than them: cooler and more precise within the purview of a law-driven paradigm'. Even in this chess game, the computer is expected to beat its programmer.

Reisner emphasised two of the advantages that might come with the computation of proportionality. First, thresholds could be numerically defined, and the ratio of acceptable civilian casualties to military deaths could be decided in advance, facilitating planning. Second, a computer system would be without 'the tendency for cruelty that some individuals have'. In this Reisner might have been thinking about research by the US scientist Ronald Arkin, a leader in the field of weaponised robotics who worked to develop and promote 'ethical' robotic warfare on similar grounds. Arkin also explains that robots have no joy in violence. They do not get angry, scared or panicked under fire – the states of mind in which excess might lead to war crimes – but most importantly they are expendable: they do not have to defend themselves at the risk of others. A robot would have no problem making the ultimate ethical choice and destroying itself. Arkin describes the ethical/legal algorithms that would govern the life and death of robots as something akin to a governor in a steam engine. Just as the governor shuts down the engine when it runs too hot, the 'ethical governor' would operate as an artificial stop-action, or self-destruct option, in the ethical/legal domain when a

numerical threshold gets crossed or when rules of engagement and battlefield protocols are about to be breached.[15] In this argumentation the 'rational' self-sacrifice of the machine is understood as the perfect mirror image of the 'irrational' self-sacrifice of the suicide bomber. Furthermore, in situations such as Israel's occupation of Gaza, where an increased number of robotic technologies are employed to police and control an increasingly famished population, the assumed higher ethical position of robotic and other high-technology killing emphasises the growing distance between the post-human coloniser and the barely human colonised.

In contemporary warfare, however, robots could not be thought of as singular instruments but as parts of a flexible and synergic network of heterogeneous components consisting of human, automatic and semi-automatic components. Because military action gradually becomes more systematic – in the sense that it is undertaken by a diffuse assemblage of sensors, automatic weapons, computers and optics together with human operators, overseers and regulators, it also becomes increasingly hard to isolate individual responsibility and liability in the traditional way. As one of the legal advisers for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recently told me,

> **within complex military systems, even when the most serious violations of IHL are committed it is often not possible to identify individual war criminals. Where information is dispersed among multiple actors there may be no individual perpetrator to whom to attribute fault. Thus it is only deviant behaviour that could be prosecutable.**

But deviant behaviour, rather than the systemic organised violence of the state military, is what the military itself might prosecute. 'Deviants who breach the military's own rules and undermine its discipline are a problem to the military. But it is the systemic violence and not these "rotten apples" that is the main cause of suffering inflicted on civilians.'[16] Therefore, from the perspective of a possible legal defence of a soldier accused of violating IHL, a situation might arise where it would be advisable to adopt a counterintuitive strategy: instead of arguing that he exhibited his humanity by doing less than he could have done or was ordered to do – the lesser evil justification – he might propose the opposite: that he actually did more or worse than what he was asked to. The breach of the techno-civilised logic of computation and calculations could thus be argued as madness itself.

An Ethical Governor

The analogy of the ethical governor is a revealing one. When enacted by state militaries as a self-imposed form of restraint, the 'minimising' function of humanitarian law often coincides with other military objectives. As legal scholar David Kennedy suggested, 'humanitarian law becomes a blueprint for military efficiency: it regulates how the military would best achieve its objectives without unnecessary use of force'.[17] Containing the number of civilian casualties is often seen as a useful strategy. A high proportion of casualties might fuel rage or resistance in ways that hinder a military's ability to govern effectively. Adherence to the proportionality principle helps focus the power of limited means. Thus it is in its

moderation, rather than in its unrestrained application of power, that state violence becomes effective. The calculations of proportionality as a technique of management and government – the management of violence and the government of populations – is undertaken by the powerful side 'on behalf' of those it subjugates. Moreover this power is in fact grounded in the very ability to calculate, count, measure, balance and act on these calculations. Inversely, to make oneself ungovernable, one must make oneself incalculable, immeasurable, uncountable.

The current textbook for US counterinsurgency – the infamous Field Manual FM 3-24, drafted in 2005 under the command of General David Petraeus, and used in Baghdad and Afghanistan by him and Stanley McChrystal to implement the surges – is perhaps the best example of a collusion of interests between general international humanitarian law and human rights principles on the one hand, and the demands of military efficiency on the other. Sarah Sewall, then director of Harvard University's Carr Center for Human Rights, co-sponsored and co-organised the military 'doctrine revision workshop' for the purpose of drafting this manual and was one of its most enthusiastic supporters.[18] In her introduction to the Chicago University Press version of the manual, Sewall announced it as the product of an 'unprecedented collaboration [between] a human rights centre partnered with the armed forces'. Military actions that cause civilian deaths are, she stated, 'not only morally wrong but tactically self-defeating'.[19] 'A short-term focus on minimising risks to counterinsurgent forces**,** she writes, 'can ironically increase the risks

to the larger campaign, including the longer-term vulnerability of US forces'. In this way, the manual allowed humanitarian law and human rights principles to become tools in the hands of an occupying military in trying to win over civilian populations – to become a technique of government. Before he was relieved of his duties by President Obama, General Stanley McChrystal was one of the manual's most devoted followers and, as chief of NATO forces in Afghanistan, its implementing arm. In his initial address to the US military in Afghanistan McChrystal explained how adherence to mitigating principles of the law would be militarily effective: 'Our strategy cannot be focused on seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces; our objective must be the population […] we run the risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage.'[20] The new kind of soldier he thought must be a social worker, an urban planner, anthropologist and psychologist. It was such comments that prompted a prominent military historian to describe contemporary war as 'social work with guns'.[21] These processes are applicable insofar military violence is understood as intervention in, rather than a replacement of, politics. Contemporary militaries see urbanised environments as complex social fields saturated by pre-existing conflicts. It is the very nature of urban areas – with their tendencies to density, congestion, diversities and heterogeneity – to foster conflicts in which different social, national or ethnic groups are at permanent conflict with each other. When military violence is introduced into a field that is already saturated with violence, it seeks to extenuate and unleash the poten-

tial conflicts already latent within the city in political, sectarian or communitarian form. The military would then sometimes refer to aerial bombing as the 'injection of kinetic energy into the fabric of social relations'.

Indeed, when using the population's well-being as part of a military calculus, we must be aware of the stick that hides behind any carrot. Any utilitarian use of humanitarian and human rights principles must acknowledge the possibility of its inverse and the speed by which such inversion could occur. If protecting civilians is used as a way of convincing people to comply with military government, at other times inflicting pain on them might usefully achieve the same ends – such as in situations when militaries want to force civilians to exert political pressure on their governments or militants for example. According to this logic, harming civilians is not only a 'regrettable' collateral product of military counter-insurgency, but part of an overall logic of this form of military government – as seen, infamously in Fallujah in 2004, in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008–09, when this pressure was thought to weaken resistance by hurting its civilian base. Increasing the harm to civilians can be undertaken and monitored using the same tools conceived to reduce it.

War of the Mad

Military violence, then, endeavours not only to bring death and destruction to its intended targets but also to communicate with its survivors – those that remain, those not killed. The laws of war have become one of the ways in which military violence is interpreted by those who experience it, as well as by global bystanders. It could thus be said to have a pedagogical pretension. It is a violence that should not only convince but also manufacture the possibility for conviction. In contemporary war, the principle of proportionality has become the main translator of the relation between violence, law and its political meaning.

The communicative dimension of military threats can function only if gaps are maintained between the possible destruction that an army is able to inflict and the actual destruction that it does inflict. It is through the constant demonstration of the existence and size of this gap that a military communicates with the people it fights and occupies. Sometimes the gap opens wide, such as when the military governs the territories it occupies – its violence in a state of potential, existing as a set of threats and possibilities that are not, for the time being, actualised. In a state of war the gap closes – but rarely does it do so completely. Even in the most brutal of wars, something of the gap still exists as the stronger side restrains and moderates its full destructive capacity. Restraint is also what allows for the possibility of further escalation, an invitation for those people receiving violence to make their own cost-benefit calculation and opt for consent. A degree of restraint is thus part of the logic of almost every military operation: however bad military attacks may appear to be, they can always get worse. The size of the gap is measured also against 'the potentiality of the worst' – an outburst of performative violence without rules, limits, proportion or measures – which has to be demonstrated

from time to time. This necessarily creates a precedent against which all other bad events are understood, and measured. With the initial recording of 'the worst', its reappearance, as Hannah Arendt commented, becomes ever more likely.[22]

The gap thus communicates the potential for destruction without the need for further violence. When the gap between the possible and the actual application of force closes completely, violence loses its function as a language. War becomes total war – a form of violence stripped of semiotics, in which the enemy is expelled, killed or completely reconstructed as a subject. Degrees in the level of violence are precisely what makes war less than total. Game theory, as applied by military think tanks since the early Cold War days of RAND, is conceived to simulate the enemy's responses, and help manage the gap between actual and potential violence. This practical form of military restraint is now often presented as the adherence to the laws of war.

While symmetric interstate warfare assumes a language that is well understood by both parties, and a rational basis for calculating the losses and profits of war, colonial violence presupposes that the language itself has to be constructed. Colonial wars have often been total wars, because the people colonised were not perceived to share the same humanity as the colonisers, and were therefore not seen as a party capable of rational behaviour and discourse. These wars are not about an enemy that has to be convinced but about an irrational people that has to be either reconstructed or killed. In these pedagogical wars, it is the *disproportional* violence of the madmen that is reserved. If proportionality stands for the ethical, rational aspect of war, in which the economy of balances functions well, then breaking this economy is intended as a message of a different order and magnitude.[23] 'We will wield disproportionate power against every village from which shots are fired on Israel, and cause immense damage and destruction. […] This is not a suggestion. This is a plan that has already been authorised'.[24] Similar statements by members of the Israeli security establishment and politicians, including the Prime Minister, proliferated in the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War with Hezbollah, and in anticipation of the 2008 invasion of Gaza where such violence was actualised. Disproportionality – the breaking of the elastic economy that balances goods and evils – is violence in excess of the law, and one that is directed at the law. Disproportional violence is also the violence of the weak, the governed, those who cannot calculate and are outside of the economy of calculations. This violence is disproportional because it cannot be measured and because, ultimately, having its justice not reflected in existing law, comes to restructure its basis altogether.

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Sharon Sliwinski, 'The Aesthetics of Human Rights', *Culture, Theory & Critique*, vol.50, no.1, 2009, pp.23–39.

3.
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4.
Thanks to Hito Steyerl for this illuminating point.

5.
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7.
John Rawls, 'Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol.14, no.3, 1985, pp.233–51.

8.
Martti Koskenniemi, 'Human Rights Mainstreaming as a Strategy for Institutional Power', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, vol.1, no.1, Fall 2010, pp.48–49. On the abuse of the proportionality principle, see Aeyal M. Gross, 'The Construction of a Wall between The Hague and Jerusalem: The Enforcement and Limits of Humanitarian Law and the Structure of Occupation', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, no.19, 2006, pp.393–440.

9.
Jus ad bellum proportionality focuses on whether the overall legitimate objectives of a war are outweighed by the total damage (to civilians as well as military objectives) anticipated. *Jus in bello* proportionality, in contrast, is much narrower; it focuses on specific attacks during the campaign, and asks whether the incidental civilian deaths, or the incidental damage to civilian objects caused unintentionally in the process of attacking legitimate military objectives, outweigh the military advantages anticipated as a result of the specific attack.

10.
Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. Author's emphasis.

11.
Daniel Reisner interviewed by the author by telephone, London to Tel Aviv, 15 December 2010.

12.
Yotam Feldman, *The Lab*, Channel 8 films (Israel), 2011. Ben Israel: 'There is a mathematical formula that allows us to measure the amount of components within a system that we need to target in order for it to lose its information and collapse […] the optimal is around the 20 to 25 per cent […] for the entire system to collapse. Out of the list of terrorist that conduct operations about 20 to 25 were hit and their system collapsed in the West Bank'.

13.
For proportionality analysis in areas where a military has effective control or feels it can commit to ground operation and can conduct ground operation for the purpose of an arrest, say, the calculus is different from that in which a military does not have such control, and chooses to conduct a targeted operation with civilian casualties.

14.
Daniel Reisner interviewed by the author, *op. cit.*

15.
Ronald C. Arkin, 'Ethical Robots in Warfare', *Technology Research News*, 9 December 2005. See also Armin Krishnan, *Killer Robots: Legality and Ethicality of Autonomous Weapons*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009.

16.
Eitan Diamond in conversation with the author, 11 February 2011.

17.
David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp.235–323.

18.
The manual is available from http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf (last accessed on 30 March 2012).

19.
Sarah Sewall, Introduction, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

20.
Initial United States Forces – Afghanistan (USFOR-A) Assessment Commanders Summary, http://globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2009/090830-afghan-assessment/090830-afghan-assessment-01.htm (last accessed on 30 March 2012). This was also sourced by a Pentagon programme, called the Human Terrain System, which employed anthropologists in research with the idea that the military should have a deeper understanding of the cultures and societies in which it conducts its counterinsurgency campaigns. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said, 'The net effect of these efforts is often less violence across the board and fewer hardships and civilian deaths'. 'Patricia Cohen, Panel Criticizes Military's Use of Embedded Anthropologists', *The New York Times*, 3 December 2009.

21.
'Rather than a giant computer game, modern war turned out to be more like social work with guns'. Andrew Bacevich, 'Social Work with Guns', *London Review of Books*, vol.31, no.24, 17 December 2009. See also Tom Hayden, 'Kilcullen's Long War', *The Nation*, 2 November 2009.

22.
'Once a specific crime has appeared for the first time, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been'. Hannah

Arendt, 'Epilogue', *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, p.273. Alexander García Düttmann termed this the potentiality of the worst. Alexander García Düttmann, 'The Worst, the Better and the Lesser of Two Evils: Some Thoughts on Revolution and Literature', lecture at Goldsmiths, University of London, 19 October 2010.

23.
Even in its negation – articulated in the use of the term 'disproportionate' – the reference to the law is invoked. Human rights scholar Thomas Keenan offers a more subtle interpretation about the relation between law and violence. Being in control and out of control, upholding and violating international law, are not diametric opposites. Rather, they are complementary actions undertaken in relation to the law, and demonstrate the power of interna-

tional humanitarian law to condition the battlefield as a discursive field. Disproportionality is thus a relation between violence and law that is more complex than mere disregard. The threat of projecting force in excess of calculations resonates precisely because it has been articulated against the backdrop of the legal principles of proportionality. Disproportionality affirms the law in its violation. See Thomas Keenan, 'Going Wild: Language, War, and Translation', paper given at Excess of Order, Pericentre, Cairo, January 2010.

24.
Gabriel Siboni, 'Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War', *INSS Insight*, no.74, 2 October 2008. After the end of the Gaza attack Prime Minister Ehud Olmert explained that this doctrine will become Israel's guiding principle in future wars:

'Our response will be *disproportionate*. We won't go back to the rules that the terrorist organisations tried to dictate'. Israel Channel 2 News, 1 February 2009 (in Hebrew), available at http://mako.co.il/ news-military/ security/Article- 34a14179ie03f11004. htm (last accessed on 30 March 2012). The Goldstone report also insisted that Israel waged 'a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever-increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability'. The report is available from http://www2. ohchr.org/english/ bodies/hrcouncil/ specialsession/9/ docs/UNFFMGC_ Report.pdf (last accessed on 30 March 2012).

Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions and Street Politics

Judith Butler

With this title, I have laid out three concepts that seem to form a cluster of ideas, suggesting from the start that ideas that matter may well form in clusters, bound up with other ideas in new ways and with new historical significance. But I want to pause and think about what such a reflection can be, and attempt to set aside some of the misconceptions that can easily arise from such a title. It may be thought that I will say that bodies on the street are a good thing or that we should celebrate mass demonstrations, and that bodies together on the street form a certain ideal of community or even a new politics worthy of praise.[1] Though sometimes bodies assembled on the street are clearly cause for joy and even hope, let us remember that the phrase 'bodies on the street' can refer equally well to right-wing demonstrations, to military soldiers assembled to quell demonstrations, and to formations of military occupation. So, from the start, we have to be prepared to ask under what conditions do we find bodies assembled on the street to be cause for celebration, or what forms of assembly actually work in the service of realising greater ideals of justice and equality.[2] Minimally, we can say that those demonstrations that seek to realise justice and equality are worthy of praise. But even then, we are called upon to define our terms, since, as we know, there are conflicting views of justice, and there are surely many disparate ways of thinking and valuing equality. Two more problems immediately present themselves: in certain parts of the world, political alliances do not, or cannot, take the form of street assemblies. We need only consider conditions of intense police surveillance or military occupation. Crowds cannot swell on the streets without risking imprisonment, injury or death under such

conditions, and so alliances are sometimes made in other forms, ones that seek to find ways to minimise bodily exposure at the same time that demands for justice are made. And hunger strikes within prisons, as we saw in Palestine in the Spring of 2012, also constitute forms of resistance that must take place in spaces of enforced confinement, understood as bodily demands for public space and public freedom. So let us remember that heightened bodily exposure is not always a political good or, at least, not always the most successful strategy for an emancipatory movement. Further, we have to consider as well that some forms of political assembly do not take place on the street or in the square, precisely because streets and squares do not exist, or do not form the symbolic centre of that political action. For instance, a movement may be galvanised for the purposes of establishing adequate infrastructure – we can think about the continuing shantytowns of South Africa, Kenya, Pakistan, the temporary shelters constructed along the borders of Europe, but also the *barrios* of Venezuela or the *barracas* of Portugal. These are populated by groups of people, including immigrants, squatters and/or Roma, who are struggling precisely for running water, working toilets, paved streets, for work and necessary provisions. So the street is not a site that we can take for granted for certain kinds of public assemblies; it is also a public good for which people fight – an infrastructural necessity that forms one of the demands of certain forms of popular mobilisation.

And yet, I think we can see that in such situations, with or without streets, some basic requirements of the body are at the centre of political mobilisations.

And we could certainly make a list of those: bodies require food and shelter, protection from injury and destruction and freedom to move, employment, health care; bodies require other bodies for support and for survival. It matters, of course, what age those bodies are, and whether they are able-bodied, since in all forms of dependency bodies require not just one other person, but social systems of support that are complexly human and technical. But if I argue this, another set of questions also emerges: are we speaking only about human bodies? And can we speak about bodies at all without the environments, the machines and the complex systems of social interdependency upon which they rely, all of which form the conditions of their existence and survival? And finally, even if we come to understand and enumerate the requirements of the body, do we struggle only for those requirements to be met? Or do we struggle as well for bodies to thrive, and for lives to become livable? One demand is that bodies have what they need to survive, for survival is surely a precondition for all other claims we make. And yet, it seems that we survive precisely in order to live, and life, as much as it requires survival, must be more than survival in order to be livable.[3] So, a second demand is precisely for a livable life. How, then, do we think about a livable life without positing a single or uniform ideal for that life? It is not a matter, in my view, of finding out what the human really is, or should be, since it has surely been made plain that humans are animals, too, and that their very bodily existence depends upon systems of support that are both human and non-human. So, to a certain extent, I follow my colleague Donna Haraway in asking us to think about the complex relationalities that consti-

tute bodily life, and to suggest that we do not need any more ideal forms of the human, but rather more complex ways of understanding that set of relations without which we do not exist at all.[4]

Bodily Mobilisations

Perhaps I have already gotten ahead of myself, or perhaps I keep lagging behind the topic that forms the purpose of this essay. But I wanted to pause at the beginning to make sure that there are no unnecessary misunderstandings. Although there are those who will say that active bodies assembled on the street constitute a surging multitude, one that in itself constitutes a radical democratic event or action, I only partially agree with that view. There are all sorts of surging multitudes I would not want to endorse (even if I do not dispute their right to assemble), and they would include racist or fascist congregations and mass movements. The final aim of politics is not simply to surge forth together, constituting a new sense of the 'people' even if sometimes, for the purposes of radical democratic change – which I do endorse – it is important to surge forth in ways that claim and alter the attention of the world for some rather specific purposes. After all, something has to hold such a group together, some demand, some felt sense of injustice and unlivability, some shared intimation of the possibility of change, and that change has to be fuelled by a resistance to, minimally, existing and expanding inequalities, ever-increasing conditions of precarity for many populations both locally and globally, forms of authoritarian and securitarian control that seek to suppress democratic processes and movements. On the one hand, there are bodies that assemble on the street or online or through other less visible networks of solidarity, especially in prisons, whose political claims are made through forms of solidarity that may or may not appear directly in public space; on the other hand, there are mobilisations that emerge in public that make their claims through language, action, gesture and movement, through linking arms, through refusing to move, to forming bodily modes of obstruction to police and state authorities. A given movement can move in and out of the space of heightened exposure, depending on its strategies and the military and police threats it must face. In each of these cases, however, we can say that these bodies forms networks of resistance together, remembering that bodies are not just active agents of resistance, but also fundamentally in need of support. Equally, they are not just in need of support, but also capable of resistance. In some ways, the task of this essay will be to think through this plural predicament of requiring and demanding support for bodily vulnerability and this mobilisation of bodies in the plural in the practices of resistance.

When such movements work, they themselves provide provisional support to facilitate the broader demand for forms of enduring support that make lives livable. The demand is at once enacted and made, exemplified and communicated. Bodies assemble precisely to show that they are bodies, and to let it be known politically what it means to persist as a body in this world, what requirements must be met for bodies to survive, and what conditions make a bodily life, which is the only life we have, finally livable.

It is not, then, exclusively or primarily as subjects bearing abstract rights that we take to the streets. We take to the streets because we need to walk or move there, we need streets to be structured so that, whether or not we are in a chair, we can move there, and we can pass through that space without obstruction, harassment, administrative detention, fear of injury or death. If we are on the streets, it is because we are bodies that require infrastructural support for our continuing existence, and for living a life that matters. Mobility is itself a right of the body, but it is also a precondition for the exercise of other rights, including the right of assembly itself.

So, if I caution from the start against an easy celebration of active bodies, I caution as well against the idea that activism requires that we think of the body only as active. If the body were by definition active, then we would not need to struggle for the conditions that allow the body its free activity in the name of social and economic justice. That struggle presumes that bodies are constrained and constrainable. But there is another point, which has to do with the way the idea of bodily vulnerability enters into the formation of coalitions that seek to counter precarity. Although I do not want to posit an idea of the body as primarily or exclusively vulnerable, I do think that we cannot understand the forms of interdependency that constitute our bodily lives if we do not understand the relation between vulnerability and those forms of activity that come to constitute our survival, our flourishing, as well as our political resistance. Indeed, even in the moment of actively appearing on the street, we are vulnerable. This is especially true for those who

appear on the street without permits, who are opposing the police or the military or other security forces without weapons. Although one is shorn of protection, to be sure, one is reduced to some sort of 'bare life'. On the contrary, to be shorn of protection is a form of political exposure, at once concretely vulnerable and potentially and actively defiant. How do we understand this connection between vulnerability and defiant resistance within activism?

Feminism and Vulnerability
Of course, feminist theorists have for a long time argued that women suffer social vulnerability disproportionately.[5] And though there is always a risk in claiming that women are especially vulnerable – given how many other groups are entitled to make the same claim – there is perhaps something important to be taken from this tradition. The claim can sometimes be taken to mean that women have an unchanging and defining vulnerability, and that kind of argument makes the case for the provision of paternalistic protection. If women are especially vulnerable, then they seek protection or protected status, and it becomes the responsibility of the state or other paternal powers to provide that protection. According to that model, feminist activism not only petitions paternal authority for special dispensations and protections, but affirms that inequality of power that situates women in a powerless position and, by implication, men in a more powerful one. And where it does not literally put 'men' in the position of providing protection, it invests state structures with the paternalistic obligation to facilitate the achievement of feminist goals. Such a view is very different from one that claims, for

instance, that women are at once vulnerable and capable of resistance, and that vulnerability and resistance can, and do, happen at the same time, as we see in certain forms of feminist-self-defence,[6] or even in certain openly political movements of women in the public sphere where they are not generally allowed to appear (trans women in Turkey), or where they suffer harassment or injury by virtue of appearing as they do (and this would include Muslim women wearing full veils in France, for instance).

Of course, there are good reasons to argue for the differential vulnerability of women; they suffer disproportionately from poverty and literacy, two very important dimensions of any global analysis of women's condition (and two reasons why none of us will be 'post-feminist' until such time as these conditions are fully overcome). So the question that emerges, and forms the focus of this essay, is how to think about the vulnerability of women in conjunction with feminist modes of agency, and how does such a conjunction shed light on global conditions of precarity as well as emerging possibilities of global alliance against precarity?

The need to establish a politics that avoids the retrenchment of paternalism seems clear. At the same time, if this resistance to paternalism objects to all state and economic institutions that provide social welfare, then the position becomes self-defeating. Hence, this task is made all the more difficult now that state structures and institutions that provide basic human services in Europe and the US are losing their own resources, thus exposing more populations to homelessness,

unemployment, illiteracy and inadequate health care. Hence, the struggle, in my view, is how to make the feminist claim effectively that such institutions are crucial to sustaining lives at the same time that feminists resist modes of paternalism that reinstate and naturalise relations of inequality.

Although the value of vulnerability has been important to feminist theory and politics, this does not mean that vulnerability serves as a differentiating characteristic of women as a group. This means neither that women are more vulnerable than men nor that women value vulnerability more than men do. Rather, certain kinds of gender-defining attributes, like vulnerability and invulnerability, are distributed unequally under certain regimes of power, and precisely for the purpose of shoring up certain regimes of power that disenfranchise women. We think about goods as distributed unequally under capitalism, as natural resources, especially water are, but we should also surely consider that one way of managing populations is to distribute vulnerability unequally in such a way that 'vulnerable populations' are established within discourse and policy. More recently, we note that social movements and policy analysts refer to precarious populations, and that political strategies are accordingly devised to think about ameliorating conditions of precarity.[7] As we extend the economic notion of 'unequal distribution' to broader social and cultural spheres, we are confronted, especially during times of war, with the uneven grievability of populations, that is, the idea that certain lives, if lost, are more worthy of memorialisation and public grieving than others. Populations targeted for injury and destruction in war are consid-

ered ungrievable from the start, but so too are populations whose labour is episodic and precarious, or who are considered 'abandoned' through systematic forms of negligence. To be grievable is a status one has as a living being, as someone whose possible loss would matter to others. And so, that status does not arrive only on the occasion of loss, but characterises a life in its living value.

When vulnerability is distributed unequally, then certain populations are effectively targeted as injurable (with impunity) or disposable (without grieving or reparation). This kind of explicit or implicit marking can justify the infliction of injury upon such populations (as we see in times of war, or in state violence against undocumented citizens). It is always possible to regard such populations as responsible for their position (according to neoliberal forms of 'responsibilisation') or, conversely, to regard them as in need of protection from the state, institutions of civil society, or non-governmental institutions. We think that these two positions are antithetical, but they may well belong to the rationale of power. If precarious populations have produced their own situation, then they are not situated within a regime of power that reproduces precarity in systemic ways. If they are seen as in need of protection, and if paternalistic forms of power (including philanthropy and humanitarian NGOs) seek to install themselves in permanent positions of power to represent the powerless, then those very populations are excluded from democratic processes and mobilisations. The solution is not a moral one that tends to position precarious populations as hyper-responsible or as in need of care, but a political

one that seeks to animate and extend radical democratic claims for enfranchisement. When either one of those moral solutions is pursued, those who set the terms shore up their own power – and, I would add, their own invulnerability. In addition, they engage in the unequal distribution of vulnerability, and in that way pursue a politics of inequality.

When such redistributive strategies abound, the ones orchestrating or effecting the processes of redistribution posit themselves as invulnerable, if not impermeable, and without any such needs of protection. This approach takes vulnerability and invulnerability as political effects, unequally distributed effects of a field of power that acts on and through bodies. If vulnerability has been culturally coded feminine, then how are certain populations effectively feminised when designated as vulnerable (something clearly in evidence in the coercive feminisation of men and women tortured at Abu Ghraib and Kandahar), and others construed as masculine when laying claim to impermeability? Once again: these are not essential features of men or women, but, rather, processes of gender formation, the effects of modes of power that have as one of their aims the production of gender differences along lines of inequality.

This has led psychoanalytic feminists to remark that the masculine position, construed in such a way, is effectively built through a denial of its own constitutive vulnerability. This denial or disavowal requires the political institution of oblivion, or forgetfulness, more specifically, the forgetting of one's own vulnerability and its projection and displacement elsewhere.

The one who achieves this impermeability erases – or externalises – all trace of a memory of vulnerability. The person who considers himself, by definition, to be invulnerable effectively says, 'I was never vulnerable, and if I was, it wasn't true, and I have no memory of that condition'. An obviously contradictory statement, it nevertheless shows us something of the political syntax of disavowal. Yet, it also tells us something about how histories can be told in order to support an ideal of the self one wishes were true; such histories depend on disavowal for their coherence, a coherence that is also thereby rendered suspect.

Although psychoanalytic perspectives such as these are important as a way of gaining insight into this particular way that vulnerability is distributed along gender lines, they only go part of the way toward the kind of analysis needed here. Since if we say that some person or some group denies vulnerability, we are assuming not only that the vulnerability was already there, but also that it is in some sense undeniable. Denial is always an effort to deflect from what is obstinately the case, so the potential refutation of denial is part of its very definition. In this sense, denial is impossible, although it happens all the time. Of course, one cannot make an easy analogy between individual and group formations, and yet modes of denial or disavowal can be seen to traverse them both. For instance, to certain defenders of the military rationale for the destruction of targeted groups or populations, we might say, 'you act as if you yourself were not vulnerable to the kind of destruction you cause'. Or to defenders of certain forms of neoliberal economics – 'you act as if you yourself could never belong to a population whose work and life is precarious, who can suddenly be deprived of basic rights or access to housing or health care, or who lives with anxiety about how and whether work will ever arrive'. In this way, then, we assume that those who seek to expose others to a vulnerable position – or to install them there – as well as those who seek to posit and maintain a position of invulnerability for themselves, all seek to deny a vulnerability by virtue of which they are obstinately, if not unbearably, bound to the ones they seek to subjugate. If one is tied to another against one's will, or without having contracted to be so bound, then the tie can be maddening, and certainly it challenges the idea of oneself as an individuated and choosing being. But what is revealed through the consideration of ties that are at once obstinate and unbearable is that pre-contractual vulnerability to others that partially defines the bonds of interdependency. This is meant less as an existential thesis about shared vulnerability than a general claim made about how bodies invariably depend on enduring social relations and institutions or their survival and well-being (or livability).

Precarity and Oblivion
Although the latter claim can be understood as an existential one, it belongs more properly to the articulation of a social ontology that I am trying in a preliminary way to suggest can become the basis for new forms of coalition, one that we see episodically instanced in the contemporary politics of the street. I suggest that (a) bodily vulnerability presupposes a social world and that we are, as bodies, vulnerable to others and to institutions, and that this vulnerability constitutes one aspect of the social modality through

which bodies persist. And further, I put forward (b) that the issue of my or your vulnerability implicates us in a broader political problem of equality and inequality, since vulnerability can be projected and denied (psychological categories), but also exploited and manipulated (social and economic categories) in the course of producing and naturalising forms of social inequality. This is what is meant by the unequal distribution of vulnerability. Vulnerability constitutes one aspect of the political modality of the body, where the body is surely human, but understood as a human animal. Vulnerability to one another, that is to say, even when conceived as reciprocal, marks a pre-contractual dimension of our social relations. This means as well that at some level it defies that instrumental logic that claims that I will only protect your vulnerability if you protect mine (wherein politics becomes a matter of brokering a deal or making a calculation on chances). In fact, vulnerability constitutes one of the conditions of sociality and political life that cannot be contractually stipulated, and whose denial and manipulability constitutes an effort to destroy or manage an interdependent social condition of potential equality.

This last formulation may seem to imply that there is a single subject, sovereign, who allocates vulnerability differentially or unequally, but this is not necessarily the case. These modes of allocation and even disavowal can be built into institutional rationalities and strategies, and so become forms of power that operate without the conceit of a single, deciding subject. And so efforts to challenge and contest these issues – something that happens more often than not under the name of 'precarity' – take aim not only at individuals who make policy but more fundamentally at the forms of rationality, representation and strategy that form and inform this form of power.

Of course, what is paradoxical here is that we cannot easily use an idea of 'subject formation' to describe this form of power by which populations are rendered precarious. The reason is that in some ways the subject status of that population is precisely what is de-instituted through precaritisation: certain kinds of being are not constituted as subjects, that is to say, they fail to be constituted at all. This process does not always presuppose a dyadic frame: one person or group does something to another. We are left to try to understand those occasions when populations do not appear at all, do not count, those whose bodies do not matter. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has made clear, those institutionalised forms of effacement at issue cannot be described through recourse to a presumed category of the subject.[8]

In the United States, for instance, the history of native peoples tends to fall into this category. They are 'described' and given discursive life through national narratives about the founding of the Americas, and yet this very description more often than not becomes a further means of their effacement. As we know – since Spain was an imperial power before the US – that the colonisation of the Americas brought with it acts of slaughter and killing that are regularly denied on the anniversary that is commonly referred to as Columbus Day. And now there is a popular movement that has achieved widespread success in renaming that day Indigenous Peoples Day. When we speak about

effacement, we are also speaking about the regulation of memory, and entering into another formulation of disavowal: 'there was no slaughter or radical dispossession, and even if there were, I do not remember it or there is no reliable archive, or it is not among the histories that any of us know or tell'. But if we were to enter that history into a comparative history of genocide or a comparative history of forcible displacement, then we would see how the killing of whole populations (in Congo, in Nazi Germany, in Armenia in the earlier part of the twentieth century, or the more recent histories of the disappeared in Chile, Argentina or even the political murders of Franco's Spain) regularly become matters for historians to dispute. Will there be an institutionalised memory or not? And in such cases, it is not a matter of memory as something that is held in the mind by someone who has experienced this destruction directly. Rather, it is memory that is maintained through historical record, through discursive and transmittable means, through documentation, image and archive. To preserve the memory of the vulnerability of bodies requires a form of memorialisation that must be repeated, and re-established over time and space. And this means that there is no one memory, that memory is not finally a property of cognition, but that memory is socially maintained and transmitted through certain forms of documentation and exhibition. In this sense, the historical vulnerability of those who were exploited, whose land was confiscated or whose lives were lost continues to be at risk of disappearing in the present. This is why Walter Benjamin thought that a struggle must be waged for the history of the oppressed – precisely because under modern conditions that history runs the risk of disappearing into oblivion.

It is this Benjaminian maxim that was, and is, enacted by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo who, beginning in 1977, started to meet every Thursday in that large square in Buenos Aires, the site of Argentina's government, to publicly protest the disappearance of their children, those suspected of activism against the dictatorship. Illegally and persistently, they walked in non-violent demonstrations, taking back public space, and even making use of their public exposure as mothers precisely to defy the regime. As they walked they chanted: 'We want our children; we want them to tell us where they are'. The Madres said, 'No matter what our children think they should not be tortured. They should have charges brought before them. We should be able to see them, visit them'.

As the movement and numbers of women whose children had 'disappeared' grew, their weekly demonstrations became populated with more pictures of the missing children. Later, as both the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, they wore white scarves to symbolise the white dove of peace, which 'can unite all women'.[9] And yet, this movement was neither identitarian nor maternalist. It opposed the brutality of the regime, and even when the regime finally fell in 1983, they continued weekly, and continue now, with other generations joining them, to protest any forgetting of that brutality, and for trials that will bring all the torturers to justice. Suffering, memorialisation and political resistance mark that ongoing and periodic public demonstration, and yet, it is also a demonstration that claimed public space when it was forbidden, and claims it still, maintaining it as a political right.

Perhaps now I can make clear at least two points about vulnerability that seek neither to idealise nor to discount its political importance. The first is that vulnerability cannot be associated exclusively with injurability. All responsiveness to what happens, including the responsiveness of those who document the losses of the past, is a function and effect of vulnerability – of being open to a history that is not told, or being open to what another body undergoes or has undergone, even when that body is gone. We can say that these are matters of cross-temporal empathy, but I want to suggest that part of what a body does (to use the phrase of Gilles Deleuze, derived from his reading of Spinoza)[10] is to open onto the body of another, or a set of others, and that for this reason bodies are not self-enclosed kinds of entities. They are always in some sense outside themselves, exploring or navigating their environment, extended and even sometimes dispossessed through the senses. If we can become lost in another, or if our tactile, motile, haptic, visual, olfactory or auditory capacities comport us beyond ourselves, that is because the body does not stay in its own place, and because dispossession of this kind characterises bodily sense more generally. It is also why we have to speak sometimes about the regulation of the senses as a political matter – there are certain photographs of the injury or destruction of bodies in war, for example, that we are often forbidden to see precisely because there is a fear that this body will feel something about what those other bodies underwent, or that this body, in its sensory comportment outside itself, will not remain enclosed, monadic and individual. Indeed, we might ask what kind of regulation of the senses – those modes of ecstatic relational-ity – might have to be regulated for individualism to be maintained as an ontology required for both economics and politics. This is also why certain forms of public documentation in print and media, but also in museums and art spaces, or even the art space of the street, become important in the battle against historical oblivion.

My last point here is that the body can and does become a site where the memories of others are transmitted. No memory is preserved without a mode of transmission, and the body is a point of transfer (and transivitivity) in which your history becomes mine, or where your history passes through mine. I do not have to experience your history first-hand to transmit something of your history, but the temporality of your life can and does cross my own, and a certain operation of translation makes that possible – one that does not purport to translate everything adequately. But it is also because we are, or can be, bound up with one another, which is very different from being bounded as individual subjects. Thus, the possibility of transmitting a memory under political threat depends upon the transitivity of that memory, its taking shape and exercising an effect on bodies that were not there, and could not be there. This is not the same as the kind of testimony given by those who were there, but it does suggest that that very testimony depends upon transmission for it to survive in time. Thus, we might see the ways that the memories of others arrive for us, or even in us, as a mode of relationality, and we might further understand this capacity to receive and convey what the other documents about history as a function of our own corporeal relatedness across time and

space to those whose words we carry. We carry them in ourselves – those histories become part of who we are – but we also carry them in spite of ourselves, and in carrying them we are already beyond ourselves. In this sense, our references to what is 'in' us and what is 'outside' us are reversible. We are not just this spatial and bounded creature, though we can never transcend that boundary completely; we are also the histories that we never lived, but which we nevertheless transmit in the name of the struggle to preserve the history of the oppressed, and to mobilise that history in our struggle for justice in the present.

When, for instance, the Israeli government prohibits any mention or memorialisation of the Naqba, the forcible dispossession of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes in 1948, often in the middle of their meals or the middle of their sleep, with no warning and with no justification, in order to produce domiciles for Jewish citizens of the new state, what precisely are they doing?[11] They are surely seeking to regulate memory, to consign an historical and persisting form of dispossession and suffering to oblivion, and to refuse the historically demonstrated link between the forcible dispossession of one people in order to produce a liberatory nationalist narrative for founding another. That dispossession of people and confiscation of land did not happen once; rather, it inaugurated forms of land appropriation and population transfer that happen regularly, amplify demonstrated in the expansion and legalisation of the illegal occupation, the building of new settlements, the redrawing of territorial lines, and the new demands for loyalty oaths on the part of Palestinians to Israel as a Jewish nation, and even in the now very public debate about transferring those Palestinians who still live within the boundaries of Israel to the occupied territories.

Of course, there are many different histories to be told here, and I cannot do them justice within these few pages. The body is, however, central to these struggles against the disappearance of the history of oppression into oblivion. What has happened to bodies is transmitted through various media, including spoken and written testimonials and silent vigils. And when bodies assemble to oppose the disappearance of a history of oppression into oblivion, they openly struggle against the effaced past. Their own bodies are there, standing for the bodies that are gone. As there, they are themselves in a bodily position of vulnerability, receiving a history pressed upon them, and in this sense living in a span of temporalities as they insist upon a history that belongs to those who are gone and those who remain. No history can be impressed upon or inscribed on a body, or conveyed through it, without bodily vulnerability. An inscription makes the body bend, cave, suffer and respond, even take on a new form in light of that pressure, so the body must be thought, then, not as substance and enclosure, but as a site of injurability, passionate exposure and ethical contact.

Interdependency and Alliance
How, then, do we best understand the relevance of bodily vulnerability for bodies in alliance? Although we often speak as if vulnerability were a contingent and passing circumstance, there are reasons not to accept that as a general view. Of course, it is always possible to say, 'I was vulnerable then, but I am not

vulnerable anymore', and we say that in relation to specific situations in which we felt ourselves to be at risk or injurable. Those can be economic or financial situations when we feel that we may be exploited, lose work or find ourselves in conditions of poverty. Or they can be emotional situations in which we are very much vulnerable to rejection, but later find that we have lost that vulnerability. Even as it makes sense that we speak this way, it makes equal sense to treat with caution the seductions of ordinary discourse at this moment. And though we may legitimately feel that we are vulnerable in some instances and not in others, the condition of our vulnerability is itself not changeable. At most, there are times when our vulnerability becomes apparent to us, even acutely so, but that is not the same as saying that we are only vulnerable at those times. We not only can be vulnerable without our knowing it, but that not-knowing-it is one aspect of our vulnerability.

Indeed, vulnerability cannot be understood restrictively as an affect restricted to a contingent situation, nor can it be understood as a subjective disposition. As a condition that is co-extensive with human life, understood as the invariably social life of the human animal, and as bound to the problem of precarity, vulnerability is the name for a certain way of opening onto the world.[12] In this way, vulnerability not only designates a relation to the world, but asserts our very existence as a relational one. To say that any of us are vulnerable beings is thus to establish our radical dependency not only on others, but on a sustaining and sustainable world. This has implications for understanding who we are as emotionally and sexually passionate beings, as bound up with others from the start, but also as beings who seek to persist, and whose persistence can be imperilled or sustained depending on whether social, economic and political structures support us, or not.

Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Adriana Cavarero tells us that one of the key moments of politics, what we might even identify as its constitutive ethical moment, is the emergence of the question, 'who are you?'[13] We ask this question implicitly or explicitly when we seek to bring a population into discourse, or establish a language of representation. It is not necessarily a person who poses this question. An institution, a discourse, an economic system that asks 'who are you' seeks to establish a space of appearance for the Other. To ask who you are is to avow that one does not know in advance who you are, that one is open to what comes from the other, and that one expects that no pre-established category will be able to articulate in advance the other's singularity. An ethical relation within the political field thus poses the question, 'who are you?' without any expectation of a final answer. If the question ceases, so too does the ethical nature of the relationship. So although we might well get many answers to the question, no answer can, or should, satisfy it.

This ethical question within the political field has clear implications for how we think about multiculturalism, models of intersectionality, pluralism and cosmopolitanism. But it also delineates a certain relationship between the one who poses the question and the one to whom the question is posed. They are bound to one

another through the open question, which is always in some ways subtended by another: what do you need for a liveable life? And how are each of us implicated in the problem of producing a liveable world? For every being any of us may seek to 'know' also has conditions of liveability, and they are part of what is surely communicated in response to any question, 'who are you?' I am not just this person who is already fed and housed and exposes the truth of my interiority to another; I am inseparable from my conditions of liveability. So to ask about another is invariably to ask who makes life liveable, and what renders it precarious.

To understand any of this, one has to keep actively in mind the relationship between the various meanings of the precarious; precariousness is a function of our social vulnerability and the condition of our exposure that always assumes some political form; precarity is differentially distributed, and so one important dimension of the unequal distribution of conditions required for a liveable life. But precaritisation is also an ongoing process, as Isabell Lorey has argued.[14] Precaritisation allows us to think about the 'slow death', in Lauren Berlant's words, undergone by targeted or neglected populations over time and space.[15] And it is surely a form of power without a subject, which is to say that there is no one centre which propels the direction and destruction that is precarity. If we only considered the term 'precaritisation', I am not sure that we could account for the structure of affect that is named by precarity. And if we decided to rally under the name of 'the precarious' – as a new identity formation – we might then draw attention away from the globally specific ways that precarity is lived out as a social and political condition, cloaking some way that that form of power actually works. So maybe precarious is what we feel, or would rather not feel. In the latter case, its analysis has to be linked to the drive to become impermeable, as so often happens within the discourse of military nationalism and the rhetoric of security and national self-defence. And yet, it will be important to call 'precarious' those bonds that support forms of life, those that should be structured by the condition of mutual need and exposure that should bring us to forms of political organisation that sustain living beings on terms of equality or, at least, dispose them toward equality as an ideal worth struggling for.

What seems finally more important than any form of existential individualism is the idea that a 'bond' is flawed or frayed, or that it has become lost or irrecoverable. And we see this very prominently when, for instance, Tea Party politicians in the US overtly rejoice over the idea that those individuals who have failed to 'take responsibility' for their own health care may well face death and disease as a result.[16] In other words, they believe that those who have not found employment that gives them health insurance are to be faulted morally for their circumstances, and that if they face untreated illness and death as a result of not having health coverage, that is surely what they deserved. When this argument was made, there was loud and angry rejoicing, a kind of sadistic pleasure that followed upon the thought of an inadequately insured person's death. Clearly, it was a moment in which any possible social bond between the Tea Party

reveller and the imagined dying or dead person is destroyed, and a moral calculus emerges that justifies the life of the one and not the other. At such moments, a social bond has been cut or destroyed, and so, too, a shared precariousness denied, where precariousness is understood as a condition that precedes contract and calculation. The very particular ethos and politics that ideally should follow from shared precariousness is global interdependency, one that actively resists the radically unequal distribution of precarity (and grievability).

Such a struggle would be at once opposed to forms of securitarian logics as well as the old and new paternalisms that are now linked to the seductions of economic and political security. But this resistance can only happen if modes of coalition are grounded in interdependency, and if the struggle against precarity and for equality exercises power in ways that break with the lure of paternalism. This cannot mean refusing all forms of state and institutional support; that form of anti-institutional politics unfortunately allies with the destruction of social democratic goods and economic rights – and these forms of destruction are precisely those that are undertaken by neoliberalism and securitarian politics alike. So one must struggle for social democracy, including the protection of benefits, but within the context of a more radical democratic politics.[17]

We cannot presume that interdependency is some beautiful state of co-existence; it cannot be the same as social harmony. Inevitably, we rail against those on whom we are most dependent (or those who are most

dependent on us), and there is no way to dissociate dependency from aggression once and for all. These may not be happy or joyous alliances. But they are constituted from the insight into the pre-contractual conditions of social embodiment. We require one another to live, and this means that are survival and well-being is invariably negotiated in the social, economic and political spheres; indeed, our negotiations are the very sites where those spheres converge and lose their distinctness as spheres.

As I mentioned earlier, we can make this idea popular by seeking recourse to the broad existential and humanist claim that, well, everyone is precarious. But once we ask about what this means, or what forms precarity assumes, we see that we have already left the existential domain to consider our social existence as bodily beings who depend upon one another for shelter and sustenance and who, therefore, are at risk of statelessness, homelessness and destitution under unjust and unequal political conditions. In other words, our survival depends upon political arrangements, and politics, especially as it becomes biopolitics and the managing of populations, is concerned with the question of whose lives will be preserved, protected and valued (and eventually mourned, that is, whose lives were from the very start considered as worth protecting from injury and death) and whose lives will be considered disposable and ungrievable. In this way, our precarity is to a large extent dependent upon the organisation of economic and social relationships, the presence or absence of sustaining infrastructures and social and political institutions, and modes of struggling for them that produce and sustain alliances.

Precarity is thus indissociable from that dimension of politics that addresses the organisation and protection of bodily needs, where those needs index social relations (the need is always a need for something, and a need for something from someone, and so a mode of relating to world and to the others). Precarity exposes our sociality, the fragile and necessary dimensions of our interdependency, and this has implications for how we join together in struggle, when we do. No one escapes the precarious dimension of social life – it is, we might say, our common non-foundation. Nothing 'founds' us outside of a convergent struggle to establish those sustaining bonds.

Taking to the Streets

When people take to the streets together, they form something of a body politic, and even if that body politic does not speak in a single voice – even when it does not speak at all or make any claims – it still forms, asserting its presence as a plural and obdurate bodily life. That is the political significance of assembling as bodies, stopping traffic or claiming attention, or moving not as stray and separated individuals, but as a social movement of some kind. It does not have to be organised from on high (the Leninist presumption) and it does not need to have a single message (the logocentric conceit) for assembled bodies to exercise a certain performative force in the public domain. The 'we are here' that translates that collective bodily presence might be re-read as 'we are still here', meaning: 'we have not yet been disposed of'. Such bodies are precarious and persisting, which is why I think we have always to link precarity with forms of social and political agency, wherever that is possible. When the bodies of those deemed 'disposable' assemble into public view, they are saying, 'we have not slipped quietly into the shadows of public life: we have not become the glaring absence that structures your public life'. In a way, the collective assembling of bodies is an exercise of the popular will, and a way of asserting, in bodily form, one of the most basic presuppositions of democracy, namely, that political and public institutions are bound to represent the people, and to do so in ways that establish equality as a presupposition of social and political existence. So when those institutions become structured in such a way that certain populations become disposable, are interpellated as disposable, deprived of a future, of education, of stable and fulfilling work, of even knowing what space one can call a home, then surely the assemblies fulfil another function, not only the expression of justifiable rage, but the assertion in their very social organisation, of principles of equality in the midst of precarity.

I am aware that the fate of the Egyptian revolution remains uncertain, and sometimes extremely dispiriting, especially as the elections seek to retrench forms of power that the revolution sought to overcome. I still want to underscore two aspects of the revolutionary demonstrations in Tahrir Square in the first months of 2011 and which still, despite all odds, continue in some form to this day.[18] The first has to do with the way a certain sociability was established within the square, a division of labour that broke down gender difference, that involved rotating who would speak and who would clean the areas where people slept and ate, developing a work schedule for everyone to maintain the environment and to clean the toilets.

In short, what some would call 'horizontal relations' among the protestors formed easily and methodically, introducing relations of equality into the form of the resistance. These included an equal division of labour between the sexes, became part of the very resistance to Mubarak's regime and its entrenched hierarchies, including the extraordinary differentials of wealth between the military and corporate sponsors of the regime, and the working people, and those subject to the violence of police forces and to the *baltageya*, the hired thugs that do the government's dirty work. So the social form of the resistance began to incorporate principles of equality that governed not only how and when people spoke and acted for the media and against the regime, but how people cared for their various quarters within the square, the beds on pavement, the makeshift medical stations and bathrooms, the places where people ate, and the places where people were exposed to violence from the outside. These actions were all political by refusing the normalising of inequality produced by strict divisions between the public and private spheres and by incorporating into the very social form of resistance the principles for which they were struggling on the street.

The second has to do with the careful relation to violence: when up against violent attack or extreme threats, many people chanted the words 'silmiyya', which comes from the root verb *salima*, which means to be safe and sound, unharmed, unimpaired, intact, safe and secure; but also, to be unobjectionable, blameless, faultless; and yet also, to be certain, established, clearly proven.[19] The term comes from the noun 'silm', which means peace but also, interchange-

ably and significantly, the religion of Islam. One variant of the term is 'Hubb as-silm', which is Arabic for pacifism. Most usually, the chanting of 'silmiyya' comes across as a gentle exhortation: 'peaceful, peaceful'. Although the revolution was for the most part non-violent, it was not necessarily led by a principled opposition to violence. Rather, the collective chant was a way of encouraging people to resist the mimetic pull of military aggression – and the aggression of the gangs – by keeping in mind the larger goal – radical democratic change. To be swept into a violent exchange of the moment was to lose the patience needed to realise the revolution. What interests me here is the chant, the way in which language worked not to incite an action, but to restrain one. The chant structures affect in the direction of community and non-violence, calling for, and enacting a non-violent mode of politics. Of course, an ambiguity emerges precisely there, since resisting a violent attack does take some force – one has to sometimes forcibly resist a forcible attack; indeed, resistance means entering into a field of force. And this means that non-violence is not a form of passivity, but rather a thoughtful and strategic cultivation of forceful resistance that refuses to replicate the aggression it opposes. This leads us to consider non-violent resistance as relying on a form of restraint that is the non-violent cultivation of force.[20]

Although some may wager that under conditions of new media or social networking the exercise of rights now takes place quite at the expense of material bodies on the street, and that Twitter and other virtual technologies have led to a disembodiment of the public sphere, I would disagree. The media requires those

bodies on the street to have an event, even as the street requires the media to exist in a global arena. Under conditions when those with cameras or internet capacities are imprisoned or tortured or deported, or when internet links are cut or surveilled, then the use of the technology holds implications for the bodies who send and receive. Not only must someone's hand tap and send, but someone's body is on the line if that tapping and sending gets traced, or if the link is cut before one can literally get to the others who have asked for help in their own confrontation with those threatening violence against them. In other words, the localised and vulnerable condition of the body is hardly overcome through the use of a media that potentially transmits globally, or that translates some aspect of one's condition into a virtual entity. And if this conjuncture of street and media constitutes a very contemporary version of the public sphere, then bodies on the line (on the street, but also connected to the web) have to be thought as both there and here, now and then, linked with others in ways that suggest an interdependency at once global and proximate, transported and stationery.

Bodies on the street are precarious – they are exposed to police force, and sometimes endure physical suffering as a result – the risk is there, and it seems to be increasing now that police regularly clear out the encampments of the Occupy Movement through forcible means. But those bodies that remain show something obdurate, connected and persisting about bodily life together, insisting on their continuing and collective 'thereness' and, in these recent forms, organising themselves without hierarchy, and so exemplifying the principles of equal treatment that they are demanding

of public institutions. In this way, those bodies enact the message, performatively, even when they sleep in public, or when they organise collective methods for cleaning the grounds they occupy, as happened in Tahrir and in Zucotti Park in New York. If there is a 'we' who assembles there, at that precise space and time, there is also a 'we' that forms across the media that calls for the demonstrations and broadcasts its events, so some set of global connections are being articulated, a different sense of the global from the 'globalised market'. And some set of values is being enacted in the form of a collective resistance: a defence of our collective precarity and persistence in the making of equality and the many-voiced and unvoiced ways of refusing to become disposable. When this happens, we act from a sense of precarity, against a sense of precarity, and in coalition, often in unchosen proximities where a pre-contractual interdependency is at work – felt sometimes as relief or exhilaration, but often enough as uneasy, conflicted, barely livable. But it is there in coalition the conditions of livability are negotiated in a mode of resistance that episodically instance, and repeatedly demand, another mode of living together, one that seeks to fathom an equal claim to the livable life.

1.
See 'Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street', http://eipcp.net/transversal/1011/butler/en (last accessed on 30 May 2012). That paper is a modified transcription of the paper originally given at Fondazione Querini Stampalia on 7 September 2011, as part of 'The State of Things'. The current essay is a further development of the ideas originally presented there.

2.
It would be one matter to defend the rights of those with whom one disagrees to assemble on the street, and it would be another to celebrate or endorse the actual demonstrations. Although this essay does not address the conditions and limits of the right of assembly, it seems important to underscore from the start that I accept the right of all sorts of groups, including those with whom I most vehemently disagree, to assemble on the street. Although the right of assembly surely has its limits, my sense is that those limits would be at least partially and minimally established by demonstrating persuasively that a group deliberately poses a threat to the physical well-being of others who have an equal and legitimate claim to public space.

3.
See my 'Introduction: Precarious Life, Grievable Life', *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, London and New York: Verso, 2009, pp.1–32.

4.
See Donna Haraway's views on complex relationalities in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (London: Routledge, 1991) and The Companion Species Manifesto (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

5.
Feminist theorists on vulnerability are many, but a few recent articles give some sense of the important policy implications of this notion: Martha Fineman, 'The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition', *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, vol.20, no.1, 2008, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1131407 (last accessed on 30 May 2012); Anna Grear, 'The Vulnerable Living Order: Human Rights and the Environment in a Critical and Philosophical Perspective', *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, vol.2, no.1, 2011; Peadar Kirby, 'Vulnerability and Globalisation: Mediating Impacts on Society', *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, vol.2, no.1, 2011; Katie Oliviero, 'Sensational Nation and the Minutemen: Gendered Citizenship and Moral Vulnerabilities', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* vol.36, no.3, 2011. See also Bryan Turner, *Vulnerability and Human Rights, University Park*, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006.

6.
See Elsa Dorlin, 'To Be Beside Oneself: A Phenomenology of Our Own Violence', presented at the Townsend Center, University of Berkeley, October 2010.

7.
For reflections on contemporary precarity, see Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999, trans. Gregory Elliott), London and New York: Verso, 2005.

8.
See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's reflections on the necessary limits of the theory of the subject for theorising cultural effacement in 'More on Power/Knowledge' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, pp.25–52; and Rosalind Morris (ed.), *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Reflections on the History of an Idea, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

9.
See http://www.madresfundadoras.org.ar (last accessed on 30 May 2012).

10.
See Gilles Deleuze 'What Can a Body Do?', *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968, trans. Martin Joughin), New York: Zone Books, 1990, pp.217–89.

11.
The 'Naqba Bill' was passed on 23 March 2011, and stipulates that no state funds can be used to commemorate the Naqba on the Palestinian Naqba Day, and elaborates a set of punishments and fines for any such commemoration.

12.
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Intertwining', *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964, trans. Alphonso Lingis), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968, pp.130–55; and Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952, trans. Charles Lam Markmann), New York: Grove Press, 1967, pp.17–40 and 109–21.

13.
See Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (1997, trans. Paul A. Kottman), London: Routledge, 2000.

14.
See Isabell Lorey, 'Governmental Precaritization', eipcp.net, January 2011, available at http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/lorey/en (last accessed on 30 May 2012).

15.
See Lauren Berlant, 'Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)', *Critical Inquiry*, vol.33, no.4, Summer 2007, pp.754–80. See also a further conversation with Lauren Berlant on 'slow death' and the politics of austerity: Gesa Helms, Marina Vishmidt and L. Berlant, 'Affect & the Politics of Austerity: An Interview Exchange with Lauren Berlant', *Variant*, issue 39/40, Winter 2010, available at http://www.variant.org.uk/39_40texts/berlant39_40.html (last accessed on 30 May 2012).

16.
For an instance of the Tea party rejoicing, see http://videocafe.crooksandliars.com/karoli/tea-party-audience-cheers-idea-leaving-sick (last accessed on 30 May 2012).

17.
Radical democracy has several forms, but I am following several trajectories of the work of Ernesto Laclau, Jacques Rancière and Etienne Balibar.

18.
The last draft of this text was completed in May 2012.

19.
All citations taken from J.M. Cowan (ed.), *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Urbana, IL: Spoken Languages Services, 1994.

20.
Clear connections can be made with the work of Mahatma Gandhi in *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)* (1924/25, London: Dover, 2001), but also with the important distinction between force and violence that deserves greater elaboration than can be offered here.

Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions and Street Politics / Judith Butler

Pasolini in Tottenham

Franco Berardi

When I started writing this paper, its title was 'Pasolini and the Movement of '68, A Misunderstanding' Now, after its completion, I would like to change it, influenced the four days of rage in parts of England in August 2011.[1] I don't know if Pasolini ever went to the United Kingdom. As far as I know, he never talked about it, but I do not care. What I would like to do is to question once more the sensibility of the poet who wrote about the Roman *borgate* fifty years ago, this time from the point of view of a violent rebellion of lumpen proletarians from deprived areas in England in 2011.[2]

The way I will talk about Pier Paolo Pasolini is fragmentary. I am trying to see the different facets of his work and of his public experience, as well as of his private life, in the kaleidoscope of the social and anthropological, changing framework that he anticipated, described and criticised. I think Pasolini would have had interesting things to say about the Afro-Caribbean, Maghrebi and white English young men and women who rioted in the streets of Tottenham, Hackney and Peckham, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester in those four nights of rage. The visions and predictions that we can find in his writings and films are good starting points for a discussion of what has happened in the English cities, and also of what is going to happen in the next few months and years all over Europe, in the insurrection that has already started and that will spread throughout the Old Continent – a continent that is turning into a place of violence and misery thanks to the neoliberal politics and the financial dictatorship, and to the ignorance and dogmatism of the European ruling class.

Meeting Pasolini

I came across Pasolini when I was a schoolboy in 1965 or 1966, when I went to see *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (*Il vangelo secondo Matteo*, 1964) with professor Corrado Festi, a blind man who taught philosophy in the High School where I was studying. He was a libertarian communist who always went to watch films with a student or two, because he needed someone to explain to him what happened on the screen, so that he could also see.

I came across Pasolini again in 1968. After the Valle Giulia riots, when the students, for the first time, did not run away from the police but instead reacted against its violence, and Pasolini wrote a poem.[3] A bad poem, I believe: rancorous and sour, without any irony. But interesting, anyway.

The poem's title was 'Il P.C.I. ai giovani!!' ('The Italian Communist Party to the Students'), but it came to be widely known with the title 'Vi odio cari studenti' ('I Hate You, Dear Students') only because the magazine *L'Espresso* published the poem with this title in its pages.[4] In the poem Pasolini accuses the students of being the offspring of the privileged, craving for power and, in order to grab it, fighting against their parents. He accompanies this with a declaration of his love for the policemen, who are the young sons of farmers and workers. Old populist rhetoric, I believe. 'Paccottiglia', as we say in Italian.

Then I came across Pasolini for the third time, and for good, in the house of a common friend, Laura Betti, in a night of the year 1973. I looked at that unsmiling, harsh man without much sympathy. In those years he was publishing 'Lettere a Gennariello' in the pages of *Il Corriere della Sera,* and the portrait that he was drawing of the young Neapolitan proletarian seemed fake to me. I was dealing with young proletarians from Naples and from other cities of the Italian South, and I had a very different sentiment. The young Southerners whom I met in the Northern Italian factories, those migrant Gennariello whom I knew, where not less archaic and instinctive than Pasolini's, but they were much sharper, aware and sophisticated. They were the migrant labourers working in the factories of Milan and Turin, the actors of the new wave of autonomous struggles against capitalist exploitation and industrial work. They resembled much more the young Fiat worker described by Nanni Balestrini in his novel *Vogliamo Tutto* (*We Want Everything*), published in 1971. Passolini's Gennariello was coming from an old populist mythology that had nothing to say to me.

Words and Visions

When we look at Pasolini's work, when we read his novels, his poems and his countless interviews and articles, and when we watch his feature films and documentaries, we sometimes have the impression of getting lost in a labyrinth of paradoxes. I will try to find a map of the labyrinth, and make sense of the paradoxical nature of his judgments and opinions, of his idiosyncrasies, passions and aversions.

The general criterion that I have concluded from my analysis is this: when he writes, when he speaks, when he ideologises, Pasolini is essentially a reac-

tionary and a conformist disguised as a provocateur. But when it comes to his works of images Pasolini is a visionary, almost a prophet, and he is able to see much further than everybody else. Being a man of extraordinary visions, although a bad poet and a boring, old-fashioned ideologue whose knowledge of Karl Marx's philosophy was quite poor, Pasolini did not understand the meaning of the students' movement of 1968.

Many of the students who took to the streets in 1968, in Italy, France and elsewhere, where probably the offsprings of bourgeois parents. Many were the children of employees and petit bourgeois, and some came from workers' families, although the access of workers to the university was limited at the time. But this is not the point. Such sociological considerations do not really help to understand.

The meaning of the upheaval that convulsed the world in 1968 can only be grasped by looking at the long process of re-composition of labour, and at the long process of transformation in the technological structure of the production process. That movement was the first large-scale emergence of cognitive labour, which in the following decades became the moving force of production. The alliance between students and industrial workers was not a rhetorical exhibition of solidarity, but the sign of the interdependence between the increasing productivity of industrial labour, the implementation of new technologies and the prospect of a possible liberation of social time from the slavery of labour.

Pasolini was totally wrong in his appreciation of the students' movement because he missed the crucial point: not the social origin of students, but the new role that cognitive work was destined to play in the transformation of capitalist production, and in the political composition of the working class.

Fake and Real Gennariello
After 1968, Pasolini's approach to the movement changed: he was pushed by the very force of the events to acknowledge the proletarian character of the movement, and aligned himself with Lotta Continua, a leftist organisation that mixed Marxism, Maoism and Anarchism with a generous inspiration of Christian radicalism. Together with Lotta Continua Pasolini authored a film, titled *12 Dicembre* (1970–72).

It is not hard to understand the vicinity of Pasolini to Lotta Continua. 'The priority of these young militants is passion and sentiment', he said. And a certain degree of theoretical inaccuracy or superficiality, what we call 'pressapochismo', helped. Lotta Continua was not a political organisation, but a climate of mind, a feeling that sometimes verged on populism. A broad feeling of love for the people, the destitute, the dispossessed was the common ground of Lotta Continua and Pasolini.

In the 'Letters to Gennariello' this broad sentiment of love for the poor came together with the mythology of authenticity of the young pre-modern Neapolitan man, whom the writer wants to protect from the contamination of consumerism and modern coarseness.

But this mythology was fake and empty: the true Gennariellos in those years were not so candid and unsophisticated as Pasolini liked to imagine. In 1973 young workers coming from Southern Italy occupied FIAT in Turin, and in 1977 they gathered in a general insurrection that reached its peak in Rome and Bologna in the spring of that year. Michel Foucault wrote an article (published by *Le Monde* in March 1977, with the title 'Les Matins gris de la tolérance', or 'The Grey Mornings of Tolerance'[5]) dedicated to Pasolini's *Comizi d'Amore,* a documentary made in 1963. The article refers to the Bologna riots of '77, which in the words of Foucault could be considered as the last expression of the fashion challenging the power that had started around 1963.

In November 1977 Marco Pannella came to Paris, where I was exiled after being prosecuted for my work with the free Radio Alice, to celebrate the second anniversary of Pasolini's death at the Italian Cultural Center. He invited Julia Kristeva and myself to speak. During the event, I said that in that watershed year Gennariello had become 'indiano metropolitano', an autonomous worker rejecting capitalist exploitation.

Pasolini was assassinated in November 1975, so he could not witness the explosion of 1977. We cannot say if he would have recognised in the insurgents of Rome and Bologna the brothers of his Gennariello. But I don't think so. I guess that Pasolini would have rather joined the Stalinists of the Italian Communist Party, who after 1989 converted to the neoliberal dogma, but who in 1977 were still worshipping the supreme authority of the state, in condemning the delirium and the extremist madness of Mao-Dadaists and *indiani metropolitani*. But who knows?

The Disturbing Freedom of Women

The ideological world of Pasolini is a male-centred space where women do not belong except as mothers. The concept of anthropological mutation, which is an interesting way to understand the change that was underway in those years, shows its reactionary side when it comes to the place of women: women are seen as an instrument of the vicious modernisation leading to consumerist fascism. In an article published in 1972 with the embarrassing title 'Troppa libertà sessuale e si arriva al terrorismo' ('Too Much Sexual Freedom Leads to Terrorism') Pasolini describes the transition from the old agrarian landscape of popular authenticity to the consumerist landscape of a corrupted modernity in these terms:

> **In a few years, the sexual relation between men and women has dramatically changed. [...] Mainly in the cities, in every street, corner or building one or two underage girls are now available for everybody… in fact, you will no longer see groups of young boys hanging around with the prostitutes: they are almost ignoring them… Prostitution is vanishing, incredible as it may seem, at least in its traditional forms – noisy, almost joyous. The sudden sexual permissiveness, although it brings with it some good consequences, is causing unexpectedly negative effects. For instance, it brings sexual conformism.[6]**

Pasolini is disturbed by women's sexual freedom. Women are corrupting and enticing young men, and this is disquieting for him. Women are breaking male complicity and solidarity. His denunciation of the conformist side of sexual and anthropological

change originates in his nostalgia for a past characterised by prostitution and homosexual innuendo, unchallenged by women's freedom.

I don't want to deny that sexual conformism and consumerism have emerged from the changes in sexual behaviour introduced in the 1970s; in fact, the cultural change within those years can be seen to have led to the aggressive sexual consumerism of the Berlusconi years. But if sexual freedom has turned into a bulimic and aggressive cult of sexual competition, this is an effect of the inability of Italian culture to link sexual desire and social liberation. The bigotry of leftist Italian culture, with its Catholic background, has paved the way for the cynical exploitation of sex in advertising, television and politics. Franco Fortini, one of the Pasolini's sharpest critics, wrote once something along the lines: Pasolini speaks of the mother as a virgin, of teenagers as sensuous and innocent, of Jesus as a polluted young man, and of communism as paternal Super-Ego. I could not say it better.

A Visionary and a Prophet

I don't intend to badmouth or insult Pier Paolo Pasolini. I think that he is a bad poet, that he is a political reactionary, and that his knowledge of Marxism is second-hand. But I also think that Pasolini has been one of greatest, most disturbing film-makers in the history of cinema. While he is bad with words, confused with concepts, contradictory in his political statements and boring as a poet, he is fantastic when it comes to images. He does not say, he sees. He saw the distant future; he was a wonderful visionary in the precise sense of a prophet. Look at the images from his movies, his novels, his talks. In an interview with Alberto Arbasino from 1963 he speaks of Italy with these words:

> **Italy is a beautiful feminine body, but wherever you touch it or you look at it, you see the wrapping coils of a serpent. How can you make love to a body that is wrapped and enfolded by a snake? [7]**

Italian poets have often described the country as a beautiful woman, beginning with Francesco Petrarca:

> **Italia mia**
> **benché il parlar sia indarno**
> **alle piaghe mortali**
> **che nel bel corpo tuo sì spesse veggio**

The feminine identification of Italy is an interesting subject, I think. An interesting perspective on the political history of the country, too. In fact, the modern process of construction of the Italian nation was based on the abandonment and disavowing of the femininity of the Mediterranean self-perception. The sordid story of the Italian nation starts with this shame and this repudiation of femininity.

Fascism is essentially based on it, and not by accident the 'Manifesto Futurista' of 1909 declares 'contempt for the woman' as a basic principle of the national revolution of Italian Modernity that is called fascism. Femininity is weakness, and war is the only way to secure the hygiene of the world. Although fascism has a universal diffusion, its historical origin is unquestionably Italian. Therefore its general definition, elusive as it is, may be linked to the denial of femininity.

Fascism Belongs to the Future

I think that Pasolini's statements about the meaning of 1968 are wrong, and I think that he totally misses the point as far as the understanding of the historical process encompassing the student's upheaval is concerned. But on some crucial points Pasolini has been able to see (I really mean 'to see') things that the rest of us missed completely.

The main mistake of the Italian student movement, the mistake of the intellectual groups that were the progressive soul of that movement, my own mistake and the mistake of Potere Operaio, the group I was part of, was exactly this: thinking that fascism was something of the past. We thought that the enemy of students and workers was the neo-capitalist, social democratic bourgeoisie. Fascists still existed, of course, but they were considered nostalgic of the dark past of Mussolini, instruments of the most reactionary adventures and isolated criminals that the ruling class could use at its convenience in order to scare the popular movement, in order to divert the attention of the workers from the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

This is why the movement launched self-defeating campaigns of *antifascismo militante*, whose only effect was falling in the trap of violence, hitting at some idiots dressed in black, and being hit by them. We were deadly wrong, because fascism was not something of the past – fascism belonged to the future. This is what Pasolini clearly saw, although he was unable to explain it in words.

Pasolini rightly linked fascism and sexual humiliation, fascism and consumerism, ignorance, aggressiveness and ugliness. Sexual humiliation, Ersatz consumerism, ignorance and aggressiveness have been on the rise during the years of the neoliberal dictatorship. And ugliness is everywhere, in the cities ravaged by speculation, in the bodies wasted by exploitation and loneliness, in ubiquitous advertising signs, television screens and in hyper-polluting 4x4s.

It is not easy to say what fascism means, but I humbly propose the idea that fascism is a pathology of identity – a pathology affecting those who are too weak to accept the idea that identity is changing and multifarious, and too frightened by their uncertainty and ambivalence. Pasolini was able to predict the spreading of this ambivalence, this fear, this frailty, and to foresee the epidemics of aggression that was doomed to result from all this.

The Land of the Pimp

Accattone is a man who pimps out his wife in the shabby *borgate* of post-War Rome. When his wife is jailed the only thing he can do is look for another woman to work the streets for him: he is a pimp, a sordid, miserable, distressing pimp. *Accattone* is not only a film about post-War Italy, a country that Neorealist film-makers portrayed in black and white. It is a film about the deep nature of Italian national identity, that since the decline of the seventeenth century has chanted:

Francia o Spagna basta che si magna.[8]

Read the wonderfully disturbing *The Skin* (*La pelle*, 1949), by Curzio Malaparte, and you will understand that Italy as a nation has always been a country of pimps. *Accattone* contains a prediction, a prophecy about post-modern Italy, the country where Silvio Berlusconi's empire has thrived. Look at the current Italian scene: some young women denounced sexual orgies organised in the residency of the Prime Minister, after which the Italian newspapers were filled with the pictures of dozens of those girls, and of their recruiters, who had been almost officially rewarded with money, well-paid jobs or government offices.

Berlusconi's pimps were supplying the sultan with young female flesh, but they are not the only pimps on stage. There are also the pimps of the European Central Bank who promptly want to supply the bankers with fresh blood from the Italian society. For instance, the president of the Republic, an old Stalinist turned neoliberal who has pretended to oppose Berlusconi while doing nothing effective against his mafia power, asked the Parliament to support the financial laws proposed by the Berlusconi government, because the European Central Bank was asking to go fast, to pay the debt, to bleed workers dry in order to fill the banks with cash.

Power's Worshippers

Pasolini saw better than me and my fellow students and workers of the autonomous movement the personal destiny of the 1968ers. Let us go back to the not very beautiful poem 'Il PCI ai giovani', in which he expressed his contempt for the students of the movement and his love for the poor young policemen who were obliged to beat (and sometimes kill) those well-to-do students who deserved what they got.

I have already said that I think Pasolini was totally wrong in his assessment of the social and historical meaning of that movement. I have already said that the emergence of the deep transformation of capitalist production in a cognitive direction completely escaped his understanding. But I want to come back to one point that is interesting, at least from an ethical and also political point of view. He says that those young people, those students, those *figli di papà*, were only fighting for power, only intended to take power from the hands of their parents. It is foolish to believe that this affirmation can be referred to the entirety of the movement. But a large part of the social body that we called 'the Movement' has shown that Pasolini was not entirely wrong on this point. I think particularly to those people who adhered to the official pro-soviet Communist Party, and also those who adhered to the many Stalino-Maoist parties. Part (not all, but a large part) of the intellectuals and militants who have been followers of the Leninist Faith (the faith in power) have subsequently converted, at various degrees, and in different ways, to the Neoliberal Faith. Richard Pearl and Massimo D'Alema, André Glucksmann and Giuliano Ferrara, Aldo Brandirali, William Kristol and Vladimir Putin have this in common. In their youth all of them accepted and justified the concentration camps of Joseph Stalin; all them accepted and justified the crimes and the lies and the oppression of the Soviet (or the Maoist) nomenklatura. All of them accepted and hailed the proletarian dictatorship as a step towards the bright future of socialism.

They were Maoist and Stalinist and Trotskyites-Leninists. And all of them turned into neoliberal worshippers of capitalist competition and capitalist growth, accepting and justifying the crimes and the lies of the neoliberal rule.

Why so? Why did those young intellectuals who in the year 1968 were waving Mao's *Little Red Book* ten or fifteen years after published articles against egalitarianism, and chanted the glory of capitalist democracy and infinite growth? The answer lies of course in their miserable personal biographies, which Pasolini perceived. But biographic accidents are not enough to understand their betrayal, because their betrayal is not only an act of moral baseness (which certainly is) but also and mainly an act of intellectual coherence.

That is, there is a rationale to their baseness. All the names I have listed above are names of arrogant climbers of unimpressive intelligence and middle-brow culture, but their common ground is this: all of them believed in the dialectic creed, therefore they were convinced that the working class was destined to win. In their dreams of young Stalinists, Trotskyites or Maoists, the working class was destined to win and exert power with violence, dictatorship and terror. When they realised that things were not going like they had dreamt in their young militant years, they did not change their dialectic creed: reason will be real, and reality will be rational. They quite simply changed sides and chose the winner, because for someone who believes that history is dialectical, the winner is always right. Their minds are following the same paradigm, and they trust the same dogma: only power is real. This is their philosophical principle, this is their moral North Star.

Pasolini in Tottenham

But they are wrong. Real is not only what is in actual existence, but also what belongs to the sphere of the possible. What exists as imagination, what exists as a tendency in the concatenation of social intelligence is real, although the existing power of capitalism is acting to hinder its tendency to emerge, to deploy itself. The possible may be killed, repressed or forced back, but it is still real.

Being simple as well as arrogant, these second-rate intellectuals could not really perceive the depth of the social change and of the cultural transformation they were trying to govern, shifting from the side of the workers to the side of the owners of capital. So they could not even imagine the unpredictability of the process they were simplistically reducing to a problem of who wins and who loses. They supported the criminal turn that Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan impressed to the history of human evolution. They supported violence, financial dictatorship and terror, and named it 'democracy'. But history is not finished, and now capitalism is agonising and representative democracy is a bedtime story that masks the reality of financial dictatorship and war.

Now I would like to go to Tottenham together with Pasolini. A young man, Mark Duggan, was killed by the police on 4 August 2011 there. After his death, thousands of young workers, unemployed and stu-

dents took to the streets in areas of London, Birmingham and Manchester, and attacked banks and shops, stealing goods from the supermarkets, setting houses ablaze and attacking police. The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, quickly returned from his holiday in Tuscany and declared them to be just criminals.

I have tried to look at those four nights of rage from Pasolini's point of view. Fascist consumerism or lumpen desacralisation of the consumerist rituals? I despise the priggish journalists and hypocritical intellectuals who screamed in the newspapers sullied by Rupert Murdoch's money that the riots were not political events, but coarse acts of consumerist violence. During the last thirty years or so, media, advertising and the neoliberal ideologists and politicians have obsessively repeated a message to the young generation: life is competition, and the field of competition is consumption. The more gadgets you can get, the better your life will be, even if you have to agree to exploitation and humiliation every day of your life. This message has forged the psycho-economic reactivity of the generation that emerged in Western European countries after the defeat of the working class. Now, all of a sudden, the kids have been told that they have to pay the debt accumulated by the financial class. The recession is coming, and social spending has to be cut; there will be no jobs or salary for young people, and the old workers no longer have the right to a pension. No wonder if most of the people who have been promised lots of gadgets in exchange of their life want those gadgets at any cost.

London Looters and Capitalist Bankruptcy

Often in Pasolini's novels and films the young male body is the object of worship and contempt. Beyond its sexual undertones, this ambivalence has a political and cultural meaning: the beautiful and the criminal combined in the same person. (Think of Accattone, simultaneously innocent and sordid.)

Many say that the London rioters are only looters, consumerists and violent. Actually, the human landscape that has been produced by thirty years of competition and consumerism is not that beautiful. Empathy has become frail and hesitant, solidarity has been ridiculed and destroyed. London's rioters have been cultivated by the reading of Murdoch's popular newspapers and television garbage.

We should not worship this rebellion and we should not condemn it. We should be able to accept and understand its historical meaning: capitalism is morally and economically bankrupt. Inside the much-needed insurrection of the precarious generation we should be able to create a new consciousness, and a new self-perception based on solidarity, on the refusal of exploitation, on frugality and on the culture of sharing: sharing production in the net and sharing consumption in the city.

European Insurrection

Leftist intellectuals may despise consumerism and Ersatz culture, but in my view this is not time for moral appreciation. It is time to imagine a possible social recomposition of the precarious body and of the general intellect. Cognitive labour and precari-

ousness are not separate realities. Cognitive workers are unemployed, and precarious workers are often highly educated young people whose intellectual skills are ominously under-used. Cognitarians and lumpen intermingle in daily life, and sometimes they can decide to go looting together.

Looting is not good, particularly when this behaviour involves the life and belongings of common people. But from looting we have to go towards the liberation of the general intellect.

I don't think that all the young people who took to the streets of England in those August nights were motivated by common consciousness or political solidarity. They were moved by many different feelings: rage, aggressiveness, in some cases egoistic consumerist craving, but also in many cases by a desire of togetherness. Insurrections are never the effect of a well-conceived plan, or of good intentions. Generally, insurrections start from a mix of different impulses. What matters is the ability of minorities (call them political avant-garde, call them organic intellectuals, call them schizoanalists) to find concepts, words and gestures that give different people a common vision, and a common understanding of the real and of the possible.

In the next months we will not need a political party. We will need a bunch of curators for the European insurrection. We don't have to provoke the insurrection, as the insurrection is being provoked by the European Central Bank and by the cowardice and the ignorance of the ruling class of the European countries. We have to introduce in the unavoidable insurrection some perception of the potency of collective intelligence, and to connect this perception with the desire of sociality. The general intellect is looking for the erotic and social body that it has lost in the process of virtualisation.

I try to imagine Pasolini on the stage of the present European insurrection, and I think that he could quote Matthew's Gospel:

> **Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life,
> what you shall eat or what you shall drink,
> nor about your body, what you shall put on.
> Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,
> and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
> Are you not of more value than they?
> And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?
> And why are you anxious about clothing?
> Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin;
> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?
> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
> For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.** [9]

I am an atheist, and I do not believe that any almighty father is in the sky. But I know the infinite potency of the general intellect, when it is governed by solidarity and affection, and by desire without greed. We can rely on collective intelligence: it is our godfather who is on Earth. It is our autonomy from any subjection: to capitalism, to the state or to god.

1.
From 6 to 11 August 2011, several areas of London and, later, other cities and towns across England, saw widespread rioting, arson and looting, following the death of a black, unarmed man during a police arrest, after being shot by an officer.

2.
'Borgata' ('borgate' in plural) refers to popular neighbourhoods in the suburbs of Rome.

3.
On 1 March 1968, the Valle Giulia in Rome was the site of a clash between left-wing militants and the police. The protesters were responding to the police's occupation of La Sapienza university.

4.
Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Il P.C.I. ai giovani!! (Appunti in versi per una poesia in prosa seguita da una "apologia")', *Nuovi Argomenti*, no.10, April–June 1968; and *L'Espresso*, 16 June 1968.

5.
Michel Foucault, 'Les Matins gris de la tolérance', *Le Monde*, no.9998, 23 March 1977, p.24.

6.
P.P. Pasolini, 'Troppa libertà sessuale e si arriva al terrorismo', *Il Tempo*, 16 July 1972

7.
P.P. Pasolini, '"L'Italia è un corpo stupendo". Dialogo con Alberto Arbasino' (1971), *Communitas*, no.49, July 2011

8.
'France, or Spain, the important thing is to eat.'

9.
Matthew 6:25

Urban Capabilities: Crafted Out of Challenges Larger Than Our Differences

Saskia Sassen

Urban capabilities have often been crafted out of collective efforts to go beyond the conflicts and racisms that mark an epoch. It is out of this type of dialectic that came the open urbanity that historically made European cities spaces for the making of expanded citizenship. One factor feeding these positives was that cities became strategic spaces also for the powerful and their needs for self-representation and projection onto a larger stage. The modest middle classes and the powerful both found in the city a space for their diverse 'life projects'. Less familiar to this author are the non-European trajectories of the strategic spaces for the powerful and the powerless.

It is impossible to do full justice to all the aspects of this process in such a short essay; here I limit myself to the basic building blocks of the argument. I use two types of acute challenges facing cities to explore how urban capabilities can alter what originates as hatred and as war. One is asymmetric war and the urbanising of war it entails. The other is the hard work of making open cities and repositioning the immigrant and the citizen as above all urban subjects, rather than essentially different subjects as much of the anti-immigrant and racist commentary does.[1]

Cities as Frontier Zones

The large, complex city, especially if global, is a new frontier zone. Actors from different worlds meet there, but there are no clear rules of engagement. Where the historic frontier was in the far stretches of colonial empires, today's frontier zone is in our large cities. It is a strategic frontier zone for global corporate capi-

tal. Much of the work of forcing deregulation, privatisation and new fiscal and monetary policies on the host governments had to do with creating the formal instruments to construct their equivalent of the old military 'fort' of the historic frontier: the regulatory environment they need in city after city worldwide to ensure a global space of operations.

But it is also a strategic frontier zone for those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities. The disadvantaged and excluded can gain *presence* in such cities, presence vis-à-vis power and presence vis-à-vis each other. This signals the possibility of a new type of politics, centred in new types of political actors. This is one instance of what I seek to capture with the concept of 'urban capabilities'. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power. There are new hybrid bases from which to act. One outcome we are seeing in city after city is the making of informal politics.

Both the work of making the public and making the political in urban space become critical at a time of growing velocities, the ascendance of process and flow over artefacts and permanence, massive structures that are not at a human scale, and branding as the basic mediation between individuals and markets. The work of design since the 1980s has tended to produce narratives that add to the value of existing contexts, and, at its narrowest, to the utility logics of the economic corporate world. But the city can 'talk back'; for instance, there is also a kind of public-making work that can produce disruptive narratives, and make legible the local and the silenced. Here we can detect yet another instance of what I think of as urban capabilities.

These urban capabilities also signal the possibility of making new subjects and identities in the city. Often it is not so much the ethnic or religious phenotype that dominates in urban settings, but the urbanity of the subject and of the setting, even when national politics is deeply anti-immigrant. For instance, how can one avoid noticing that when former pro-immigration mayors of large US cities become presidential candidates, they shift to an anti-immigration stance? A city's sociality can bring out and underline the urbanity of subject and setting, and dilute more essentialist signifiers. It is often the need for new solidarities when cities confront major challenges that can bring this shift about. This might force us into joint responses and from there onto the emphasis of an urban, rather than individual or group subject and identity – such as an ethnic or religious subject and identity.

Against the background of a partial disassembling of empires and nation-states, the city emerges as a strategic site for making elements of new, perhaps even for making novel partial orders.[2] Where in the past national law might have been *the* law, today subsidiarity, but also the new strategic role of cities, makes it possible for us to imagine a return to urban law. We see a resurgence of urban law-making, a subject I discuss in depth elsewhere.[3] For instance, in the US, a growing number of cities have passed local laws (ordinances) that make their cities sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants; other cities have passed environmental laws that only hold for the particular cities.

In my larger project I identified a vast proliferation of such partial assemblages that remix bits of territory, authority and rights, once ensconced in *national* institutional frames. In the case of Europe these novel assemblages include those resulting from the formation and ongoing development of the EU, but also those resulting of a variety of cross-city alliances around protecting the environment, fighting racism and other worthy causes. And they result from sub-national struggles and the desire to make new regulations for self-governance at the level of the neighbourhood and the city. A final point to elaborate the strategic importance of the city for shaping new orders is that, as a space, the city can bring together multiple, very diverse struggles and engender a larger, more encompassing push for a new normative order.

These are among the features that make cities a space of great complexity and diversity. But today cities confront major conflicts that can reduce that complexity to mere built-up terrain or cement jungle. The urban way of confronting extreme racisms, governmental wars on terror or the future crises of climate change is to make these challenges occasions to further expand diverse urban capabilities and to expand the meaning of membership.

Cities and Political Subjectivity:
When Powerlessness Becomes Complex
Cities are one of the key sites where new norms and new identities are *made*. They have been such sites at various times and in various places, and under very diverse conditions. This role can become strategic in particular times and places, as is the case today in global cities.

It is helpful to consider Max Weber's *The City* (*Die Stadt,* 1921) in order to examine the potential of cities to make norms and identities. There are two aspects in this work that are of particular importance here. In his effort to specify the ideal-typical features of what constitutes the city, Weber sought a kind of city that combined conditions and dynamics that forced its residents and leaders into crafting innovative responses and adaptations. For Weber, it is particularly the cities of the late Middle Ages that combine the necessary conditions to push its urban residents into action. Weber helps us understand under what conditions cities can be positive and creative influences on peoples' lives. For Weber, cities are a set of social structures that encourage individuality and innovation and hence are an instrument of historical change. There is in this intellectual project a deep sense of the historicity of these conditions. But he did not find these qualities in the modern industrial cities of his time. Modern urban life did not correspond to this positive and creative power of cities. Weber saw modern cities as dominated by large factories and office bureaucracies, thereby robbing from their citizens the possibility of shaping at least some of their features.

A second key feature in Weber's work is that these transformations could make for epochal change beyond the city itself, and could institute larger foundational transformations. In that regard, the city offered the possibility of understanding changes that

could, under certain conditions, eventually encompass society at large. Weber shows us how in many of these cities these struggles led to the creation of what today might be described as governance systems and citizenship. Struggles around political, economic, legal, cultural, issues centred in the realities of cities can become the catalysts for new trans-urban developments in all these institutional domains – markets, participatory governance, rights for members of the urban community regardless of lineage, judicial recourse, cultures of engagement and deliberation.

Moving on, cities emerge once again as strategic sites when our global era begins, a trend that is counterintuitive but has by now been extensively documented.[4] Today a certain type of city – the global city – has proliferated across the world and emerged as a strategic site for innovations and transformations in multiple institutional domains. Several of the key components of economic globalisation and digitisation concentrate in global cities and produce dislocations and destabilisations of existing institutional orders that go well beyond cities.[5] Further, some of the key legal, regulatory and normative frames for handling urban conditions are now part of national framings – much of what is called 'urban development policy' *is* national economic policy. It is the high level of concentration of these new dynamics in these cities that forces the need to craft new types of responses and innovations on the part of both the most powerful and the most disadvantaged, albeit for very different types of survival.

In contrast, from the 1930s up until the 70s, when mass manufacturing dominated, cities had lost strategic functions and were not sites for creative institutional innovations. The strategic sites were the large factory at the heart of the larger process of mass manufacturing and mass consumption. The factory and the government were the strategic sites where the crucial dynamics producing the major institutional innovations of the epoch were located. My own reading of the Fordist city corresponds in many ways to Weber's in the sense that the strategic scale under Fordism is the national scale – cities lose significance. But I part company from Weber in that historically the large Fordist factory and the mines emerged as key sites for the making of a modern working class and as a syndicalist project; it is not always the city that is the site for making norms and identities.

With globalisation and digitisation – and all the specific elements they entail – global cities do emerge as such strategic sites for making norms and identities. Some reflect extreme power, such as the global managerial elites, and others reflect innovation under extreme duress: notably much of what happens in immigrant neighbourhoods. While the strategic transformations are sharply concentrated in global cities, many are also enacted (besides being diffused) in cities at lower orders of national urban hierarchies.

It is worth noting that Weber's observation about urban residents, rather than merely leading classes, is also pertinent for today's global cities. Current conditions in these cities are creating not only new structuration of power but also operational and rhetorical

openings for new types of political actors which may long have been invisible or without voice. A key element of the argument here is that the localisation of strategic components of globalisation in these cities means that the disadvantaged can engage new forms of contesting globalised corporate power. Further, the growing numbers and diversity of the disadvantaged in these cities takes on a distinctive 'presence'. Critical in this process is to recover some of the differences between being powerless and being invisible or impotent. The disadvantaged in global cities can gain 'presence' in their engagement with power but also vis-à-vis each other. This is different from the 1950s to the 70s in the US, for instance, when white flight and the significant departure of major corporate headquarters left cities hollowed out and the disadvantaged in a condition of abandonment. Today, the localisation of the most powerful global actors in these cities creates a set of objective conditions of engagement. Examples are the struggles against gentrification which encroaches on minority and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which led to growing numbers of homeless beginning in the 1980s and struggles for the rights of the homeless; or demonstrations against police brutalising minority people. Elsewhere I have developed the case that while these struggles are highly localised, they actually represent a form of global engagement; their globality is a horizontal, multi-sited recurrence of similar struggles in hundreds of cities worldwide.[6] These struggles are different from the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s, which were short, intense eruptions confined to the ghettos and causing most of the damage in the neighbourhoods of the disadvantaged themselves.

In these ghetto uprisings there was no engagement with power, but rather more protest against power. In contrast, current conditions in major, especially global, cities are creating operational and rhetorical openings for new types of political actors, including the disadvantaged and those who were once invisible or without voice.

The conditions that today make some cities strategic sites are basically two, and both capture major transformations that are destabilising older systems organising territory and politics. One of these is the re-scaling of what are the strategic territories that articulate the new politico-economic system and hence at least some features of power. The other is the partial unbundling or at least weakening of the national as container of social process due to the variety of dynamics encompassed by globalisation and digitisation. The consequences for cities of these two conditions are many: what matters here is that cities emerge as strategic sites for major economic processes and for new types of political actors.

What is being engendered today in terms of political practices in the global city is quite different from what it might have been in the medieval city of Weber. In the medieval city we see a set of practices that allowed the burghers to set up systems for owning and protecting property against more powerful actors, such as the king and the church, and to implement various immunities against despots of all sorts. Today's political practices, I would argue, have to do with the production of 'presence' by those without power and with a politics that claims rights to the

city rather than protection of property. What the two situations share is the notion that through these practices new forms of political subjectivity, i.e. citizenship, are being constituted and that the city is a key site for this type of political work. The city is, in turn, partly constituted through these dynamics. Far more so than a peaceful and harmonious suburb, the contested city is where the civic is getting built. After the long historical phase that saw the ascendance of the national state and the scaling of key economic dynamics at the national level, the city is once again today a scale for strategic economic and political dynamics.

But what happens to these urban capabilities when war goes asymmetric, and when racisms fester in cities where growing numbers become poor and have to struggle for survival? Here follows a brief discussion of two cases that illustrate how cities can enable powerlessness to become complex. In this complexity lies the possibility of making the political, of making history.

The Urbanising of War

Today's urbanising of war differs from past histories of cities and war in modern times. In World War II the city entered the war theatre not as a site for warmaking but as a technology for instilling fear: the full destruction of cities as a way of terrorising a whole nation, with Dresden and Hiroshima the iconic cases. Today, when a conventional army goes to war the enemy is mostly irregular combatants, who lack tanks and aircraft and hence prefer to do the fighting in cities.

Elsewhere I examine the question as to whether cities can function as a type of weak regime.[7] The countries with the most powerful conventional armies today cannot afford to repeat Dresden with firebombs, or Hiroshima with an atomic bomb – whether in Baghdad, Gaza or the Swat valley.[8] They can engage in all kinds of activities, including violations of the law: rendition, torture, assassinations of leaders they don't like, excessive bombing of civilian areas and so on, in a history of brutality that can no longer be hidden and seems to have escalated the violence against civilian populations.[9] But superior military powers stop on this side from destroying a city, even when they have the weapons to do so. The US could have pulverised Baghdad and Israel could have pulverised Gaza. But they didn't.

It seems to me that the reason was not respect for life or the fact that killing of unarmed civilians is illegal according to international law. It has more to do with a vague constraint that remains unstated: the notion that the mass-killing of people in a city is a different type of horror from, for example, that of allowing the deaths of massive numbers of people year after year in jungles and in villages due to a curable disease such as malaria. I would posit that pulverising a city is a specific type of crime, one which causes a horror that people dying from malaria does not. The mix of people and buildings – in a way, the civic – has the capacity to temper destruction. Not to stop it, but to temper it. So it is not the death of human beings as such. It is people in the context of the city. It is the collective making that is a city, especially in its civic components.

Over and over history shows us the limits of power.[10] It would seem that unilateral decisions by the greater power are not the only source of restraint: in an increasingly interdependent world, the most powerful countries find themselves restrained through multiple interdependencies. To this I add the city as a weak regime that can obstruct and temper the destructive capacity of a superior military power. It is one more capability for systemic survival in a world where several countries have the capacity to destroy the planet.[11] Under these conditions the city becomes both a technology for containing conventional military powers and a technology of resistance for armed insurgencies. The physical and human features of the city are an obstacle for conventional armies – an obstacle wired into urban space itself. [12]

Cities as Frontier Spaces:
The Hard Work of Keeping Them Open

The preceding section signals that if the city is to survive as a space of complexity and diversity – and not become merely a built-up terrain or cement jungle – it needs capabilities to transform conflict. It will have to find a way to go beyond the fact of conflicts, whether they result from racisms, from governmental wars on terror, or from the future crises of climate change.[13] This implies the possibility of making new subjectivities and identities. For instance, often it is the urbanity of the subject and of the setting that mark a city, rather than ethnicity, religion or phenotype. But that marking urbanity of subject and setting do not simply fall from the sky. It often comes out of hard work and painful trajectories. One question is whether it can also come out of the need for new solidarities in cities confronted by major challenges, such as violent racisms or environmental crises. The acuteness and overwhelming character of the major challenges cities confront today can serve to create conditions where the challenges are bigger and more threatening than a city's internal conflicts and hatreds. This might force us into joint responses and from there onto the emphasis of an urban, rather than individual or group, subject and identity – such as an ethnic or religious subject and identity.

One important instance in the making of norms concerns immigration. What must be emphasised here is the hard work of making open cities and repositioning the immigrant and the citizen as urban subjects that inevitably, mostly, transcend this difference. In the daily routines of a city the key factors that rule are work, family, school, public transport and so on, and this holds for both immigrants and citizens. Perhaps the sharpest difference in a city is between the rich and the poor, and each of these classes includes both immigrants and citizens.[14] It is when the law and the police enter the picture that the differences of immigrant status versus citizen status become key factors. But most of daily life in the city is not ruled by this differentiation.

Here I address this issue from the perspective of the capacity of urban space to make norms and make subjects that can escape the constraints of dominant power systems – such as the nation-state, the 'war on terror', the growing weight of racism. The particular case of immigrant integration in Europe over the centuries, the making of the European Open City, is

one window into this complex and historically variable question.

In my reading, both European and Western-hemisphere history shows that the challenges of incorporating the 'outsider' often became the instruments for developing the civic and, at times, for expanding the rights of the already included. Responding to the claims by the excluded has had the effect of expanding the rights of citizenship. And very often restricting the rights of immigrants has been part of a loss of rights by citizens. This was clearly the case with the Immigration Reform Act passed by the Clinton Administration in the US, which showed that a Democratic Party legislative victory for an 'immigration law' had the effect of taking away rights from immigrants *and* from citizens.[15]

Anti-immigrant sentiment has long been a critical dynamic in Europe's history, one until recently mostly overlooked in standard European histories.[16] Anti-immigrant sentiment and attacks occurred in each of the major immigration phases in all major European countries. No labour-receiving country has a clean record – not Switzerland, with its long admirable history of international neutrality, and not even France, the most open to immigration, refugees and exiles. For instance, French workers killed Italian workers in the 1800s, having accused them of being the wrong types of Catholics.

Critical is the fact that there were always, as is the case today, individuals, groups, organisations and politicians who believed in making our societies more inclusive of immigrants. History suggests that those fighting for incorporation succeeded in the long run, even if only partially. Just to focus on the recent past, one quarter of the French have a foreign-born ancestor three generations up, and 34 percent of Viennese are either born abroad or have foreign parents. It took active making to transform the hatreds towards foreigners into the urban civic. But it is also the result of constraints in a large city; for instance, it is not feasible to check on the status of all users of the public transport system and also have a reasonably fast system. A basic and thin rule needs to be met: pay your ticket and you are on. That is the making of the civic as a material condition: all those who meet the thin rule – pay the ticket – can use the public bus or train, regardless of whether they are citizens or tourists, good people or not-so-good people, local residents or visitors from another city.

Europe has a barely recognised history of several centuries of internal labour migrations. This is a history that hovers in the penumbra of official European history, dominated by the image of Europe as a continent of emigration, never of immigration. Yet, in the 1700s, when Amsterdam built its polders and cleared its bogs, it brought in workers from northern Germany; when the French developed their vineyards they brought in Spaniards; workers from the Alps were brought in to help develop Milan and Turin; as were the Irish when London needed help building water and sewage infrastructure. In the 1800s, when Raoul Hausmann rebuilt Paris, he brought in Germans and Belgians; when Sweden decided to become a monarchy and needed some good-looking palaces,

they brought in Italian stoneworkers; when Switzerland built the Gotthard Tunnel, it brought in Italians; and when Germany built its railroads and steel mills, it brought in Italians and Poles.

At any given time there were multiple significant flows of intra-European migration. All the workers involved were seen as outsiders, as undesirables, as threats to the community, as people that could never belong. The immigrants were mostly from the same broad cultural group, religious group and phenotype. Yet they were seen as impossible to assimilate. The French hated the Belgian immigrant workers, and said they were the wrong type of Catholics, and the Dutch saw the German Protestant immigrant workers as the wrong types of Protestants. This is a telling fact. It suggests that it is simply not correct to argue, as is so often done, that today it is more difficult to integrate immigrants because of their different religion, culture and phenotype. When these were similar, anti-immigrant sentiment was as strong as today, and it often lead to physical violence on the immigrant.

Yet all along, significant numbers of immigrants did become part of the community, even if it took two or three generations. They often maintained their distinctiveness, yet were still members of the complex, highly heterogeneous social order of any developed city. At the time of their first arrival, they were treated as outsiders, racialised as different in looks, smells and habits, though they were so often the same phenotype, or general religious or cultural group. They were all Europeans: but the differences

were experienced as overwhelming and insurmountable. Elsewhere I have documented the acts of violence, the hatreds we Europeans felt against those who today we experience as one of us.[17]

Today, the argument against immigration may be focused on questions of race, religion and culture, and this focus might seem rational – that cultural and religious distance is the reason for the difficulty of incorporation. But in sifting through the historical and current evidence we find only new contents for an old passion: the racialising of the outsider as Other. Today the Other is stereotyped by differences of race, religion and culture. These are equivalent arguments to those made in the past when migrants were broadly of the same religious, racial and cultural group. Migration hinges on a move between two worlds, even if within a single region or country, such as East Germans moving to West Germany after 1989, where they were often viewed as a different ethnic group with undesirable traits. What is today's equivalent challenge, one that can force us to go beyond our differences and make what it is that corresponds to that older traditional making of the European civic?

Conclusion: Where We Stand Now

The major challenges that confront cities (and society in general) have increasingly strong feedback loops that contribute to a disassembling of the old civic urban order. The so-called 'war on terror' is perhaps one of the most acute versions of this dynamic – that is, the dynamic whereby fighting terrorism has a strong impact on diminishing the old civic urban

order. Climate change and its impacts on cities could also be the source of new types of urban conflicts and divisions.

But I would argue that these challenges do contain their own specific potential for making novel kinds of broad front platforms for urban action and joining forces with those who may be seen as too different from us. Fighting climate change may well force citizens and immigrants from many different religions, cultures and phenotypes to work together. Similarly, fighting the abuses of power of the state in the name of fighting terrorism can create similar coalitions bringing together residents who may have thought they could never collaborate with each other, but now that there is a bigger threat to civil rights that will also affect citizens, not only immigrants, novel solidarities are emerging.

The spread of asymmetric war and climate change will affect both the rich and poor, and addressing them will demand that everybody join the effort. Furthermore, while sharp economic inequalities, racisms and religious intolerance have long existed, they are now becoming political mobilisers in a context where the centre no longer holds – whether this is an imperial centre, the national state or the city's bourgeoisie.

These developments signal the emergence of new types of sociopolitical orderings that can coexist with older orderings, such as the nation state, the interstate system and the older place of the city in a hierarchy that is dominated by the national state.

Among these new types of orderings are global cities that have partly exited that national, state-dominated hierarchy and become part of multiscalar, regional and global networks. The last two decades have seen an increasingly *urban* articulation of global logics and struggles, and an escalating use of urban space to make political claims not only by the citizens of a city's country, but also by foreigners.

1.
I have explored the notion of urban capabilities in a range of other histories, including most recently the 'occupy' movements. See 'The Global Street: Making the Political', *Globalizations*, October 2011, vol.8, no.5, pp.565–71; 'Imminent Domain: Spaces of Occupation', *Artforum*, vol.50, no.5, January 2012, pp.85–86.

2.
One synthesising image we might use to capture these dynamics is the movement from centripetal nation state articulation to a centrifugal multiplication of specialised assemblages.

3.
See Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, Chapters 2 and 6. The emergent landscape I am describing promotes a multiplication of diverse spatiotemporal framings and diverse normative mini-orders, where once the dominant logic was toward producing grand unitary national spatial, temporal, and normative

framings. See chapters 8 and 9 in the same book.

4.
See, for example, S. Sassen, *The Global City*, New York, London, Tokyo and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991 and S. Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012.

5.
Emphasising this multiplication of partial assemblage contrasts with much of the globalisation literature that has tended to assume the binary of the global versus the national. In this literature the national is understood as a unit. I emphasise that the global can also be constituted inside the national, i.e. the global city. Further, the focus in the globalisation literature tends to be on the powerful global institutions that have played a critical role in implementing the global corporate economy and have reduced the power of the state. In contrast, I also emphasise that particular components of the state have actually gained power because

they have to do the work of implementing policies necessary for a global corporate economy. This is another reason for valuing the more encompassing normative order that a city can (though does not necessarily) generate.

6.
See S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, *op. cit.*, Chapters 6 and 8.

7.
See S. Sassen, 'Urban Capabilities: An Essay on Our Challenges and Differences', *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2012, vol.65, no.2, pp.85–96.

8.
Even if the nuclear threat to cities has remained hypothetical since 1945, cities remain highly vulnerable to two kinds of very distinct threats. The first one is the specialised aerial attack of new computer-targeted weaponry, which has been employed 'selectively' in places like Baghdad or Belgrade.

9.
See, for example, Juan Cole, 'Gaza 2008: Micro-Wars and Macro-Wars', *Informed Comment*, 4 January 2009, avail-

able at http://www.juancole.com/2009/01/gaza-2008-micro-wars-and-macro-wars.html; Arvind Rajagopal, 'Violence, Publicity, and Sovereignty', SSRC Blog, 26 November 2008, http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/15/violence-publicity-and-sovereignty/ (both last accessed on 24 May 2012).

10.
A separate source for unilateral restraint is tactical: thus theorists of war posit that also the superior military force should, for tactical reasons, signal to its enemy that it has not used its full power.

11.
S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8. And, from a larger angle than the one that concerns me here, when great powers fail in this self-restraint we have what Mearsheimer has called the tragedy of great powers. See John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

12.
This dual process of urbanisation of war and militarisation of urban life unsettles the meaning of the urban.

See Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*, London and New York: Verso, 2011. Peter Marcuse writes that 'the war on terrorism is leading to a continued downgrading of the quality of life in US cities, visible changes in urban form, the loss of public use of public space, restriction on free movement within and to cities, particularly for members of darker skinned groups, and the decline of open popular participation in the governmental planning and decision-making process'. P. Marcuse, 'Urban Form and Globalization after September 11th: The View from New York', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.26, no.3, 2002, pp.596–606. Second, it questions the role of cities as welfare providers. The imperative of security means a shift in political priorities. It implies a cut or a relative decrease in budgets dedicated to social welfare, education, health, infrastructure development, economic regulation and planning. These two trends, in turn,

challenge the very concept of citizenship. See S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6.

13.
See, for example, P. Marcuse, 'Urban Form and Globalization after September 11th', *op. cit.*

14.
See, for example, Adrian Favell and Michael Peter Smith (ed.), *The Human Face of Global Mobility: International Highly Skilled Migration in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2006.

15.
See S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6; see also Chapters 4 and 5 for a diversity of other domains besides immigration where this holds.

16.
This section is based on research in two previous works: S. Sassen, *Guests and Aliens: Europe's Immigrants, Refugees and Colonists*. New York: New Press, 1999; and S. Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2007, Chapter 5.

17.
See S. Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, *op. cit.*; for a more general discussion, see A. Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

The Experience of Defeat

T.J. Clark

How deceiving are the contradictions of language! In this land without time the dialect was richer in words with which to measure time than any other language; beyond the motionless and everlasting *crai* [meaning 'tomorrow' but also 'never'] every day in the future had a name of its own [...] The day after tomorrow was *prescrai* and the day after that *pescrille*; then came *pescruflo, maruflo, maruflone*; the seventh day was *maruflicchio*. But these precise terms had an undertone of irony. They were used less often to indicate this or that day than they were said all together in a string, one after another; their very sound was grotesque and they were like a reflection of the futility of trying to make anything clear out of the cloudiness of the future.
– Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* [1]

I hope sincerely it will be all the age does not want... I have omitted nothing I could think of to obstruct the onward march of the world... I have done all I can to impede progress... having put my hand to the plough I invariably look back.
– Edward Burne-Jones on the Kelmscott Chaucer [2]

Left intellectuals, like most intellectuals, are not good at politics; especially if we mean by the latter, as I shall be arguing we should, the everyday detail, drudgery and charm of performance. Intellectuals get the fingering wrong. Up on stage they play too many wrong notes. But one thing they may be good for: sticking to the concert hall analogy, they are sometimes the bassists in the back row whose groaning establishes the key of politics for a moment, and even points to a possible new one. And it can happen, though occasionally, that the survival of a tradition of thought and action depends on this – on politics being transposed to a new key. This seems to me true of the Left in our time.

These notes are addressed essentially (regrettably**3**) to the Left in the old capitalist heartland – the Left in Europe. Perhaps they will resonate elsewhere. They have nothing to say about capitalism's long-term invulnerability, and pass no judgment – what fool would try to in present circumstances? – on the sureness of its management of its global dependencies, or the effectiveness of its military humanism. The only verdict presupposed in what follows is a negative one on the capacity of the Left – the actually existing Left, as we used to say – to offer a perspective in which capitalism's failures, and its own, might make sense. By 'perspective' I mean a rhetoric, a tonality, an imagery, an argument and a temporality.

By 'Left' I mean a root and branch opposition to capitalism. But such an opposition has nothing to gain, I shall argue, from a series of overweening and fantastical predictions about capitalism's coming to an end. Roots and branches are things in the present. The deeper a political movement's spadework, the more complete its focus on the here and now. No doubt there is an alternative to the present order of things. Yet nothing follows from this – nothing deserving the name political. Left politics is immobilised, it seems to me, at the level of theory and therefore of practice, by the idea that it should spend its time turning over the entrails of the present for signs of catastrophe and salvation. Better an infinite irony at *prescrai* and *maruflicchio* – a peasant irony, with an earned contempt for futurity – than a politics premised, yet again, on some terracotta multitude waiting to march out of the emperor's tomb.

Is this pessimism? Well, yes. But what other tonality seems possible in the face of the past ten years? How are we meant to understand the arrival of real ruination in the order of global finance ('This sucker could go down', as Georges W. Bush told his cabinet in September 2008), and the almost complete failure of Left responses to it to resonate beyond the ranks of the faithful? Or to put the question another way: if the past decade is not proof that there are *no* circumstances capable of reviving the Left in its nineteenth- and twentieth-century form, then what would proof be like?

It is a bitter moment. Politics, in much of the old previously immovable centre, seems to be taking on a more and more 'total' form – an all-or-nothing character for those living through it – with each successive month. And in reality (as opposed to the fantasy world of Marxist conferences) this is as unnerving for Left politics as for any other kind. The Left is just as unprepared for it. The silence of the Left in Greece, for example – its inability to present a programme outlining an actual, persuasive default economic policy, a year-by-year vision of what would be involved in taking 'the Argentinian road' – is indicative. And in no way is this meant as a sneer. When and if a national economy enters into crisis in the present interlocking global order, what has *anyone* to say – in any non-laughable detail – about 'socialism in one country' or even 'partly detached pseudo-nation-state non-finance-capital-driven capitalism'? (Is the Left going to join the Eurosceptics on their long march? Or put its faith in the proletariat of Guangdong?)

The question of capitalism – precisely because the system itself is once again posing (agonising over) the question, and therefore its true enormity emerges from behind the shadow play of parties – has to be bracketed. It cannot be made political. The Left should turn its attention to what can.

* * *

It is difficult to think historically about the present crisis, even in general terms – comparisons with 1929 seem not to help – and therefore to get the measure of its mixture of chaos and *rappel à l'ordre*. Tear gas revives the army of bondholders; the Greek for General Strike is on everyone's lips; Goldman Sacks rules the world. Maybe the years since 1989 could be likened to the moment after Waterloo in Europe – the moment of Restoration and Holy Alliance, of apparent world-historical immobility (though vigorous reconstellation of the productive forces) in the interim between 1815 and 1848. In terms of a thinking of the project of Enlightenment – my subject remains the response of political thought to wholesale change in circumstances – this was a moment between paradigms. The long arc of rational and philosophical critique – the arc from Thomas Hobbes to René Descartes to Denis Diderot to Thomas Jefferson to Immanuel Kant – had ended. Looking with hindsight, we can see that beneath the polished surface of Restoration the elements of a new vision of history were assembling: peculiar mutations of utilitarianism and political economy, the speculations of Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier's counterfactuals, the intellectual energies of the Young Hegelians. But it was, at the time (in the shadow of Klemens von Met-

ternich, Ingres, the later Samuel Taylor Coleridge), extremely difficult to see these elements for what they were, let alone as capable of coalescing into a form of opposition – a fresh conception of what it was that had to be opposed, and an intuition of a new standpoint from which opposition might go forward. This is the way Viscount Castlereagh's Europe resembles our own: in its sense that a previous language and set of presuppositions for emancipation has run into the sand, and its realistic uncertainty as to whether the elements of a different language are to be found at all in the general spectacle of frozen politics, ruthless economy and enthusiasm (as always) for the latest dim gadget.

* * *

The question for the Left at present, in other words, is how *deep* does its reconstruction of the project of enlightenment have to go? 'How far down?'

Some of us think, 'Seven levels of the world.' The book we need to be reading – in preference to *The Coming Insurrection* by The Invisible Committee (2007), I feel – is Christopher Hill's *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (1984). That is: the various unlikely and no doubt dangerous voices I find myself drawing on in these notes – Friedrich Nietzsche in spite of everything, A.C. Bradley on tragedy, Walter Burkert's terrifying *Homo Necans* (*L'insurrection qui vient*, 1972), William Hazlitt and Pieter Bruegel at their most implacable, Moses Wall in the darkness of 1659, Walter Benjamin in 1940 – come up as resources for the Left only at a moment of true historical failure. We read them only when events

Fig. 1 — Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The 'Little' Tower of Babel*
c. 1565. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Fig. 2 — Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International,*
c. 1919–20

oblige us to ask ourselves what it was, in our previous stagings of transfiguration, led to the present debacle.

The word 'Left' in my usage refers, of course, to a tradition of politics hardly represented any longer in the governments and oppositions we have. (It seems quaint now to dwell on the kinds of difference within that tradition once pointed to by the prefix 'ultra'. After sundown all cats look grey.) Left, then, is a term denoting an absence; and this near non-existence ought to be explicit in a new thinking of politics. But it does not follow that the Left should go on *exalting* its marginality, in the way it is constantly tempted to – exulting in the glamour of the great refusal, and consigning to outer darkness the rest of an unregenerate world (the pimps of their lives). That way literariness lies. The only Left politics worth the name is, as always, the one that looks its insignificance in the face, but whose whole interest is in what it might be that could *turn the vestige*, slowly or suddenly, *into the beginning of a 'movement'.* Many and bitter will be the things sacrificed – the big ideas, the revolutionary stylistics – in the process.

* * *

This leads me to two kinds of questions, which structure the rest of these notes. First, what would it be like for Left politics not to look forward – to be truly present-centred, non-prophetic, disenchanted, continually 'mocking its own presage'? Leaving behind, that is, in the whole grain and frame of its self-conception, the last afterthoughts and images of the avant-garde. **[Figs. 1 & 2]** And second, connected question: could Left politics be transposed into a tragic

The Experience of Defeat / T.J. Clark

key? Is a tragic sense of life possible for the Left – for a politics that remains recognisably in touch with the tradition of Karl Marx, François-Vincent Raspail, William Morris, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, Andrei Platonov, Georges Sorel, Pier Paolo Pasolini? Isn't that tradition rightly – indelibly – unwilling to dwell on the experience of defeat?

* * *

What do I mean, then, by tragedy, or the tragic conception of life? The idea applied to politics is strange, maybe unwelcome, and therefore my treatment of it will be plain; which need not, in this instance, mean banal. Bradley is a tremendous late-Victorian guide; better, I think, because more political, than all the great theorists and classicists who followed; and I choose him partly because he is such a good example of the kind of middle wisdom – the rejected high style – that the Left will have to rediscover in its bourgeois past. He addresses his students (colonial servants in the making) mainly about William Shakespeare, but almost everything in his general presentation of the subject resonates with politics more widely.

Tragedy, we know, is pessimistic about the human condition. Its subject is suffering and calamity, the constant presence of violence in human affairs, the extraordinary difficulty of reconciling that violence with a rule of law or a pattern of agreed social sanction. It turns on failure and self-misunderstanding, and above all on a fall from a great height – a fall that frightens and awes those who witness it because it seems to speak to a powerlessness in man, and a general subjection to a Force or Totality derived from the very character of things. Tragedy is about greatness come to nothing. But that is why it is not depressing. '[Man] may be wretched and he may be awful,' says Bradley, 'but he is not small. His lot may be heart-rending and mysterious, but it is not contemptible.'[4] 'It is necessary that [the tragic project] should have so much of greatness that in its error and fall we may be vividly conscious of the possibilities of human nature.' Those last two words have traditionally made the Left wince, and I understand why. But they may be reclaimable: notice that for Bradley nature and possibility go together.

* * *

Bradley has a great passage on 'what [he] ventures to describe as the centre of the tragic impression.' I quote it in full:

> **This central feeling is the impression of waste. With Shakespeare, at any rate, the pity and fear which are stirred by the tragic story seem to unite with, and even merge in, a profound sense of sadness and mystery, which is due to this impression of waste. […] We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyond the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of man, we see power, intelligence, life and glory, which astound us and seem to call for our worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves, often with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end. Tragedy is the typical form of this mystery, because that greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us, and it makes us realise so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity.[5]**

One thing to be said in passing about this paragraph – but I mean it as more than an aside – is that it can serve as a model of the *tone* of politics in a tragic key. The tone is grown up. And maybe that is why it inevitably will register as remote, even a trifle outlandish, in a political culture as devoted as ours to a ventriloquism of 'youth'. The present language of politics, Left and Right, participates fully in the general infantilisation of human needs and purposes that has proved integral to consumer capitalism. (There is a wonderful counter-factual desperation to the phenomenon. For consumer society is, by nature – by reason of its real improvement in 'living standards' – grey-haired. The older the average age of its population, we might say, the more slavishly is its cultural apparatus geared to the wishes of sixteen-year-olds.) And this too the Left must escape from. Gone are the days when 'infantile disorder' was a slur – an insult from Lenin, no less – that one part of the Left could hope to reclaim and transfigure. A tragic voice is obliged to put adolescence behind it. No more Arthur Rimbaud, in other words – no more apodictic inside-out, no more elated denunciation.

* * *

Here again is Bradley. 'The tragic world is a world of action,' he tells us,

> and action is the translation of thought into reality. We see men and women confidently attempting it. They strike into the existing order of things in pursuance of their ideas. But what they achieve is not what they intended; it is terribly unlike it. They understand nothing, we say to ourselves, of the world on which they operate. They fight blindly in the dark, and the power that works through them makes them the instrument of a design that is not theirs. They act freely, and yet their action binds them hand and foot. And it makes no difference whether they meant well or ill.[6]

Politics in a tragic key, then, will operate always with a sense of the horror and danger built into human affairs. 'And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves.' This is a mystery. But (again quoting Bradley, this time pushing him specifically in our direction) 'tragedy is the […] form of this mystery [that best allows us to think politically], because the greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us.'[7] And it *localises* the mystery, it stops it from being an immobilising phantom – it has any one politics (for instance, our own) be carried on in the shadow of a specific political catastrophe.

* * *

Our catastrophe – our Thebes – is the seventy years from 1914 to 1989. **[Fig. 3]** And of course to say that the central decades of the twentieth century, at least as lived out in Europe and its empires, were a kind of charnel house is to do no more than repeat common wisdom. Anyone casting an eye over a serious historical treatment of the period – the one I never seem to recover from is Mark Mazower's terrible conspectus, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1997) – is likely to settle for much the same terms. 'The Century of Violence', I remember an old textbook calling it.[8] The time of human smoke.

Fig. 3 — Collectivisation campaign, USSR c. 1930
('We kolkhozniks are liquidating the kulaks as a class, on the basis of complete collectivisation')

The political question is this, however. Did the century's horrors have a shape? Did they obey a logic or follow from a central determination – however much the contingencies of history (Adolf Hitler's charisma, Lenin's surviving the anarchist's bullet, the psychology of Bomber Harris) intervened? Here is where the tragic perspective helps. It allows us *not to see* a shape or logic – a development from past to future – to the last hundred years. It opens us, I think rightly, to a vision of the period as catastrophe in the strict sense: unfolding pell-mell from Sarajevo on, certainly until the 1950s (and if we widen our focus to Mao Tse-tung's appalling 'Proletarian Cultural Revolution' – in a sense the last paroxysm of a European fantasy of politics – well on into the 1970s): a false future entwined with a past, both come suddenly from nowhere, overtaking the certainties of Edwardian London and Vienna; a chaos formed from an unstoppable, unmappable criss-cross of forces: the imagined communities of nationalism, the pseudo-religions of class and race, the dream of an ultimate subject of History, the new technologies of mass destruction, the death-throes of the 'white man's burden', the dismal realities of inflation and unemployment, the haphazard (but then accelerating) construction of mass parties, mass entertainments, mass gadgets and accessories, standardised everyday life.

The list is familiar. And I suppose that anyone trying to write the history that goes with it is bound to opt, consciously or by default, for one among the various forces at work as predominant. There must be a heart of the matter.

Which leads to the question of Marxism. Marxism, it now comes clear, was most productively a theory – a set of descriptions – of bourgeois society and the way it would come to grief. It had many other aspects and ambitions, but this was the one that ended up least vitiated by chiliasm or scientism, the diseases of the cultural formation Marxism came out of. At its best (in Marx himself, in Georg Lukàcs during the 1920s, in Gramsci, in Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, in Bertolt Brecht, in Mikhail Bakhtin, in Attila József, in the Jean-Paul Sartre of 'La conscience de classe chez Flaubert' (1966)) Marxism went deeper into the texture of bourgeois beliefs and practices than any other description save the novel. But about bourgeois society's ending it was notoriously wrong. It believed that the great positivity of the nineteenth-century order would end in revolution – meaning a final acceleration (but also disintegration) of capitalism's productive powers, the recalibration of economics and politics, and breakthrough to an achieved modernity. This was not to be. Certainly bourgeois society – the cultural world that Kazimir Malevich and Gramsci took for granted – fell into dissolution. But it was destroyed, so it transpired, not by a fusion and fission of the long-assembled potentials of capitalist industry and the emergence of a transfigured class community, but by the vilest imaginable parody of both. Socialism became National Socialism, Communism became Stalinism, modernity morphed into crisis and crash, new religions of *Volk* and *Gemeinschaft* took advantage of the technics of mass slaughter. Francisco Franco, Felix Dzerzhinsky, Earl Haig, Adolf Eichmann, Wernher Von Braun, Benito Mus-

solini, Edward Teller and J. Robert Oppenheimer, Jiang Qing, Henry Kissinger, Augusto Pinochet, Pol Pot, Ayman al-Zahawiri. This is the past that our politics has as its matrix. It is our Thebes.

But again, be careful. Tragedy is a mystery, not a chamber of horrors. It is ordinary and endemic. Thebes is not something we can put behind us. No one looking in the eyes of the poor peasants in the 1930 photograph, lined up with their pikes and Stalinist catch-phrases, off to bludgeon a few kulaks down by the railway station – looking in the eyes of these dupes and murderers, dogs fighting over a bone, and remembering, perhaps with Platonov's help, the long desperation the camera does not see – no one who takes a look at the real history of the twentieth century, in other words, can fail to experience the 'sense of sadness and mystery' Bradley points to, 'which is due to the impression of waste… And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves… as though they came into being for no other end.'

* * *

However we may disagree about the detail of the history the kolkhozniks in the photograph are living, at least let us do them the justice not to pretend it was *epic*. 'Historical materialism must renounce the epic element in history. It blasts the epoch [it studies] out of the reified "movement of history". But it also explodes the epoch's homogeneity, and intersperses it with ruins – that is, with the present.'[9] The shed on the right in the photograph might as well be a lager, and the banner read '*Arbeit macht frei*'.

'The world is now very dark and barren; and if a little light should break forth, it would mightily refresh it. But alas: man would be lifted up above himself and distempered by it at present, and afterwards he would die again and become more miserable':[10] this is the Puritan revolutionary Isaac Penington in 1654, confronting the decline of the Kingdom of Saints. Penington thinks of the situation in terms of the Fall, of course, but his attitude to humanity can be sustained, and I think ought to be, without the theological background. His speaking to the future remains relevant. And it can coexist fully with the most modest, most moderate, of materialisms – the kind we need. Here for example is Moses Wall, writing to John Milton in 1659 – when the days of the English republic were numbered:

> You complain of the Non-proficiency of the Nation, and of its retrograde motion of late, in liberty and spiritual truths. It is much to be bewailed; but yet let us pity human frailty. When those who made deep protestations of their zeal for our Liberty, being instated in power, shall betray the good thing committed to them, and lead us back to Egypt, and by that force which we gave them to win us Liberty, hold us fast in chains; what can poor people do? You know who they were that watched our Saviour's Sepulchre to keep him from rising.

(Wall means soldiers. He knows about standing armies.)

> Besides, whilst people are not free but straitened in accommodations for life, their Spirits will be dejected and servile: and conducing to [reverse this], there should be an improving of our native commodities, as our Manufactures, our Fishery, our Fens, Forests, and Commons, and our Trade at Sea, & c. which would give the body of the nation a comfortable Subsistence...[11]

Still a maximalist programme.

A tragic perspective on politics is inevitably linked, as Wall's letter suggests, to the question of war and its place in the history of the species. Or perhaps we should say: to the interleaved questions of armed conflict, organised annihilation, human psychology and sociality, the city- and then the nation-state, and the particular form in which that something we call 'the economy' came into being. I take seriously the idea of Jean-Pierre Vernant and the archaeologists that the key element in the transition to a monetised economy may not have been so much the generalisation of trade between cultures (where kinds of barter went on functioning adequately) as the spread of endemic warfare, the rise of large professional armies, and the need for transportable, believable, on-the-spot payment for same.[12] And with money and mass killing came a social imaginary – a picture of human nature – to match.

'When, in a battle between cities,' says Nietzsche,

> the victor, according to the rights of war, puts the whole male population to the sword and sells all the women and children into slavery, we see, in the sanctioning of such a right, that the Greek regarded a full release of his hatred as a serious necessity; at such moments pent-up, swollen sensation found relief: the tiger charged out, wanton cruelty flickering in its terrible eyes. Why did the Greek sculptor again and again

Fig. 4 — Baldwin Spencer, *Men quarreling after accusations over disobedience of social laws*. Alice Springs, 9 May 1901; in *The Photographs of Baldwin Spencer*, 2005, plate 36

have to represent war and battles, endlessly repeated, human bodies stretched out, their sinews taut with hatred or the arrogance of triumph, the wounded doubled up in pain, the dying in agony? Why did the whole Greek world exult in the pictures of fighting in the Iliad? I fear we do not understand these things in enough of a Greek fashion… and we would shudder if we did…[13]

Nietzsche is vehement; some would say exultant. But much the same point can be made with proper ethnological drabness:

Many prehistoric bone fractures resulted from violence; many forearms appear to have been broken deflecting blows from clubs. Most parrying fractures are on the left forearm held up to block blows to the left side of the body from a right-hander. Parrying fractures were detected on 10 per cent of desert men and 19 per cent of east coast women; for both groups they were the most common type of upper-limb fractures… [Fig. 4] Fractured skulls were twice to four times as common among women as men. The fractures are typically oval, thumb-sized depressions caused by blows with a blunt instrument. Most are on the left side of the head, suggesting frontal attack by a right-hander. Most head injuries are thus the result of interpersonal violence, probably inflicted by men on women.[14]

* * *

Do not think, by the way, that dwelling on man's ferocity leads necessarily in a Nietzschean direction. Listen to Hazlitt, speaking from the ironic heart of the English radical tradition:

Nature seems (the more we look into it) made up of antipathies: without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would

turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions of men. The white streak in our own fortunes is brightened (or just rendered visible) by making all around it as dark as possible; so the rainbow paints its form upon the cloud. Is it pride? Is it envy? Is it the force of contrast? Is it weakness or malice? But so it is, that there is a secret affinity, a hankering after evil in the human mind… Protestants and Papists do not now burn one another at the stake: but we subscribe to new editions of *Fox's Book of Martyrs* [a contemporary equivalent might be Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, 1958–68]; and the secret of the success of the Scotch Novels is much the same – they carry us back to the feuds, the heart-burnings, the havoc, the dismay, the wrongs and the revenge of a barbarous age and people – to the rooted prejudices and deadly animosities of sects and parties in politics and religion, and of contending chiefs and clans in war and intrigue. We feel the full force of the spirit of hatred with all of them in turn… The wild beast resumes its sway within us, we feel like hunting-animals, and as the hound starts in its sleep and rushes on the chase in fancy, the heart rouses itself in its native lair, and utters a wild cry of joy…[15]

This has more to say about Homs and Abbottabad, or Anders Breivik and the EDL, than most things written since.

* * *

It is a logical error of the Left, I am saying, to assume that a full recognition of the human propensity to violence – to blood-soaked conformity – closes off the idea of a radical reworking of politics. The question is: what root is it we need to get down to? And even a Hazlitt-type honesty about 'a *hankering* after evil in the human mind' can perfectly well coex-

ist (as it did in Hazlitt's post-Augustan generation) with a 'By our own spirits are we deified.'[16] Human capacities may well be infinite; they have certainly been hardly explored, hardly been given their chance of flowering; but the tragic sense starts from an acknowledgment that the infinity (the unplumbable) is for bad as much as good.

It likewise is wrong to assume that moderacy in politics, if we mean by this a politics of small steps, bleak wisdom, concrete proposals, disdain for grand promises, a sense of the hardness of even the least 'improvement', is not revolutionary – assuming this last word has any descriptive force left. It depends on what the small steps are aimed at changing. It depends on the picture of human possibility in the case. A politics actually directed, step by step, failure by failure, to preventing the tiger from charging out would be the most moderate and revolutionary there has ever been.

Nietzsche again is our (Janus-faced) guide, in a famous glimpse of the future in *The Will to Power* (1901). As a view of what the politics of catastrophe might actually be like it remains unique.

He begins with an overall diagnosis that will be familiar to anyone who has read him; but then, less typically, he moves on. The diagnosis first:

To put it briefly… What will never again be built any more, cannot be built any more, is – a society, in the old sense of that word; to build such, everything is lacking, above all the material. All of us are no longer material for a society; this is a truth for which the time has come![17]

We moderns no longer provide the stuff from which a society might be constructed; and in the sense that Enlightenment was premised on, perhaps we never did. The political unfolding of this reversal of the 'social' will be long and horrific, Nietzsche believes, and his vision of the century to come is characteristically venomous (which does not mean inaccurate): the passage just quoted devolves into a sneer at 'good socialists' and their dream of a free society built from wooden iron – or maybe, Nietzsche prophesies, from just iron on its own. After 'socialism' of this sort will come chaos, necessarily, but out of the chaos a new form of politics may still emerge. 'A crisis that […] purifies, that […] pushes together related elements to perish of each other, that […] assigns common tasks to men who have opposite ways of thinking […] Of course, outside every existing social order.'[18] And the upshot is as follows:

> Who will prove to be the strongest in the course of this? The most moderate; those who do not require any extreme articles of faith; those who not only concede but actually love a fair amount of contingency and nonsense; those who can think of man with a considerable reduction of his value without becoming small and weak themselves on that account… human beings who are sure of their power and who represent, with conscious pride, the strength that humanity has [actually] achieved.[19]

Of course I am not inviting assent to the detail (such as it is) of Nietzsche's post-socialism. His thought on the subject is entangled with a series of naïve, not to say nauseating, remarks on 'rank order' as the most precious fruit of the new movement. But as a sketch of what moderacy might mean to revolutionaries, his note goes on resonating.

* * *

Utopianism, on the other hand – that invention of early modern civil servants – is what the landlords have time for. It is everything Carlo Levi's peasants have learnt to distrust. Bruegel spells this out. His *The Land of the Cockaigne* (*Het Luilekkerland*, 1567) **[Fig. 5]** is above all a de-sublimation of the idea of Heaven – an un-Divine Comedy, which only fully makes sense in relation to all the other offers of otherworldliness (ordinary and fabulous, instituted and heretical) circulating as Christendom fell apart. What the painting most deeply makes fun of is the religious impulse, or one main form that impulse takes (all the more strongly once the hold of religion on the detail of life is lost): the wish for escape from mortal existence, the dream of immortality, the idea of Time to Come. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'[20] What Bruegel says back to the Book of Revelation – and surely his voice was that of peasant culture itself, in one of its ineradicable modes – is that all visions of escape and perfectibility are haunted by the worldly realities they pretend to transfigure. Every Eden is the here and now intensified; immortality is mortality continuing; every vision of bliss is bodily and appetitive, heavy and ordinary and present-centred. The man emerging from the mountain of gruel in the background is the 'modern' personified. He has eaten his way through to the community of saints.

The young man on the ground at right, with the pens at his belt and the bible by his side, we could see as

Fig. 5 — Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Land of Cockaigne*, 1567. Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Fig. 6 — Baldwin Spencer, *Final burial ceremonies*. Tennant Creek, 23 August 1901; in *The Photographs of Baldwin Spencer*, plate 75

none other than St. Thomas More, awake but comatose in his creation. And the lad gone to sleep on top of his flail? Who but Ned Ludd himself?

* * *

Utopias reassure modernity as to its infinite potential. But why? It should learn – be taught – to look failure in the face.

* * *

About modernity in general – about what it is that has made us moderns no longer stuff for the social – I doubt there is anything new to say. The topic, like the thing itself, is exhausted: not over (never over) just tired to death.

All that needs restating here – and Baldwin Spencer's great photographs of the longest continuing human culture are the proper accompaniment **[Fig. 6]** – is that the arrival of societies oriented toward the future, as opposed to a past of origins, heroisms, established ways, is a fact of history not nature, happening in one place and time, with complex, contingent causes. Personal religion (that strange mutation) and double-entry book-keeping being two of them. And by modernity is meant very much more than a set of techniques or a pattern of residence and consumption: the word intends an ethos, a habitus, a way of being a human subject. I go back to the sketch I gave in a previous book:

> **'Modernity' means contingency. It points to a social order which has turned from the worship of ancestors and past authorities to the pursuit of a projected future – of goods, pleasures, freedoms, forms**

of control over nature, new worlds of information. The process was accompanied by a terrible emptying and sanitising of the imagination. For without the anchorage of tradition, without the imagined and vivid intricacies of kinship, without the past living on (most often monstrously) in the detail of everyday life, meaning became a scarce social commodity – if by 'meaning' we have in mind agreed-on and instituted forms of value and understanding, orders implicit in things, stories and images in which a culture is able to crystallize its sense of the struggle with the realm of necessity and the realities of pain and death. The phrase Max Weber borrowed from [Friedrich] Schiller, 'the disenchantment of the world' – gloomy yet in my view exultant, with its promise of a disabused dwelling in the world as it is – still sums up this side of modernity best… 'Secularisation' is a nice technical word for this blankness. It means specialisation and abstraction, as part of the texture of ordinary doings; social life driven by a calculus of large-scale statistical chances, with everyone accepting or resenting a high level of risk; time and space turned into variables in that same calculus, both of them saturated by 'information' and played with endlessly, monotonously, on nets and screens; the de-skilling of everyday life (deference to experts and technicians in more and more of the microstructure of the self); available, invasive, haunting expertise; the chronic revision of everything in the light of 'studies'.[21]

This does no more than block in the outlines: descriptively, there would be many things to add. But from the present point of view only two things need developing. First, that the essence of modernity, from the scripture-reading spice-merchant to the Harvard iPod banker sweating in the gym, is a new kind of isolate obedient 'individual' with technical support to match. The printed book, the spiritual exercise, coffee and *Le Figaro*, *Time Out*, Twitter, tobacco (or

its renunciation), the heaven of infinite apps. Second, that all this apparatus is a kind or extension of *clockwork*. Individuality is held together by a fiction of full existence to come. *Time Out* is always just round the corner. And while the deepest function of this new chronology is to do work on what used to be called 'subject positions' – keeping the citizen-subject in a state of perpetual anticipation (and thus accepting the pittance of subjectivity actually on offer) – it is at the level of politics that the Great Look Forward is most a given.

* * *

What, in the trajectory of Enlightenment – from Hobbes to Nietzsche, say, or Joseph de Maistre to Alexandre Kojève – were the distinctive strengths of the Right? A disabused view of human potential – no doubt always on the verge of tipping over into a rehearsal of original sin. And (deriving from the first) an abstention from futurity. Nietzsche as usual is the possible exception here, but the interest of his occasional glimpses of a politics to come is, as I have said, precisely their ironic moderacy.

Does the Right still possess these strengths? I think not. It dare not propose a view of human nature any longer (or if it does, it is merely Augustinian, betraying the legacy of David Hume, Giambattista Vico, even Sigmund Freud and Martin Heidegger); and slowly, inexorably, it too has given in to the great modern instruction not to be backward-looking. The Right has vacated the places, or tonalities, that previously allowed it – to the Left's shame – to monopolise the real description and critique of modernity,

and find language for the proximity of nothing. The Left has no option but to try to take the empty seats.

* * *

Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will? Not any more: because optimism is now a political tonality indissociable from the promises of consumption. 'Future' exists only in the stock-exchange plural. Hope is no longer given to us for the sake of the hopeless: it has mutated into an endless political and economic Micawberism.

* * *

The tragic key makes many things possible and impossible. But perhaps what is central for the Left is that tragedy does not expect something – something transfiguring – to turn up.

The modern infantilisation of politics goes along with, and perhaps depends on, a constant orientation of politics towards the future. Of course the orientation has become weak and formulaic, and the patter of programmers and gene-splicers more inane. Walter Benjamin would recoil in horror at the form his 'weak messianism' actually took once the strong messiahs of the twentieth century went away. The Twitter utopia joins hands with the Tea Party. But the *direction* of politics resists anything the reality of economics – even outright immiseration making a comeback – can throw at it. Politics, in the form we have it, is nothing without a modernity constantly in the offing, at last about to realise itself: it has no other telos, no other way to imagine things otherwise. The task of the Left is to provide one.

'Presence of mind as a political category,' says Benjamin,

> comes magnificently to life in these words of Turgot: 'Before we have learned to deal with things in a given state, they have already changed several times. Thus, we always find out too late about what has happened. And therefore it can be said that politics is obliged to foresee the present.'[22]

* * *

You may ask me, finally, what the difference is between the kind of anti-utopian politics I am advocating and 'reformism' pure and simple. The label does not scare me. The trouble with the great reformists within the Internationals was that they shared, with the revolutionaries, a belief in the essentially progressive, purgative, reconstructive destiny of the forces of production. They thought the economy had it in it to remake the phenotype. Therefore they thought 'reform' was a modest proposal, a pragmatic one. They were wrong. (The essential and noblest form of socialist reformism – Eduard Bernstein's – came juddering to a halt in 1914, as the cycle of twentieth-century atavisms began. As a socialist project, it proved unrevivable.) Reform, it transpires, is a revolutionary demand. To move even the least distance out of the cycle of horror and failure – to leave the kolkhozniks and water-boarders just a little way behind – will entail a piece-by-piece, assumption-by-assumption dismantling of the politics we have.

* * *

To end by rephrasing the question posed earlier: the Left in the capitalist heartland has still to confront

the fact that the astonishing – statistically unprecedented, mind-boggling – great leap forward in all measures of raw social and economic inequality over the past forty years has led most polities, especially lately, to the Right. The present form of the politics of *ressentiment* – the egalitarianism of our time – is the Tea Party. In what framework, then, *could* inequality and injustice be made again the object of a politics? This is a question that, seriously posed, brings on vertigo.

Maybe the beginning of an answer is to think of inequality and injustice, as Moses Wall seemed to, as epiphenomena above all of permanent warfare – of the permanent warfare state. And to frame a politics that says, unequivocally: 'Peace will never happen.' It is not in the nature of (human) things that it should. But that recognition, for the Left, only makes it the more essential – the more revolutionary a programme – that the focal point, the always recurring centre of politics, should be to contain the effects and extent of warfare, and to try (the deepest revolutionary demand) to prize aggressivity and territoriality apart from their nation-state form. Piece by piece; against the tide; interminably. In the same spirit as a Left which might focus again on the problem of poverty – for of course there *is* no Left without such a prime commitment – all the more fiercely for having Jesus's words about its permanence ringing in their ears.

* * *

The question of reformism versus revolution, to take that up again, seems to me to have died the death as a genuine political question, as opposed to a rhetorical

flourish. To adapt Randolph Bourne's great dictum, extremisms – the extremisms we have – are now the health of the state.

The important fact in the core territories of capitalism at present (and this at least applies to Asia and Latin America just as much as Europe) is that no established political party or movement any longer even pretends to offer a programme of 'reform'. Reforming capitalism is tacitly assumed to be impossible; what politicians agree on instead is revival, resuscitation. Re-regulating the banks, in other words – returning, if we are lucky, to the age of Richard Nixon and Jean Monnet.

It surely goes without saying that a movement of opposition of the kind I have been advocating, the moment it began to register even limited successes, would call down the full crude fury of the state on its head. The boundaries between political organising and armed resistance would break down – not of the Left's choosing, but as a simple matter of self-defence. Imagine if a movement really began to put the question of permanent war economy back on the table – in however limited a way, with however symbolic a set of victories. Be assured that the brutality of the 'kettle' would be generalised. The public-order helicopters would be on their way back from Bahrain. Jean Charles de Menezes would have many brothers. But the question that follows seems to me this: what are the circumstances in which the predictable to and fro of state repression and Left response could begin, however tentatively, to de-legitimise the state's preponderance of armed force? Not, for sure, when

the state can show itself collecting severed and shattered body parts from the wreckage of tube trains. Extremism, to repeat, is the state's ticket to ride.

* * *

There will be no future, I am saying finally, without war, poverty, Malthusian panic, tyranny, cruelty, classes, dead time and all the ills the flesh is heir to, because *there will be no future*; only a present in which the Left (always embattled and marginalised, always – proudly – a thing of the past) struggles to assemble the 'material for a society' Nietzsche thought had vanished from the earth. And this is a recipe for politics, not quietism – a Left that can look the world in the face.

1.
Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945, trans. Frances Frenaye), New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1947, pp.209–10. Translation slightly modified.
2.
Edward Burne-Jones, letter from December 1895, quoted in William Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p.252.
3.
My thanks to Iain Boal, who asked me for a first version of this essay for his conference, 'The Luddites, without Condescension' at Birkbeck, London, in May 2011; and to audiences there and at subsequent readings of this paper. I draw occasionally on material used previously, and apologise to readers who come across things they already know.
4.
A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (1904), London: Macmillan and Co., 1912, p.23.
5.
Ibid.
6.
Ibid., p.27.
7.
Ibid., p.23.
8.
The actual title is David Thomson (ed.), *The Era of Violence 1898–1945*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960. The overall editors of The New Cambridge Modern History, in which Thomson's volume appeared, quickly ordered a revised edition called *The Shifting Balance of World Forces*.
9.
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin), Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999, p.474, Convolute N9a, 6.
10.
Isaac Penington, *Divine Essays*, London, 1654, quoted in Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries*, New York: Penguin, 1984, p.120.
11.
 Moses Wall, letter to Milton, 25 May 1659, quoted in David Masson, *Life of Milton*, London, 1858–80, vol.5, pp.602–03; quoted in part and discussed in C. Hill, *The Experience of Defeat, op. cit.*, pp.53, 280–01, 327–28. Masson's great *Life* is a good companion to Bradley.
12.
On a deeper level, Jean-Pierre Vernant's argument for a connection between the rise of 'de-individualised' hoplite warfare, the generalising of a culture of competitiveness (*agon*), the move towards a conception of social 'equality' or *isonomia* (for the citizen few), and the drive towards a numerical valuation of more and more aspects of social life, remains fundamental. See Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (1962), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
13.
Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Homer's Contest' (unpublished fragment from circa 1872), *On the Genealogy of Morality* (trans. Carol Diethe), Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.174–75.

14.
Josephine Flood, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007, pp.122–23, following Stephen Webb, *Palaeopathology of Aboriginal Australians: Health and Disease across a Hunter-Gatherer Continent*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.188–216.

15.
William Hazlitt, 'On the Pleasure of Hating' (1823), *Selected Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, pp.397–98.

16.
William Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence', *Poems. Vol.1*,1807, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, p.88.

17.
F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882, trans. Walter Kaufmann), New York: Random House, 1974, p.304. Translation slightly modified. I opt for the *Gay Science*'s formulation of a thought repeated constantly, but never so economically, in *The Will to Power*. By 'us', Nietzsche means 'us moderns'.

18.
F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (1901, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale), New York: Random House, 1967, p.38.

19.
Ibid., p.38–39. Translation slightly modified.

20.
Apocalypse, 21,4.

21.
T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999, p.7 (changed slightly).

22.
W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, *op. cit*., pp.477–78, Convolute N12a, 1.

Afterword   Angela Vettese

The State of Contemporary Art

This book originates from one of the most radical experiments ever to have taken place within the context of the Venice Biennale. It is the result of Norway's official participation in the 2011 edition, which consisted of a series of lectures held within some of the key cultural centres of the city, and the invitation to an artist, Bjarne Melgaard, to participate as a professor in the Graduate Course in Visual Arts at the Università Iuav di Venezia. Questions as to how and where to exhibit contemporary art have, since the 1990s, become increasingly pressing. The decision by one state to give its representation over exclusively to discourse and education is a significant response to this set of questions. One cannot fully understand this book's effort to interpret the times we are living in if one does not reflect on its premise, that understanding 'the state of things' is a task to be carried out by the art context, and that this involves understanding its own state of things.

Some specific issues have emerged from the project. First, the role of national participation at a time when the idea of nation is being redefined but, despite globalisation, still surviving; second, the evolution of the figure of the curator since its emergence at the late 1960s. And third, contemporary art's persistence, in spite of everything, as an area of expression and thought that provides a certain degree of autonomy.

The endurance of the nation state as a structural basis at the Venice Biennale, through the national pavilions, is undeniable. Their existence, inaugurated by Bel-

gium in 1907, responded to the desire to increase the openness of the Biennale, in contrast to some more regressive, pro-Italian positions at the time. This system resulted in an increase in the exhibition's funds, through the financial support provided by each of the countries. However, the fundamental justification for the structure was that it made possible a plural perspective on the art of the times, which not surprisingly brought with it inequalities based on the varying amounts of funding committed by the different countries. These inequalities remain today; in fact, they have been intensified.

Despite recurrent calls to abandon this formula – calls that climaxed towards the end of the 1970s during the presidency of Carlo Ripa di Meana – the pavilions within the Giardini have grown in number and currently add up to thirty,[1] while the number of participating nations in the 2011 edition reached a record of 91. Not only that: avoiding the asphyxiating enclosure of the Giardini, and with the goal of establishing a dialogue with the wider context, many other exhibitions, representing nations or otherwise, have proliferated throughout the city. Still, despite critiques to the national representation format, requests continue to be made for new buildings within the Giardini – for example, on the part of China, India and the United Arab Emirates – underlining that when a country reaches a certain global visibility it often wishes to represent itself through art.

Although the pavilion structure has proven to be a productive tool for cultural diplomacy, we shouldn't be naïve about its history and capabilities. We have the right to enquire about nations that don't have states and therefore pavilions; and we can dare to ask whether the state is still a desirable structure. The process of globalisation itself, with its tendency to flatten differences between cultures, makes this a worthy challenge, if done in a constructive manner, without too many statements and claims but rather through a series of proactive proposals. Calling upon several of the most interesting international voices to speak to us of our time, the official Norwegian representation in Venice in 2011 has shown its reluctance to follow the conventional exhibition formulas. It is not the selection of an artist that is at stake (something that actually took place), nor the potentialities of visual language, but rather the kind of action that is called for. In a Biennale context where the solo exhibition is a nearly compulsory format, Bjarne Melgaard was instead asked to teach. The fact that he subsequently decided to organise an exhibition with the students of his course only bears witness to his generosity.

The path chosen by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway for the 2011 edition opposes itself both to commercial logic and to a formula according to which the curator is an individual author: the Norwegian representation was curated by a team who chose to commission what could be considered dematerialised practices – discourse and pedagogy. Such mode of participation seems to have been primarily motivated by a desire not to provide easy, readymade solutions when facing a specific problem. This unwillingness to participate in the spectacle that characterises the overall Biennale exposes the

deep complicities that have been established between contemporary art, the culture industry and the society of the spectacle. Yet the manner in which it has chosen to participate – in several formats, including this book – shows that the context of the Venice Biennale, because of the plurality of curatorial voices and styles it allows in comparison with other, apparently more updated but also more bombastic formats for shows, is still a field where it is possible to think, to wander from the subject, to give room to opposition and to search for new thoughts, even at the risk of looking like you are not there.