



INCIRCULATION

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franke james

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INCIRCULATION

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Department of Art History & Communication Studies



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Contributors

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Marcienne Martin, titulaire d'un doctorat en sciences du langage, est l'auteur des ouvrages *Le pseudonyme sur Internet, une nomination située au carrefour de l'anonymat et de la sphère privée* [2006], *Le langage sur l'Internet, un savoir-faire ancien numérisé* [2007], *Des humains quasi objets et des objets quasi humains* [2009] et *Voix ferrées par l'ombre*, recueil de poésie, [2009]. Chercheuse associée affiliée au laboratoire ORACLE [Observatoire Réunionnais des Arts, des Civilisations et des Littératures dans leur Environnement], université de l'île de la Réunion [France], elle a donné un certain nombre de conférences touchant l'onomastique et l'identité tant en France qu'à l'étranger. Elle écrit également des articles en relation avec ce domaine de recherche. Dans le cadre de ses autres activités scientifiques, elle apporte sa contribution dans un travail d'orientation et de conseil des auteurs étrangers pour la NRO (Nouvelle revue d'onomastique) ainsi que dans des comptes rendus d'ouvrages relatifs à la nomination. Elle participe à la correction et à la réécriture d'articles d'auteurs non francophones.

Bachar Bachara is an art student at Concordia University. He is currently exploring using new visual technologies to integrate images with word and sound elements. Bachara has long practiced poetry and photography. This poem was first written in Paris, where Bachar was living after having left his birth place, Damascus, in 2005. He currently resides in Montreal.

Franke James merges science, art and storytelling to inspire people to take action and “do the hardest thing first” for the planet. Franke uses her skills as an artist, photographer and writer to create visual essays on environmental and social issues. She is the author of two award-winning books, *Bothered By My Green Conscience* and *Dear Office-Politics*. Franke has delivered keynotes and workshops in Toronto, Colorado, Ottawa, Northern Ontario, Cincinnati, Maine, the Ontario Teachers Federation climate change camps, the Ontario Government, and others.

Mission Statement

IN CIRCULATION is an interdisciplinary journal based in the Department of Art History & Communication Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. The journal is an annual peer-reviewed journal, published electronically in the Fall of each year. Each issue will address both historical and contemporary realities. Drawing on the diversity of the bilingual city in which it is based, the journal will explore the circulation of aesthetic, political, and cultural ideas. Without making any specific ideological claims, we nonetheless believe that scholars and artists can take an active role in creating a better world.

Each issue calls for a discussion of the theories, styles, methodologies, and ideologies that appear to have run their course. That is, we seek to re-discover, re-theorize, and re-conceptualize the thinkers and artists for whom others in the scholarly community have already delivered the eulogy. We seek papers that illuminate the relevancy of past thinkers, methodologies.

We embrace the potential of the electronic journal, and welcome responses to our pieces, multimedia content, non-linear structures, collaborative wiki sections, and will continue to explore the potential of digital publishing.

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From the Editors

“TRANS-GLOBAL CIRCULATIONS”

Trans is a prefix that denotes moving across, beyond, or through.

In the introduction to *Circulation and the City* (2010), Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw assert that circulation – as an analytic concept – inevitably evokes both space and time. IN CIRCULATION attempts to capture the essence of this concept through an exploration of the ways in which ideas, commodities, people, images etc., circulate. Each issue responds to a different set of questions revolving around one issue from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

Globalism is often defined as an attitude that places the interest of the world above those of individual nations. A defining characteristic of this trend has been the unprecedented circulation of information, bodies, commodities, and currency. Multi-national corporations dominate financial systems, policies are often made by international bodies, and even civil society has organized as a global actor. As a result, many have proclaimed the death of the Nation-State, born of imperialism, nationalism, and war. But are these proclamations premature? Are ideas and practices still informed by the physical place they are rooted in? Do the local philosophical traditions of the world still influence artistic and scholarly output? Or has a migratory class of workers and creators severed any claims to rootedness? Has the Nation-State truly become a meaningless signifier?

Our first issue asks whether the Nation-State is still a productive means of conceptualizing the circulation of bodies, commodities, ideas, and policies. Can democratic nation-states respond to the challenges of global climate change? Do the clear signs of sovereignty displayed by various nations this year prove that the rhetoric of international policy making is overblown? Ideas, commodities, people, etc., do not just move through (or around) nation-states or geopolitical regions but, as Boutros and

Straw write, they “are accumulated and sedimented over time” (p. 11). IN CIRCULATION seeks not only to explore such movement but also to delineate the parameters of movement(s), and how they shape lived realities.

In 2010, a year of the Winter Olympics and the World Cup, of continued wars and border conflicts, of numerous fights over resources and natural disasters of all sorts, of federal governments vs. drug cartels, of fierce (and sometimes facetious) debates over immigration and Multiculturalism, and of populist revolutions, it seemed appropriate to take a closer look at the notion of the Nation. A decade ago the attacks of 9/11 were misused as rhetoric to support the botched unilateral invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the neo-liberal stripping of their natural resources that followed. The international cooperation in the recent conflict in Libya seems to demonstrate the successful involvement of global, transnational institutions absent in those earlier conflicts. Yet the murder of Colonel Qaddafi in lieu of being brought to trial in the International Criminal Court emphasizes the failure of these institutions to overcome the desires of sovereign Nation-State. The events of 2011, from the so-called Arab Spring to the *Indignados* of Madrid and the growing Occupy movement, have brought the persistence, and shortcomings, of the Nation-State to much public scrutiny and a questioning of late-capitalist regimes. And so, IN CIRCULATION is a journal which aims to explore the tensions between the local and global, the modern and post-modern, agency and structure, and even the exhaustion of these categories altogether.

Many theorists have mapped the shifting space of (post)modernity. Manuel Castells locates the transition within capitalism from a goods and services economy to one of an increasingly sophisticated network of nodes. Marxist theorists have often oriented themselves as opposed to the State, and yet the history of Marxism shows that often the ideology takes hold most firmly within the confines of the State, and as such takes on distinct, national identities. It should also be pointed out that modern liberal democracies in highly technologized capitalist nations have developed a dynamic so as to actually encourage, and benefit from, multiculturalism, plurinationalism(s), migration, and other aspects deemed to be constitutive of globalization.

The Western liberal democratic state was founded on the social contract, assuming powers once designated to religious institutions and monarchs while promising increased freedom and representation for its individual citizens. The most recent period of globalization has seen the role of the state change, leaving many to question its continued relevance. And yet the state persists.

German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk critiques the Europeans suggesting that the best course is to move away from nationalism and towards increased political integration, away from what he calls “club nationalism.” (Interview, “Damned to expertocracy,” <http://www.signandsight.com/features/238.html>) He elsewhere states that the nation-state was in many ways a literary and postal product, the “fiction of a fateful friendship with distant peoples and sympathetically united readers of bewitching common (or individual) authors.” (Rules for the Human Zoo, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2009, volume 27, pp 12-28, p. 14) As Sloterdijk, among others, points out, the nation-state was in many ways a fictional creation, a result of literacy, of creating national publics through reading and sharing letters with distant friends. Modern mass media, and more so current digital communication technologies, including the now near ubiquity of mobile telephony and the Internet, have altered the dynamic on which the nation-state first emerged. We must therefore rethink the foundations on which we co-exist in society. The state hasn’t necessarily come to an end, but if it persists, than we certainly must rethink its role.

The underlying current of Franke James’ visual essay calls attention to the failure of individual states to respond to problems that are global in nature, such as global climate change. Rather than lose hope, she thinks through the role that each individual can play. Samuel R. Galloway presents us with a nuanced argument regarding the nature of citizenship and the state from a queer perspective, focusing on the dichotomy between the failures and successes of many states to protect their citizen’s rights while also examining the tension created when appealing to some abstract sense of the universal. Marcienne Martin contributes a piece on the nature of art in a world in which borders have become increasingly porous and meaning seems more ephemeral than

ever. Bachar Bachara, a native of Syria who lived in Paris before settling in Montreal, offers a poem on the nature of statelessness and transient populations. Invited contributors Toby Miller and James Der Derian approach the issue of the state from different perspectives. Miller reflects on various transnationalism that have predicted the end of the state, the reasons for the persistence of (various sorts of) states, and the crucial role that communications plays in the state. Der Derian's brief piece is a look at the role of academics in America's "the long war," through the lens of his own involvement in filming a documentary about the role of embedded academics in Afghanistan, an excerpt of which is embedded along with the article.

As the revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East continue to unfold and the Occupy movement takes root, we would do well to remember Miller's remark that revolutionaries trying to tear down the state are always trying to replace it with another. We see not one unified world, but many globalizations at work, with the state in motion between them.

-Joseph Sannicandro and Cheryl L. Thompson

Editors

“STATE OF THE STATE”

Toby Miller

[T]he single biggest danger with the financial crisis was a view that gripped a lot of progressive politicians that somehow people were going to want the state to come back in fashion ... the progressive forces in politics are in danger of misreading the financial crisis as meaning people want the state back. They don't—Tony Blair (quoted in Kettle, 2010)

The state is so over. Tony knows.

How often have we been told this over the years? Marxism said the state would wither away once the management of class conflicts was displaced by worker control. Libertarianism thought it would wither away when the suppression of freedom was succeeded by individual control. And religion predicted the same if the suppression of faith was replaced by god-given law.

There are many differences amongst these utopias, but they all rely on magical mechanisms—communism, capitalism, or religion—unleashing the essential goodness of people once the fog of ideology is removed. Then they will govern themselves as classes, individuals, or churches. This end of the state is associated with various other endings: the end of conflict, of politics, of ideology, of globalization, of nationalism, of unionism, of property, of poverty, of welfare, of pollution, of patriarchy, of racism, of warfare.

The revolutions promised by such fantasies have not taken place. But in the period since the 1970s, financial and managerial decisions made in one part of the world have taken rapid effect elsewhere. New international currency markets proliferated with the decline of a fixed exchange rate, matching regulated systems with piratical financial

institutions that crossed borders. Speculation brought greater rewards than production, as the trade in securities and debts outstripped profits from selling cars or building houses. The world circulation of money created the conditions for imposing international credit tests on all countries, which put an end to state-dominated import-substitution industrialization and the legitimacy of national economies, supplanted by export-oriented industrialization and the international economy. As a consequence, 'the space of economic management of capital accumulation' no longer coincided with 'its political and social dimensions' (Amin 1997: xi). Governments remained sovereign and supposedly controlled financial markets, but neoclassical orthodoxy and business priorities called for privately managed international capital. The *Economist* names this an '[i]mpossible' situation ("Global" 1999: 4).

New forms of transnationalism have emerged that question state power, notably the European Union and multilateral and bilateral trading treaties and bodies, such as the World Trade Organization. In addition to these new limits on state power, older forms of non-state territorial control persist, such as warlords, tribes, and feudalism. Meanwhile, social movements splinter the idea of politics and parliaments as the sites where social change occurs; the third sector of civil society is offered as an alternative mode of intervention by firms, families, and funders; and governance and self-regulation displace state control. For Eric Hobsbawm, the last twenty years have produced 'the erosion and systematic weakening of the authority of states: of national states within their territories, and in large parts of the world, of any kind of effective state authority' (2010: 133). There are intellectual corollaries, with the decline of state theory and the rise of governmentality and imagined communities as tropes and methods (Jessop 2009: 42).

In the communications field, there are numerous related endings, mostly associated with the state deregulating, technology emerging, and capital reallocating. These had numerous alleged and actual consequences: the end of newspapers, of books, of masses, of spectatorship, of labor, of television, of landlines, of telegrams, of radio, of distance. In this new and vivid world, the deregulated, individuated media make consumers into producers, free the disabled from confinement, encourage new

subjectivities, reward intellect and competitiveness, link people across cultures, and allow billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. It's a kind of Marxist/Godardian wet dream, where people fish, finance, film, and fuck from morning to midnight, and war is never known. This cybertarian paradise admits each person to the ranks of "creatives." It is home to citizen-consumers, prosumers, twitterers, bloggers, applicants, and downloaders.

That is the strong case for the end of the state and its consequences for communications.

A compelling view is opposed to this position. First of all, exactly which state is "over" in terms of legitimacy, success, or power? There are huge differences between 'metropolitan capitalist states, export-oriented developmental states, rentier oil states, post-colonial states, post-socialist states, etc' (Jessop 2010: 39). There are more and more small states, of the sort that once bothered only 'stamp collectors' and now veer between being 'fiscal paradises, or useful sub-bases for transnational deciders' (Hobsbawm 2010: 138, 141-42). And every social or political movement avowedly dedicated to tearing down states does so in order to establish new ones.

Some regions remain vital counter-weights to the notion that states are finished. In Latin America, for example, mass popular demonstrations in favor of the democratic state protecting people and resources from capital remain part of the continent's unique history, one largely free of religious divisions and linguistic differences, and driven by the most robust form of Enlightenment ideals anywhere in the world (Hobsbawm 2010: 138) (mixed with inequality and *clientelismo*, of course!). In the Arab world, the interplay of regionalism and statehood has been central to conflict and consensus throughout colonialism, the Cold War, and today, and the goals of political Islam remain mediated through the desire for state control (Halliday, 2009b and 2009a).

Despite the buffeting it has taken, sovereignty seem to be an ineradicable desire, even though it is often subject to new divisions and definitions. Communications and

populations may have internationalized, but the rise of democracy within borders has seen the state become an ever-more-vital point of appeal by the popular classes in ways that contradict globalizing tendencies (Hobsbawm 2010: 140).

The last two hundred years of modernity have produced three zones of citizenship, with partially overlapping but also distinct historicities. These zones of citizenship are politics (conferring the right to reside and vote); economics (the right to work and prosper); and culture (the right to know and speak) (Miller, 2007). They correspond to the French Revolutionary cry '*liberté, égalité, fraternité*' [liberty, equality, solidarity] and the Argentine left's contemporary version '*ser ciudadano, tener trabajo, y ser alfabetizado*' [citizenship, employment, and literacy] (Martín-Barbero 2001: 9). The first category concerns political rights; the second, material interests; and the third, cultural representation (Rawls 1971: 61). Each one necessitates engagement with the state.

And communications are crucial to maintaining and developing state power as well as eroding it. Jacques Attali (2008) explains that a new 'mercantile order forms wherever a creative class masters a key innovation from navigation to accounting or, in our own time, where services are most efficiently mass produced, thus generating enormous wealth.' New eras in knowledge and communication index homologues and exchanges between militarism, colonialism, and class control. Fritz Machlup (1962) showed how the research-and-development emphasis of US industry, state, and education was crucial to the country's economic and social power. Since that time, the First World has recognized that its economic future lies in finance capital and ideology rather than agriculture and manufacturing—seeking revenue from innovation and intellectual property, not minerals and masses.

There are five lessons to be drawn from the last three decades. First, communications are still core elements of the state. Second, imperialism is intimately connected to capitalism, which is polarized between center and periphery as it globalizes in search of value through the exploitation of resources and people (Amin, 2003). Third, states can limit capital's power, because they operate in response to domestic political pressures

that are not always synchronized with the desires of international capital. Fourth, the neoliberal financial globalization and technological transformation of communications has diminished this autonomy, so there is a contradiction 'between intensified world market integration and the still largely national architecture of many state apparatuses' (Jessop 2010: 39). The final lesson is that the state is the last resort—for everyone—when capital fails, the political technology that retrieved financial globalization from the brink in 2007-09 (Jessop, 2009). In Hobsbawm's words, '[t]he nation-state remains the framework of all political decisions, domestic or foreign' (2010: 139).

Tony knows the state is over? Sure, Tony.

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“THE BATTLE OF THE CARLS”

James Der Derian

‘The decisive terrain is the human terrain.’

First directive of the ‘Counterinsurgency Guidance’, issued August 1, 2010 by General David H. Petraeus, Commander, ISAF/USF-Afghanistan

‘What is the film *about*?’ This was the dread question, whether earnestly voiced by film-festival audiences searching for *the* meaning of our documentary, *Human Terrain*, or skeptically posed by potential buyers grasping for *the* soundbite that would fill the theaters. Even when asked out of politeness, I would tend toward defensive retort - ‘You tell *me*’ – or pseudo-existential tautology - ‘It is what it is.’ If that failed to satisfy, I would deflect: ‘It’s *Avatar* without the blue creatures and about \$299.9 million dollars.’



There were several reasons for the evasions, probably none of them wholly plausible. But two weighed heaviest. First, this was a film written, directed, shot, and produced from differing perspectives by a team of filmmakers - Michael and David Udris, my co-conspirators, graduated from the first and probably last Department of Semiotics - who held along with Barthes, Foucault, and

other post-philosophy philosophers that not only was the author dead, but any director claiming the prerogative to restore a single meaning to a work of art, was the walking dead. The other reason was more personal than philosophical, delivered by what

Edmund Burke called the 'empire of circumstance'. More powerful than any worldly empire, it trumped all intentions, good, bad or directorial.

The film we first intended to make was about the transformation of America's way of making war. After the 'Mission Accomplished' banner came down and 'shock and awe' proved to be a flash in the pan, facing long and failing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon set out a new counterinsurgency strategy (COINS). First conceived by General Petraeus and other 'COINdinistas' at Fort Leavenworth's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the intent was to shift from a strategy of killing enemy and capturing terrain to winning hearts and minds.

At the core of COINS was the 'Human Terrain System' (HTS), created in 2006 as a TRADOC 'proof-of-concept' program. Its primary mission was to offer 'socio-cultural expertise to U.S. command personnel' that would reduce casualties on both sides of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.



This was to be accomplished - believe it or not - by embedding academics, primarily social scientists, with forward-based combat troops. With a miniscule annual budget (\$40 million) and small footprint (21 five-member teams in Iraq, four in Afghanistan), HTS nevertheless became the high-profile, civil-affairs face of COINS. Just as swiftly, the program and its two charismatic leaders, Steve Fondacaro (retired colonel, Special Forces) and Montgomery McFate (ex-punk rocker, Anthropology Ph.d.) came under attack. Leading the charge was the field of anthropology, once known as the 'handmaiden of colonialism', now determined to preserve the treasured independence of academic scholarship and to prevent culture from becoming 'weaponized'. Credible accounts of the actual operations and impact of HTS got lost in the cut-and thrust of a growing controversy. In effect, HTS became the 'MacGuffin' of COINS, the Hitchcockian device that was driving

the plot towards a final shoot-out between the military and academics.

But the empire of circumstance intervened, in the form and ultimate misfortune of Michael Vinay Bhatia. A brilliant young scholar from Brown University who graduated magna cum laude, worked as a humanitarian activist in Western Sahara, Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan, and won a Marshall Scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree at Oxford, Bhatia returned to Brown midway through his graduate studies to join our new project on the Pentagon's effort to make culture the killer variable of counterinsurgency. Bhatia traveled back and forth to academic and military conferences on cultural sensitivity, competence, and awareness.

Unbeknownst to us, he was also being pursued by the military for his considerable expertise on humanitarian intervention, combatant motivations, and military-civilian affairs. When Bhatia's fellowship at Brown came to an end, with no other academic options on



the horizon, he decided to take a leave from the ivory tower and to apply his knowledge to the 'real world'. In the fall of 2007, after a few months of training at Fort Leavenworth and Fort Benning, Bhatia embedded with the 82nd Airborne as a member of Human Terrain Team One in eastern Afghanistan. As part of the film, we made plans for a video-skyped interview with Bhatia. It was not to be. En route to mediate an intertribal dispute, Bhatia was killed along with two other soldiers when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb. The field report shows up, terse and matter-of-fact on *Wikileaks*:

May 7, 2008, 8:24 a.m.

UNIT: TF GLORY

TYPE: IED DETONATION

TIMELINE:

AT 0824HRS, TF GLORY REPORT THAT A PATROL STRUCK AN IED. 2 X US KIA. 1x US CIV KIA. 2 x US WIA. VEH DAMAGED, CAN NOT BE TOWED NMC...

EVENT CLOSED 08 0858Z MAY 08

However, there was no closure on May 8. As the first civilian casualty of a controversial program, his death was very much a public event. Major newspapers covered his funeral, which was filled family and academic colleagues as well as with members of the HTS, the 82nd and 101st Airborne. At a ceremony following the funeral, the director of HTS presented Bhatia's mother and father with the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom, 'in honor of his heroism and selfless service beyond the call of duty.' His death became the subject of magazine articles, blogs, and then, after extensive conversations with his friends and family, of a documentary that we had begun as one story and suddenly had become another.

There can be no final answer to the question of what the film is 'about'. But I realize now that it is not about one country, one war or one person but of how no intention, be it imperial or authorial, has a chance in a densely networked and highly contingent condition of heteropolarity. This winter I take up a fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin, to begin charting this clash of empires - one conventional, geopolitical, and in decline, the other circumstantial, psycho-cultural and on the rise - through a new kind of map, an e-book. My first research trip will be to the homes of two of the greatest navigators of physical and psychological terrains, where I hope to find an answer to that nagging question of 'aboutness' by staging a 'Battle of the Carls': Carl von Clausewitz, who declared 'War is a realm of chance'; and Carl Jung, who countered, 'There are no accidents'. Stay tuned.

More Information: <http://humanterrainmovie.com/>

Watch the trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZOYjok4BPs>

(This piece first appeared in *Der Tagesspiegel*)

“TOWARD A (QUEER) POLITICS BEYOND THE NATION-STATE”

Samuel R. Galloway

Abstract:

The nation-state is animated by the vacillation between disciplinary normalization and sovereign juridical rule, and as such can only be adequately confronted by activists through the cultivation a political structure wherein the subject is disinvested of both its normative ethical vicissitudes and in such a way that this disinvestment is not experienced as trauma but as pleasure. The article begins by charting the two poles of the nation-state through a reading of Foucault's lectures on Hobbes. Then, in the second section, Galloway draws on the psychoanalytic insights of Leo Bersani's queer theoretical account of the self-undermining subject of pleasure here termed "queer negationism". He concludes by politicizing this self-ascetic practice by demonstrating its conviviality to Hannah Arendt's treatment of revolutionary politics. Leveraging the two strategies together enables a realistic alternative to nation-state politics to emerge, one which avoids the trap of attempting to check disciplinary power by making recourse to sovereign law.

“You see, we must not act hastily....

I quite understand your hesitation. I quite understand it and I share it....

Our predecessor,” said Van Tricasse gravely,

*“our predecessor never said, never would have dared to say, that anything is certain.
Every affirmation is subject to awkward qualification.”*

-J. Verne, “The Experiment of Dr. Ox”

In late-modernity, in Nation-States like America, it may be the case that the only responsible, actionable politics available is a queer politics. This is not to suggest, however, that queers themselves have always been or promise to be exemplary political actors. Nevertheless, as Michael Warner has suggested, there is something queer

about the Nation-State. Yet, 'queer' is *not* simply the negative of the Nation-State, and in potentially revolutionary ways. Warner, however, disagrees, cautioning against "reading[s] of queerness [that] have vaulted over the conditions in which queer politics has made sense."¹ For him the socio-historical conditions of queer possibility are inextricably bound to the Anglo-American Nation-State, and he sharpens his warning with the specter of cultural imperialism: "In the New World Order, we should be more than usually cautious about global utopianisms that require American slang."² While sympathetic to such intellectual reflexive scruple, I find Warner's advice circumscribes the radical potential for politicizing some of the fundamental findings of queer theory to the confines of present constellations of Nation-State power. Such an intellectual orientation seems to effectively entrench the Nation-State as the necessary Big Other of queer political subjects, eliding the possibility for a (queer) politics beyond its confines. Further, such an orientation forecloses the politics of *bricolage* championed by Judith Butler: "There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there."³

Still, Anglo-American political subjects find themselves subject to the power dynamics of the Nation-State, and, by extension, the queerness derivatively engendered by its machinations. To trace these machinations I heuristically read Foucault's critique of Hobbes's theory of the sovereign State as an exercise in charting the dyadic poles of the Nation-State wherein the Nation = disciplinary power and the

¹ Warner, Michael. "Something Queer About the Nation-State" in *Public and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 209.

² Warner, "Something Queer About the Nation-State," pp. 209.

³ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 185. Butler's parodic politics may be illuminatingly read as a politicized counter-*bricolage*.

State = sovereign juridical rule to argue that, like queerness, the Nation-State exploits a liminal positionality. To amplify and texturize the political potentialities of such liminality I gesture toward the complexity of these mutually antagonistic (and in this way mutually, dependently reinforcing) relations to situate contemporary debates in queer theory over a subversive strategy I term “queer negationist” best represented by Leo Bersani and more recently Lee Edelman. I conclude by arguing it is precisely toward a ‘beyond’ of the presentist Nation-State configurations of juridico-disciplinary power that queer theory points, and which finds supplemental theoretical support in the revolutionary political theory of Hannah Arendt.

I. Sovereignty, Life Itself, and Discipline

There is “something queer about the Nation-State,” Michael Warner claims in an essay bearing a similar title.⁴ But what, exactly, is so queer about the Nation-State if not that ‘queer’ is a symptom of the Nation-State as it has come to organize political culture? In this section I trace the queer and paradoxical animus of the Nation-State by engaging Foucault’s 1975-1976 lectures, “*Society Must Be Defended*”. As Foucault contends, it is the interanimation of National disciplinary power and Statist juridical sovereignty that organizes the axes of power in late modernity. As a political concept, sovereignty is a response to an unstable, fluid, indeterminate and unpredictable political field which, nevertheless, folds within it the very conditions of instability, fluidity, and unpredictability that it sought to expel and which now must be disciplined.

⁴ Warner, “Something Queer About the Nation-State,” pp. 209-223.

Foucault goes on to sharpen this distinction between conceptualizing power as sovereignty and power as antagonistic relations of domination via a reading of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. The theory of sovereignty Hobbes is working through, Foucault contends, is one which "assumes the existence of three 'primitive' elements: a subject who has to be subjectified, the unity of the power that has to be founded, and the legitimacy [of the law] that has to be respected."⁵ Methodologically, then, Hobbes is Foucault's arch-nemesis, his agonal opponent: these presuppositions effect a distortion of the stakes of this monstrous game of historical truth. And this is deliberate; Hobbes's political theory, founded on the establishment of sovereignty, is one that, as Sheldon Wolin argues, stands as "an attempted epitaph to politics."⁶ How so?

Foucault argues that rather than consider war as an historical reality, Hobbes *dramatizes* relations of force in the course of fancifully fabricating the infamous state of nature:

There are no battles in Hobbes's primitive war, there is no blood and there are no corpses. There are presentations, manifestations, signs, emphatic expressions, wiles, and deceitful expressions; there are traps, intentions disguised as their opposite, and worries disguised as certainties. We are in a theater where presentations are exchanged, in a relationship of fear in which there are no time

⁵ Foucault, Michel. "*Society Must Be Defended*" ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 44.

⁶ Wolin, Sheldon. *Hobbes and the Epic Tradition of Political Theory* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1970), pp. 50.

limits; we are not really involved in a war.... What does characterize the state of war is a sort of unending diplomacy between rivals who are naturally equal.⁷

This, of course, is a bizarre way of characterizing war, which prompts Foucault to further distinguish between war and Hobbes's "state of war." In the state of war the absence of blood and corpses is supplemented with, oddly enough, a contract: in all the three modes of artificial sovereignty Hobbes delineates (institutional, acquisitive, and familial) there is (presaging Hegel's master-slave dialectic) *concession*: "For sovereignty to exist, there must be—and this is all there must be—a radical will that makes us want to live, even though we cannot do so unless the other is willing to let us live."⁸ In other words, Hobbes stages, and in so doing rationalizes away, the violence founding the State, erasing the very urgent, historical impetus for the real impulse for sovereign rule: "Hobbes wanted to eliminate the historical reality of war, as though he wanted to *eliminate the genesis of sovereignty*."⁹ Why? What is gained by such elimination on Hobbes's part?

On Foucault's reading the redescription of actual war into the drama of the state of war in *Leviathan* is something of a mimetic response to the Norman Conquests (which is, as it were, Hobbes's 'real' antagonist), in particular the spectacular coronation

⁷ Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," pp. 92. Foucault cites the well-known passage from *Leviathan*: "Warre consisteth not in battle onely, or in the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battel is sufficiently known." (*Leviathan*, XIII) Importantly, in his critique of Carl Schmitt's *Concept of the Political* Leo Strauss highlights the same passage for its emphasis on theatricality, cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 105.

⁸ Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," pp. 96. For an elaboration of this concept in Foucaultian terms, cf. Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)," in *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007), 754-780.

⁹ Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," pp. 97—emphasis mine.

of William the Conqueror. The crucial dimension of the coronation is the transformation enabled through its performance:

William, for his part, had sworn an oath and had been crowned by the archbishop of York: he had been *given* the crown, and in the course of that ceremony, he had sworn to protect the laws which the chroniclers described as good and ancient laws that were accepted and approved. William made himself part of the system of the Saxon monarchy that existed before him.... This is a way of showing that William is not really the conqueror he claimed to be, but the *legitimate heir*, an heir whose *sovereignty is restricted by the laws of England*, the recognition given him by the church, and the oath he has sworn.¹⁰

This historical case mirrors the move made in *Leviathan* from analyzing war to staging a 'state of war' that is only alleviated by consensual submission in the form of a contract consolidating the right to violence in the seat of the sovereign State.

But there is another dimension to this transformation that haunts the formation of the State, the specter of which continues to animate contemporary politics. I refer, of course, to the persistent 'us/them' or 'friend/enemy' binary which Foucault carefully details as following racializing narratives for constituting natural alliances of belonging.¹¹ Thus, while William seemingly is assimilated into the Saxon monarchical system of rule, this assimilation is simultaneously a corrupting or polluting abuse of Saxon systems of

¹⁰ Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," pp.104-105—emphasis mine.

¹¹ Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," pp.59-60. Cf, generally, Michel Foucault *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) for an account of the phlembotically grounded ideology of the holy Oedipal family and how this racialized, eugenic programme supported both the exponential growth of Capitalism and disciplinary power by locating in the family the nexus of surplus labor/knowledge. Cf also, Linda Zerilli, *Signifying Women: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), Ch. 4.

power: Saxon laws are now being used by Normans to dominate Saxons. (By the same token Saxon ‘collaborators’ with Norman, Royalist abuses are fantastically no longer Saxon as their political allegiance to foreign power muddies the purity of their national identity.¹²) The historico-political details of Royalist abuse, Parliamentary reform, and agitation by Diggers and Levelers are increasingly cast in racialized terms, so much so that by 1647 texts are being published erecting an allegorical equivalence between the Saxons and the “Jewes.”¹³ Thus, Foucault contends,

[t]his was the first time that the binary schema that divided society into two was articulated with national phenomena such as language, country of origin, ancestral customs, the density of a common past, the existence of an archaic right, and the rediscovery of old laws. This was a binary schema that also made it possible to interpret a whole number of institutions, and their evolution over a long period of history. It also made it possible to analyze contemporary institutions in terms of confrontation and in terms of a race war which was being waged both knowingly and hypocritically, but also violently.¹⁴

It is, I maintain, *precisely* out of this distinctly modern deployment of a biologically rooted ‘us/them’ binary that we witness emergent *mélanges* of *disciplinary power*, or “the appearance—one should say the invention—of a new mechanism of power which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment. It was, I believe, absolutely incompatible with relations of sovereignty.”¹⁵

¹² Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 108.

¹³ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 106.

¹⁴ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 110.

¹⁵ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 35.

Crucially, disciplinary power “is alien to the discourse that makes rule a product of the will of the sovereign. The discourse of disciplines is about a rule: not a juridical rule derived from sovereignty, but a discourse about a natural rule, or in other words a norm.”¹⁶ Further, disciplinary power does not take as given the subject of study, but rather constitutes the subject through the production of knowledges of the subject: the subject is a subject of knowledge. These discourses of disciplinary knowledge emerge, argues Foucault, “as early as the seventeenth-century,” coinciding with “the appearance of state racism: a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products. This is the internal racism of permanent purification, and it will become one of the basic dimensions of social normalization.”¹⁷

Thus, and to retrace the progression of Foucault’s genealogy before problematizing queer resistance to political oppression in contemporary theory, Hobbes is counter-intuitively figured as a theorist of sovereignty who opposed all dissent from centralized, legitimate authority, and not a theorist of war. Hobbes, as it were, attempts to neutralize political antagonisms insofar as he opposes the view that the law fails to stabilize civil relations because it is itself an active mode of conquest and domination. Further, and historically speaking, discourses of resistance to alien sovereignty coincide with the emergence of racialized, disciplinary power. The effect of this coincidence is to localize within the social body itself an ‘internal contradiction’ organized around two mutually exclusive, yet simultaneously reinforcing poles of power: disciplinary taxonomic normalization and sovereign juridical rule. I argue these two poles are coterminous with the Nation-State dyad that so viciously plays a shuttling game of coercive domination:

¹⁶ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 38.

¹⁷ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 62.

“having recourse to sovereignty against discipline will not enable us to limit the effects of disciplinary power,” writes Foucault, precisely because in a fundamental sense disciplinary power exercised through a national social body is an *effect of the constitution of the modern sovereign State*.¹⁸

This is the frustratingly ‘queer’ position many political activists find themselves mired in: assaults on the institutions of the State place misguided hope in the law to “change hearts and minds” (since in modernity—even contemporary late-modernity—it is precisely *not* on the register of juridical, sovereign power that hearts and minds are subjectivated in the first place¹⁹); yet, *only* mimetically satirizing the compulsory normativity of the Nation is to cede the necessity of even the barest legal protections to serve as the prerequisite backdrop of political interventions—at the very least it presupposes access to privileges not available to all. What is urgently required is a *qualified* renunciation of precisely the unqualified will-to-life necessary to the animation of sovereignty, a resolute “No” to the future as it is presently proposed, even if not the future itself.²⁰

¹⁸ Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” pp. 39.

¹⁹ Cf. Arendt, Hannah. “Civil Disobedience” in *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972), pp. 81, where Arendt draws on the example of Prohibition as a case that undermines the liberal conceit in the potency of Law.

²⁰ In a novel deployment of Foucault and Deleuze, Jasbir Puar has persuasively argued in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) that simply focusing on biological modes of reproduction ignores the *regenerative*, or non-strictly biological means by which power circulates and self-perpetuates. I do not wish to succumb to the ploy of taking biological reproductivism as the paradigmatic mode of discursive coercion, but it seems even the phrase “market virility” betrays, albeit by metaphorical derivation, the continuing hegemony of the genre of reproductivity. This genre includes characters as diverse as born-again Christians and Nietzschean übermensch, displaying qualities of, say, market virility in, perhaps, a virtual environment through the mask of their “Second Life” avatar. That is to say, as Puar skillfully demonstrates, the *living* “body of excess”—the multiply, repeatedly assembled body—remains the interface of power, whether to gather information (as in the rapidly shifting yet continuous mechanisms of biopolitical control or to regulate the actions of subjects through technologies of disciplinary normalization. It may also be precisely the indifference of power to the quality of life which enables the rapidity and multiplicity of its deployments,

II. Quarrelling, Cavorting and Conspiring with Queers

Until recently I've struggled to understand the *political* dimensions of the anti-social strain of queer theory I term queer negationism, especially when brought to the extremes proposed by Lee Edelman in *No Future*.²¹ As a political theorist, and one whose archive includes the future-oriented work of the rather anti-social Hannah Arendt, sentences in *No Future* like the one to follow strike me as insidiously anti-political, and thus profoundly *irresponsible*:

But politics (as the social elaboration of reality) and the self (as mere prosthesis maintaining the future for the figural Child), are what queerness, again as figure, necessarily destroys—necessarily insofar as this 'self' is the agent of reproductive futurism and this 'politics' is the means of its promulgation as the order of social reality.²²

In other words, politics is merely the means by which the present social elaboration of reality is reproduced. This seems to hand over politics to heteronormative reproductive futurism—a profoundly *antihistorical*, and thus theoretically suspect assumption.²³ And, perhaps not surprisingly, I locate in this concession the profound *failure* of Edelman's

and which prompted Foucault to politicize modes of disciplinary *ascesis* as an act of reverse-discourse, making the cultivation of a life ethically rooted in pleasure a political act of subversion. Cf. Foucault, generally, the series of interviews collected in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), especially "Friendship as a Way of Life," pp. 135-140, and Robert Burns Neveline, *Bodies at Risk: Unsafe Limits in Romanticism and Postmodernism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 82-83 for a Deleuzian influenced defense of Foucault's valorization of Medieval courtship rituals against Bersani's allegation that such a move is "quaint."

²¹ Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

²² Edelman, *No Future*, pp. 30.

²³ I am drawing on Muñoz's rather clear-headed suggestion that queers *not* "hand over futurity to normative white reproductive futurity" (pp. 95) so as to enable "another modality of doing and being that is in process, unfinished" (pp. 99).

argument: queers become the negative of social order, irrespective of the quality of the social order. At the same time, however, this social order is ahistorically hypostatized, doomed to forever and always reproduce itself in the name of the figural Child.²⁴ Edelman actually, and no doubt unwittingly, diagnoses his own problem: Queerness “only means [i.e., is meaningful] by figuring a *threat* to meaning, which depends of the promise of coming, in a future continuously deferred, into the presence that reconciles meaning with being in a fantasy of completion—a fantasy on which every subject’s cathexis of the signifying system depends.”²⁵ Beneath the obfuscating detritus of jargon is a rather straight-forward claim: as a queer, Edelman is meaningful only insofar as he destroys the very system of meaning he relies on as a queer, if queer is to mean anything. What is negated is *not only* the Symbolic law of the figural Child, but also, and necessarily, the queer. It is hard to see how this is anything but yet another exercise of the queer auto-erasure Bersani pointedly diagnoses:

But what’s troubling is that, in rejecting essentializing identities derived from sexual preference, [such theories] mount a resistance to homophobia in which the agent of resistance has been erased: there is no longer any homosexual subject to oppose the homophobic subject. The desirable social

²⁴ Compare Edelman’s ahistorical approach—a theoretical deficit resultant, I think, from over-reliance on Lacanian psychoanalysis, which itself teeters at times between analytic formalism and ahistorical speculation—to the majesty of Berlant’s *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997). In these essays Berlant’s discriminating capacity to read in various cultural texts the ways in which the infantilization of citizens effects the seeming necessity of accepting the “system” as it is in its present tense, as it is *now*, is inspiringly exemplary. An infantilized citizenry and the elevated political status of the fetus were not an a priori condition of American political life, but rather emerged historically as the result of various contingent, but still idiosyncratically consistent, countersubversive responses typical of the Reaganite Right. That is, by historicizing the nation, which is to say, by exposing the contingency of its political foundation (i.e., its temporality), Berlant defies the foreclosure of futurity, bringing to politics ‘live sex acts’ that challenge the deadeningly ‘natural’ reproduction of the National Symbolic Edelman diagnoses as strictly reproductive.

²⁵ Edelman, *No Future*, pp. 114.

transgressiveness of gayness—its aptitude for contesting oppressive structures—depends not on denying gay identity, but rather on exploring the links between a specific sexuality, psychic mobility, and a potentially radical politics.²⁶

However, by figuring queers as figures of negation, Edelman negates the potential participation of queers in creating a future that is *not* dominated by a politics conducted for the sake of the figural Child.

By contrast, even the most radical moment of queer negationism in Bersani's *Homos* sustains the possibility of creating new futures, as when, in the now infamous reading of Genet's *Funeral Rites* the Nazi Erik and the French collaborator Riton "fuck the world" on a Paris rooftop:

Because they know they will soon die, this act naturally has some of the desperate and brutal defiance of Genet's "J'encule le monde", but it also contains—intriguingly for us—the promise of a new kind of fertilization. They come not with each other but, as it were, *to the world*, and *in so doing they have the strange but empowering impression of looking at the night as one looks at the*

²⁶ Cf. Bersani, *Homos*, pp. 56. Cf. Hannah Arendt, "The Jewish Army—the Beginning of a Jewish Politics?" (1941) in *The Jewish Writings* ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), pp. 136-139, 137: "One truth that is unfamiliar to the Jewish people, though they are beginning to learn it, is that *you can only defend yourself as the person you are attacked as*. A person attacked as a Jew cannot defend himself as an Englishman or Frenchman. The world would only conclude that he is not defending himself.... Jews today are obsessed with the fixed idea of their own meaninglessness. Some of them hope this means they can exit the political stage yet once again, and some are in honest despair at belonging to a powerless and evidently completely depoliticized group." On the (queer) relationship in Arendt's work between homosexuality and Jewishness, and, in turn, how both pariah positions relate to racialized social norms of biopower, cf. Morris Kaplan, "Refiguring the Jewish Question: Arendt, Proust, and the Politics of Sexuality" in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park, Penn: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp.105-133.

future. For Genet, this ‘gesture of victory’ toward the world depends on an unqualified will to destroy.²⁷

But what if, for instance, the gesture of victory at stake in Bersani’s reading of Genet is a *welcoming of the world* via a dis-placement of the self in ek-static moments of pleasure as much as a defiant ‘fucking of the world’? Wouldn’t this be the *jouissance* of inviting the world ‘in’? (Though, language gets sticky here since the self whose ‘inside’ the world is being invited into is dissolved during the transaction of invitation. This ‘invitation’ or ‘infestation’ of the world ‘into’ the subject is really more a dissemination of the self amidst the flux of the world than an impregnation of the subject by the world.²⁸) In “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani provocatively argued, at the height of the AIDS crisis no less, that the gay male obsession with sex should be *celebrated* because “it never stops representing the internalized phallic male as an infinitely loved object of sacrifice.”²⁹ Here, on this model of queer negationism, what is denied under an ascetic regime of *jouissance* is precisely the self, not some outside, Other social order. The boundary line, the ‘barred subject,’ which may be said to be the phantasy of the sovereign, discrete subject, is dissolved in orgasm. On Bersani’s count “[s]exuality, at least in the mode in which it is constituted, may be a tautology for masochism.”³⁰ Yet, contra Edelman, such

²⁷ Bersani, Leo. *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 166—final emphasis mine.

²⁸ Cf. Bersani, *Homos*, pp. 118-120, 120: When reading Gide’s *Immoralist* Bersani detects in the convalescence of protagonist Michel a sort of queer re-birthing through pederastic desire, culminating in a scene when Michel experiences his body anew while nude sunbathing: “Now his body, uncovered, can *touch* everywhere. His...naked flesh...extends itself into the world, abolishing the space between it and the soil, the grass, and the air. He *is*, briefly, the contact between himself and the world, and he has simultaneously become nothing but a bodily ego *and* has broken the boundaries of that ego.” This breaking-down which also refigures a corporeal investment may be illuminatingly understood as the schizoid immanence Deleuze and Guattari trace in *Anti-Oedipus*.

²⁹ Bersani, Leo. “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in *October*, Vol. 43, AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism (Winter, 1987), pp. 197-222. Passage from the concluding paragraph, pp. 222.

³⁰ Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” pp. 217. Tim Dean takes Bersani to task for this figuration, making a petty quip about the centrality of the rectum as a metaphor for the grave of the violence-authorizing ‘self’.

masochistic *jouissance* is political to the extent that “[t]he self is a practical convenience; promoted to the status of an ethical ideal, it is a sanction for violence.”³¹ Denying this perpetually violent self-defensive self, masochistically, is a politically potent act: in accepting the intimate interanimation of self and social order animus is neither projected outward into the world, nor inward against the self. Rather, Bersani’s gay outlaws “come not with each other, but to the world...” Openness to the political world, not its negation, is what ascetic *jouissance* promises; it is a political posture that neither hypostatizes the present social order, nor disempowers the self as an agent of subversion (even if that agent begins by ‘only’ subverting himself).

To the extent that this displacement of the self is also a displacement of an unqualified will-to-life—where life is understood as, at bare minimum, control over the decision to live or die—queer sexuality³² is simultaneously a radical disavowal of

Such an objection, as I argued, misses the timeliness of Bersani’s intervention: rather than figure the rectum as a slaughterhouse, he figures it as a site of redemption (ironically): in putting to bed the self a new relation to the world is conceivable. Thus, when Dean continues to argue that the ego remains too central to Bersani’s argument he overlooks the degree to which, as quoted above, Bersani qualifies his assertion regarding sexuality appearing masochistic. By framing the ego-shattering effects of *jouissance* within the current constitution of the subject (pp. 217), Bersani strategically avoids conflating the ego as it is figured with a transcendental, masterful ego. Thus, since almost all subjects *begin* from a conceptualization of selfhood intricately bound-up with a notion of the ego, discovering an *ascesis* to aid in moving through and beyond that limiting figuration of the subject-qua-ego is necessary. Here Bersani honors the late Foucault even in his most querulous engagement with him: gay butt-fucking is an ascetic practice of the care of the self: the self is, as it were, ‘taken care of,’ fucked-over, blown-away such that the subject is subject to new relations. Cf. *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 130-131.

³¹ Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” pp. 222.

³² A common objection to the necessity of qualifying sexuality as ‘queer’—“doesn’t *all* sex do what you ascribe to ‘queer’ sexuality?”—fails to adequately account for the troublesome ways in which sex and sexuality is *done*. The delightfully provocative essay by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” addresses publicly flaunted representations of (hetero)sex(uality) in public, from bus-stop lingerie ads to wedding bands. Cf. Warner, “Sex in Public,” in *Publics and Counterpublics*, pp. 187-208. One eagerly anticipates reading about the Rambles or the Catacombs, and thwarting this desire is, in part, the pedagogical strategy their essay performs: calling into question the assumed normalcy of the heterosexual media that saturates ordinary public space demands a reconsideration of what constitutes ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ (just as the concluding consideration of erotic vomiting solicits norms of identity and pleasure-politics). The point is: many people execute sex acts, but this says nothing of whether or not they have, in so doing, figuratively executed themselves.

sovereignty. And, as Bersani somewhat rhetorically ponders, it may be precisely anxiety over losing sovereignty that lies at the heart of “the big secret about sex: most people don’t like it.”³³ It is, then, *not* ironic that what was once a truism for politics—that the pleasure of the ‘pursuit of happiness’ takes the courage to risk facing loss of life—became potent for a generation *not* in the glorious public realm, but in the shadows of Times Square tearooms and bathhouses at the dawn of a liberation movement, and at the height of an epidemic.³⁴ Yet, the imbrication of sexual risk, the loss of self, and political courage succoring current generations of sexually active (queer) citizens is swiftly losing its potency: queer sexuality suffers from privatization, politics from commercialization, and the self is lost not in pleasure, but debt. In part this is because we are told we have no future, and what is more, we shouldn’t want one.³⁵ What is more, speaking for a self-displaced subject of pleasure in the realm of politics is extremely difficult, and by design: ‘respectable’ politics, we are told, is about seeking recognition, pursuing rational self-interest, and so on... all the aims and abilities found suspect by a

³³ Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?”, pp. 197.

³⁴ Cf. Hocquenghem, Guy. *Homosexual Desire* trans. Daniela Dangoor (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993). In this trenchant polemic, published the same year as *Anti-Oedipus*, Hocquenghem, a French gay man, writes: “‘Practicing’ homosexuals are, in a sense, people who have failed in their sublimation; they are ‘incapable of fully assuming the demands which nature and culture may impose on individuals.’ To fail one’s sublimation is in fact merely to conceive social relations in a different way.... [i]n Turkish baths, for example, where homosexual desires are plugged in anonymously, in spite of ever-present fears that the police may be present.” (111) The anus for Hocquenghem is championed, not because anal sex is inherently ‘homosexual,’ but rather, in two closely related senses: 1) the pleasures of anal sex are available to everyone, whereas 2) phallo-vaginal sex is exclusionary, and as such tainted by the ideology of social desexualization characteristic of sublimation. Thus, “[t]he anus’s group mode is an annular one, a circle which is open to an infinity of directions and possibilities for plugging in, with no set places. The group annular mode (one is tempted to spell it ‘anular’) causes the ‘social’ of phallic hierarchy, the whole house of cards of the ‘imaginary,’ to collapse.” (111)

³⁵ This is the ironic conviviality of Edelman’s call for queers (and other minoritarians) to adopt an ethics founded on the refusal of futurity, on “no future,” and the very real structural foreclosures the Nation-State hybrid ceaselessly invents to hem in the future possibilities queers and their allies may strategically pursue in the pursuit of happiness, or even in a more conditioned manner, the “art of not being governed quite so much.” Cf. Foucault, Michel. “What is Critique?” in *The Essential Foucault* ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), pp. 265.

citizenry of queer subjects of pleasure apprehended by contradictory and garbled irruptions of acting-out.

Most profoundly, however, what the Nation-State forecloses is the gaze Erik and Riton train on the night sky: “the strange but empowering impression of looking at the night as one looks at the future.” This foreclosure is mirrored perfectly in Bersani’s own choice of future-oriented texts, as the scene he chooses is already freighted with death: Genet’s Erik and Riton know the jig is up, and so they gaze at the night as if it is their last. That is, they gaze at the future *nostalgically*. But what would it look like to cruise the world differently, with a commitment to impede implanted and inscribed ideological interdicts, with a qualified will to destroy not others but the conditions of (im)possibility foreclosing the dawn? Or, restated: Is it possible to figure politics as an *explicitly* sexual, and thus non-sovereign, practice?

III. A Queer Politics of Non-Sovereign Pleasure

Hannah Arendt’s biographer, and political-theorist and psychoanalyst Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, pointedly reminds readers of Arendt’s work that politics is about a “love for the world” and not, as in the power-politics of the bourgeoisie, self-aggrandizement. This commitment to the world animated Arendt’s approach to thinking-through the phenomenology of political experience so much so that, in “[r]ejecting the philosophical tradition of *contemptus mundi*, Arendt wanted to call her book [*The Human Condition*]

Amor Mundi, love of the world.”³⁶ Fundamentally, as Bersani suggests, one cannot be amorously open to the world *and* maintain a posture of sovereignty, and thus Arendt understood politics to be actualized only when and where the concept of the political grounded in sovereignty is dis-invested. Such psychic divestment is not a fantasy on Arendt’s count; quite the contrary: the founding of America, for instance, stands as an exemplary case of the revolutionary power of non-sovereign pleasure politics to open and sustain spaces of freedom.

Perhaps counter-intuitively Arendt’s public realm is thoroughly saturated in eroticized affect. While *On Revolution* is notoriously the text where Arendt seems to banish *compassion* from the public realm, faulting the overwhelming intensity of *pathos* for the failure of the French Revolution,³⁷ it is also the text where Arendt, inspired by John Adams, gestures toward a theory of political pleasure:

It is precisely because the tyrant has no desire to excel and lacks all passion for distinction that he finds it so pleasant to rise above the company of all men; conversely, it is the desire to excel which makes men

³⁶ Young-Bruehl, Elizabeth. *Hannah Arendt, For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 324.

³⁷ For a brilliantly even-handed and novel approach to Arendt’s relationship to affect see the fine essay by Deborah Nelson, “Suffering and Thinking” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren G. Berlant (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 219-244. In this essay Nelson situates *On Revolution* within the context of having been interrupted by Arendt’s coverage of the Eichmann trial, which she argues foregrounds and also qualifies the treatment of compassion in the discussion of the French Revolution. For, as Nelson notes, “It is not that Eichmann could not feel for others (though nothing in his testimony suggests that he could) that disabled his conscience and permitted him to transport Jews to their death, Arendt argues, but that he could not imagine their having a perspective other than his own. Therefore, her irony [in reportage style] can be viewed as an attempt at plurality, as mocking as it is. By taking him at his word, Arendt is able to display his self-understanding and its ludicrousness at the same time. That irony is an affectless rhetoric suggests the distance between plurality and empathy. It was a distance, however, that many of her detractors could not perceive, not because they were poor readers necessarily, but because their habits of reading and their preference for an emotional explanation for Nazi evil overrode her intervention.” (pp. 232)

love the world and enjoy the company of their peers, and drives them into public business.³⁸

As I have argued elsewhere, this desire to excel or to, in Adams's words, 'emulate,' is a *political* variation on the theme of world-receptive sensual *ascesis* Bersani discerns in queer (anal) sex.³⁹ Arendt elaborates on this desire, associating with politics a three-fold pleasure: 1) the tactile sensitivity or sensibility of moving through the world, the activity of *being aroused* and *arousing* the world; 2) the dynamic interplay characteristic of the exhibitionist and the voyeur, the thrill of *appearing before* and *watching* others; 3) the art of (re-)stylizing public personae, what may be said to be the ethical process of becoming or fashioning oneself as a character of political history.⁴⁰ In *On Revolution* Arendt rather forwardly asserts, quoting John Adams no less than *three* times, "it is action, not rest, that constitutes our pleasure," to argue that people engage in political action in no small measure because it feels good.⁴¹ It must strike contemporary readers as strange to encounter the experience of the American revolutionaries, especially Jefferson and Adams, who eagerly and unashamedly affirmed the happiness, the pleasure of politics. This pursuit of happiness, not "nature's god nor self-evident truth," is what founds and invigorates political assemblies.⁴² That is to say, political pleasure is *active*, the satisfying sensation of moving through a web of relations, acting in concert

³⁸ Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 120.

³⁹ Galloway, Samuel. "The Other Side of the Coin: The Pathos of Non-Sovereign Politics and the Pleasure of Forgiveness," unpublished manuscript.

⁴⁰ Becoming a self capable of becoming-other, in other words, is a task which cannot be undertaken in isolation, but requires the presence of others who arouse admiration, reverence, contempt, revulsion—that is, *desire*. Cf. generally Friedrich Nietzsche, especially the early yet enduringly formative essay "Schopenhauer as Educator," in *Untimely Meditations* ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴¹ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 24, 187, and 214.

⁴² Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 187.

with others, creating and cultivating novel modes of relating to others in playgrounds of innovation.⁴³ If this claim is persuasive, then it is not civic duty nor some other such prosaic delusion, but narcissistic auto-eroticism, a political exhibitionism, which motivates political engagement.

It is for this reason, too, that happiness must be *public* happiness, and not simply the long enshrined private happiness of European liberalism; the pleasure of action requires a public space where it can appear before voyeuristic spectators. “Tyranny,” writes Arendt, “deprived of public happiness, though not necessarily of private well-being, while a republic granted to every citizen the right to become ‘a participator in the government of affairs’, *the right to be seen in action*.”⁴⁴ Thus, institutionalized spaces of appearance are necessary for politics.⁴⁵ Complimenting the sensation of actively engaging others, then, is the scopophilic pleasure of politics, the pleasure of the voyeur and the exhibitionist, the undeniable generosity of *narcissistic* performative display and gratuitous spectatorial identification. Politics for this reason, says Arendt, is the pleasure

⁴³ Compare this pathos for self-display with the degenerative, pleasure- and life-sapping asceticism of appearance traced by Christina Ross in *The Aesthetics of Engagement: Contemporary Art and Depression* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Ch. 2: “The Laboratory of Deficiency”. Central to the discrepancy between the experience of the American revolutionaries and Ross’s subjects is the status of the influence exercised by Capital on the ordinary lives of apparent actors. In casting politics as a mode of playfulness I am indebted to the insights of D. W. Winnicott in *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁴ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 121—emphasis mine. Compare this ‘right to be seen’ to, for instance, certain preoccupations with the ‘right to have rights’.

⁴⁵ It occurs to me now that it is plausible Arendt demands a constitutional amendment protecting public dissent and protest precisely because such a right would literally transform *every* public space into a freely accessible political space. In this regard, Arendt seeks to radicalize public space itself by democratizing access to a stage of appearance wherever it is encountered. Cf. Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience,” pp.101. Cf. also the appropriative strategy at work in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 198: “‘Where you go, you will be a *polis*’: these famous words became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere.” Acknowledging the fragility of human affairs, the constitutional amendment proposed by Arendt is a practice of counter-colonization aimed at institutionalizing the generative power of pluralized action to open and sustain spaces for the appearance of freedom.

of “an ‘elite’ that is chosen by no one but constitutes itself. The joys of public happiness and the responsibilities for public business would then become the share of those few from all walks of life who have a taste for public freedom and cannot be ‘happy’ without it. Politically, they are the best, and it is the task of good government and the sign of a well-ordered republic to assure them of their rightful place in the public realm.”⁴⁶ Again, the best political actors are those for whom happiness is meaningless absent publicity.

The appearance or display that accompanies all action is crucial for understanding the revolutionary power of pluralized politics. Public participation in the American Revolution occurred within an organizational structure Arendt terms “revolutionary councils.” The councils were democratic spaces of appearance where public interaction and debate about political issues took place; “The men who sat in the councils...were those who organized themselves[,] those who cared and... took the initiative.”⁴⁷ Originating in small townships, the councils formed into a federal structure, where “the council men...chose their deputies for the next higher council” at each level.⁴⁸ On each tier of this pyramid-shaped organizational structure each man found himself among equals, speaking *with* and not *for* those who elected him to represent them—“their title rested on nothing but the confidence of their equals.”⁴⁹ These councils saw themselves as laying the foundation of a republic where “every member of the modern egalitarian society [could] become a ‘participator’ in public affairs.”⁵⁰ Their goal was not perpetual revolution but a form of government that would allow those who

⁴⁶ Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*, 279.

⁴⁷ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 278.

⁴⁸ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 278.

⁴⁹ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 278.

⁵⁰ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 264-265.

desired an active role in political life a space for their voices to be heard and actions seen.

Late in his life Jefferson began to reflect on his experience in the Revolution and expressed in private correspondence a fear that the Constitution had “given all the power to the citizens...without giving the citizens the opportunity of *being* republicans and *acting* as citizens.”⁵¹ The promise of the Declaration of Independence that all citizens have the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” had not been kept in the drafting of the Constitution. That is, “all power had been given to the people in their *private* capacity and there *was no space established for them in their capacity of being citizens.*”⁵² Jefferson articulated a potential remedy: the “subdivision of the counties into wards” namely, “breaking up ‘the many’ into assemblies where everyone could count and be counted upon.”⁵³ Only then “shall we be as republican as a large society can be’.”⁵⁴ The wards system was conscientiously modeled after the successful revolutionary councils and Jefferson believed “these ‘little republics’...would be the main strength of the great one.”⁵⁵

Jefferson gives weight to the dissemination of power to multiple, small assemblies because of the responsibility that accompanies proximate interaction: each man can be called upon to undertake a joint enterprise within a space where her answer will be heard. Crucial to this response-ability is the “recognition of the opposition as an

⁵¹ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 253.

⁵² Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 253, emphasis mine.

⁵³ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 253-254. There is, I think, a considerable amount of scholarly work remaining to be done toward mining the affinities between the documented experiences of the American revolutionaries and the theoretical ventures of post-68’ French intellectuals such as Foucault and Deleuze, especially around the issue of the assemblage of political constituencies.

⁵⁴ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 253.

⁵⁵ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 253.

institution of the government.”⁵⁶ The promise to allow all voices to be heard did not guarantee every opinion would win the day, but it did serve to maintain the council’s continued legitimacy and prevented disenfranchisement. Further, the very fact that the publicity of the councils as a space where each citizen acts and speaks “within its boundaries” minimizes the extent to which corrupting private interests could prevail; within this space a plurality of perspectives and opinions could be brought to bear on any one proposed course of action. This conditioning dynamic of display is replicated on an inter-council level as well, radicalizing the checks and balances offered by both federalism (states/federation) and republicanism (legislative/executive/judicial).⁵⁷

Arendt writes, “if the ultimate end of the revolution was freedom and the constitution of a public space where freedom could appear...then the elementary republics of the wards [were] the only tangible place where everyone could actually be free.”⁵⁸ Of course, history shows Jefferson’s ward federalism never became a tangible reality in America. Instead a profound mistrust of the people, most vehemently expressed by Madison, prompted the drafters of the Constitution to prefer representative politics to more democratic methods of governance.⁵⁹ The revolutions of the 20th century that saw the emergence of councils—the Russian workers strikes of 1905, the *Arbeiter-und-Soldatenräte* strikes of 1918, the 1917 February Revolution, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution—also witnessed their forcible displacement and disbandment once the revolution was ‘concluded.’ The tendency to view councils as “the hopelessly romantic yearning of the people, who...did not yet know the true facts of

⁵⁶ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 267.

⁵⁷ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 254. Cf. also “Civil Disobedience,” pp. 101.

⁵⁸ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 255

⁵⁹ Cf. *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2003), especially Federalist #47-51, and #10.

life” is, for Arendt, definitively connected to the modern prejudice of identifying “power with the monopoly of the means of violence.”⁶⁰ A successful revolution was understood to be the usurpation of an old regime, replacing one party with another, ostensibly one “for the people.” This was especially true of revolutions that occurred within nation-states, where the “councils challenged the party system as such” as “competitors for public power,” refusing to abdicate political power to party representatives. This competition for public power, and not ‘hopeless romanticism,’ accounts for the terminal life span of the councils, which were “regarded as mere instruments to be dispensed with once the revolution came to an end.”⁶¹

Concluding Invitations:

Over the course of this essay I have attempted to link the two poles of the Nation-State to the disciplinary-sovereign axes of power Foucault genealogically traces as the convivial operations of domination in late-modernity. In rehashing Foucault’s reading of Hobbes, I have amplified this conviviality to disabuse queer theorists of the temptation to make recourse to the sovereign Law as an unwavering, neutral ally in struggles against oppressively normalizing disciplinary power. Yet, I also sought to disabuse queers from the irresponsible fantasies of antipolitical postures such as Lee Edelman’s, which may be (forgivingly) said to assault not the State but the “background conditions” of the State, the normalizing ideology of compulsory heterosexual reproductive futurity. I drew on Edelman’s genealogical predecessor, Leo Bersani, to

⁶⁰ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 263; 256 respectively.

⁶¹ Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 256.

argue that what must be resisted is not the future as such, but rather the particular configuration of the present which seeks to incessantly reproduce itself. Drawing on Hannah Arendt I then sought to elaborate a model of political relationality which does not fall back on smooth fantasies of decisive, sovereign boundedness, but rather the self-dipla(y)cing pleasure practices characteristic of revolutionary council assemblies.

And, of course, the objection is still raised, as it is sardonically in the epigram of this paper, that such theoretical optimism is just a cruel delusion, a haughty or naïve voluntarism. When, if ever, will political life be organized in such a manner as to mimic the cruising practices of queer sex? And, more over, heaven help us if political life ever came to resemble the lethal, viral practices of queers. It seems reasonable to anticipate such charges of naïve optimism, and they are easily enough ignored, for ultimately they fail to appreciate the plasticity of both disciplinary and sovereign juridical power. Simply because recourse to the State will not decisively protect against the incursions of normalizing discipline cohering and consolidating the National body politic does not mean it is impregnable to the politics of *bricolage*. Speaking, again, *methodologically*, and without any real interest in weighing in on the debate one way or the other, anti-marriage queer theorists like Michael Warner seem to mystify the institution of heterosexed marriage to such an extent that it appears nothing, least of all queers, can alter its incessantly repetitive domination of minority sexualities.⁶² The fact is, however, that institutions *do change*, and the meanings they disseminate, reiterate, innovate, displace, dilute, nullify or amplify alter with such changes. For instance, as Bernard

⁶² Warner, Michael. *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 132: "It seems rather much to expect that gay people would transform the institution of marriage by simply marrying."

Harcourt has amply documented, while the landmark Supreme Court case *Lawrence v. Texas* does not really or substantively destigmatize queer sex since it operates on the register of a) consent and b) rights to privacy, it is nevertheless mistaken *not* to view the changes that *Lawrence* does effect in extending privacy rights to queers of consensual age.⁶³ This does not in any way erase the problematic frames proposed by the Court for viewing the intersections of sex and politics in America. What it does demand, however, is attention to such changes. Perhaps, then, rather than view the right to privacy as a means of repressively shutting-away deviant sexuality, one may view, with Foucault, such legal protection as a new launching ground from which to stage new political interventions—privacy enables refuge from the gaze of the State, and this is a benefit that has yet to be fully appreciated, appropriated, and leveraged by queers.

At the same time, however, the State, while capable of succumbing to manipulation in the service of opening space for queer resistance, is not in and of itself capable of altering the disciplining strategies of the National Symbolic⁶⁴: the State is a form of media; the State *dispatches*—life, knowledge, bodies, technologies, ect. To hijack the medium of the State—a political feat rather successfully accomplished by

⁶³ Harcourt, Bernard E. ““You Are Entering a Gay and Lesbian Free Zone”: On the Radical Dissents of Justice Scalia and Other (Post-) Queers [Raising Questions about *Lawrence*, Sex Wars, and the Criminal Law]” in *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 94 (2004), pp. 503-550.

⁶⁴ I follow Lauren Berlant’s summary definition of the National Symbolic as that which, precisely because it is engaged in suturing collectivities into a natural whole, is the acting-out of the multiple contradictions rife in any body politic. Crucially, Berlant suggests that such active negotiation does not signal failure, but precisely the insidious efficacy of such narratives to knit together and level pluralities. Cf. *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, pp. 277ff.37:

The National Symbolic is defined as ‘the order of discursive practices whose reign within the national space...transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity; through the Nation Symbolic, the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright. This pseudo-generic condition not only affects profoundly the citizen’s subjective experience of her/his political rights, but also of civil life, private life, the life of the body itself.’

cynical Reaganite conservatives⁶⁵—requires counter-discourses, unruly, irreverent, unpredictable, even mad acts of resistance performed by agitational groups of (queer) political activists. Insane, but seductive: the posture of (queer) non-sovereign politics is, and must always be, stylized as welcoming. This is because, quite simply, in Arendt's words, "To expect people, who have not the slightest notion of what the *res publica*, the public thing, is, to behave nonviolently and argue rationally in matters of interest is neither realistic nor reasonable."⁶⁶ Rather than assume the self-evidence of the public 'thing,' it is more fruitful to anticipate having to receive citizens who must be seduced into welcoming 'it' into their lives, into opening themselves to an intimate experience with a public world. In this regard intimate publics would be not so much the arena facilitating the privatization of the (public) world of politics through investments of intimacy, but rather those public spaces where the intimate self can be executed through excessive political exposure.⁶⁷

I take this drive for public intimacy to mean the desire for articulations of distinct and attractive alternatives for political organization to the shifty binarism of the Nation-State disciplinary-judicial pole. To the extent that (queer) political actors fail to exploit the ambivalent position of queer liminality, the seamless reproductions of (Nation-) State (normalizing-) rule prevails.⁶⁸ Ultimately it may be ambivalence which defines queerness, a definition which through its invocations implodes the concept of queer, and which

⁶⁵ Cf. Michael Rogin. Ronald Reagan, *The Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988), Ch. 1, 2, & 9 especially.

⁶⁶ Arendt, Hannah. "On Violence" in *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972), pp. 175.

⁶⁷ On the privatizing affects of intimate publics cf. generally Lauren Berlant, *Queen of America Goes to Washington City*.

⁶⁸ On ambivalence as a sustaining rather than foreclosing affect in the ordinary conduct of socio-political life cf. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), especially pp. 2.

necessarily throws each (queer) subject back onto a fundamental decision as to how to live and love. It is this throwing-back-upon which captures the queer subject in a state of ambivalence, for this condition is nothing more or less than the meager yet still wildly hopeful affirmation of a future which is not exhausted by the tired repetitions of presentist compulsory heterosexuality.

A political movement, a queer groundswell, may soon erupt from the (queer) bedroom and pour into the streets. Given the privatized nature of queer sexuality, democratic participation, and love-of-the-world generally, it is only reasonable to anticipate a seismically-induced tsunami of *publicization*.⁶⁹ This was, after all, the ‘original’ strategy of queer activism popularized by Harvey Milk, *coming out*, and it garners political consideration to the extent that the simple, courageous act of refusing to conform opens entirely new modalities of being in the world and relating to others within it.⁷⁰ Yet, coming out must mean more than heroic exposure to precarity; it must also mean a cunning, playful engagement of the Nation-State game so as to pervert the integrity of its rules; a defiant refusal to secret away from the social realm desires deemed unseemly, since there is only unmediated desire investing the social realm;⁷¹ a passionate drive to cultivate annular, jocular groups of friends to compete with the orthodoxy of heterosexed kinship; and the *ascetic*, which is to say, self-overcoming,

⁶⁹ The metaphor is borrowed from Bernard “Bifo” Berardi, who uses the metaphor heuristically in an interview to figure the return of proletariat politics as a tidal wave “so overwhelming, so frightening, that we don’t even have the guts to think about it, the guts to imagine it.” Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eojG4Hom3A> accessed Nov. 30, 2010.

⁷⁰ For a sense of coming out as coming-out-into a new modality of queer sociality or relationality cf. George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 7-8.

⁷¹ Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 29: “We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. *There is only desire and the social, and nothing else.*”

desire to open the topography of the bodily-ego to the intruding advances of ethical practices of the care of the self. To come out is to come on... to a world, a constituency, even an imaginary which is worthy of the revolutionary passion for emulation. The political challenge for queers today is to think beyond the either/or of the (disciplinary-) Nation-(juridical-) State binary, to imagine actionable regimes of relationality which bring the body back to itself and to its own creative capacities for pursuing happiness, thereby enabling an unprecedented, but not unimaginable, future.

“L’ART ÉPHÉMÈRE”

Marcienne Martin

Résumé:

La contemporanéité ouvre sur de nouveaux paradigmes découlant de découvertes qui ont révolutionné le rapport de l'être humain au monde manifesté. Ce dernier se mesure désormais en année-lumière en ce qui concerne les mondes galactiques jouxtant le nôtre. Quant à notre planète, dénommée aussi “ village global ”, les distances ne se mesurent plus en termes d'unités de longueur, mais en termes d'unités de temps. Ces nouveaux rapports à la distance et au temps ont été investis par l'artiste qui, dans l'athanor¹ de son âme, opère à leur redéfinition. Le support de la réalisation artistique ne s'inscrit plus dans la pierre ou dans la toile, grosse de l'œuvre et garante de sa pérennité. La nouvelle donne artistique a remis à plat les anciens codes. L'artiste utilise aussi bien des objets mis au rebut dans le cadre de l'arte povera ou, encore, il inscrit son œuvre dans le seul espace, réduisant le temps à sa seule réalisation et mémorisation comme dans l'art éphémère. L'inscription mémorielle de l'œuvre ne couvrira que quelques secondes, le temps d'appuyer sur le déclencheur de l'appareil photographique, pour ne citer que ce type de technologie. L'écriture artistique transcende les champs sémantiques habituels pour en découper de nouveaux, en faire éclore des harmoniques étranges, plus tout à fait humaines, proches des chants de l'univers, aux confins de l'ordre et de l'entropie et dans un pas de deux où le temps devient malléable et l'espace de l'œuvre une histoire contingente écrite dans un *continuum* intégrant œuvres, artistes et observateurs.

L'art éphémère comme composante de la contemporanéité à travers une redéfinition du temps et de l'espace.

¹ Grand alambic utilisé par les alchimistes pour leurs décoctions; fourneau à combustion lente. Définition consultable sur <http://atilf.atilf.fr/>

Introduction

Force est de constater que la contemporanéité est un objet qui se décline à l'aune de nouveaux paradigmes, nés des avancées scientifiques comme, par exemple, les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication (NTIC), tel le média Internet, et qui ont modifié radicalement le rapport de ses usagers au temps et à l'espace. À l'ancien paradigme, toujours existant, d'un monde au sein duquel les distances pour joindre un point du globe à un autre, sont incommensurables au regard de l'échelle humaine, s'est superposé celui du village global, c'est-à-dire d'un univers où les distances et le temps sont quasiment abolis pour ce qui est, par exemple, de la communication sur Internet ou par téléphone. La modification du rapport qu'entretient l'homme avec le temps et l'espace se traduit également par la manière dont les distances sont mesurées et qui est la conséquence des moyens de transport mis à la disposition de l'être humain et dont la rapidité (navettes spatiales, avions, etc.) induit une autre perception du déplacement. En effet, le voyage fait l'objet de mesures indexées au temps et non plus à l'espace. Il y est ainsi évoqué des trajets de x heures et non plus de x kilomètres. Mesurer les distances à l'aune du temps et non plus de l'espace n'est pas anodin. Point s'en faut!

Selon le dictionnaire, l'unité lexicale "espace" recouvre le sens de: "étendue, distance",² tandis que celle de " temps " a pour signification: "fraction de durée" et "durée continue."³ Ces deux occurrences combinées sont à l'origine du terme " espace-temps " né de la théorie de la relativité générale et qui se dit "du milieu à quatre dimensions où quatre variables sont considérées comme nécessaires pour déterminer un phénomène."⁴ Le premier terme correspond à un objet pérenne considéré à un moment T de son existence. Quant au temps lui-même, il est par nature impermanent. Il s'écoule inexorablement, subsumant la transformation incessante des objets du monde, conséquence de l'incidence que chacun d'eux peut avoir sur leur ensemble. Que ce soit les grandes découvertes, les catastrophes écologiques, le quotidien de chacun d'entre nous ou encore la création artistique, tout cela participe de cette métamorphose permanente. Et c'est l'artiste, miroir d'une culture en devenir, qui va fonder " une communication nouvelle, pour établir un dialogue et susciter des participations que la société ne peut concevoir."⁵

² REY, Alain. *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 2006), pp. 1295.

³ *ibid*, pp. 3785.

⁴ *ibid*, pp. 1295.

⁵ Duvignaud, Jean. *Sociologie de l'art* (Paris: PUF, 1972), pp. 22/

Cela posé et afin mieux de cerner le nouveau paradigme au sein duquel les rapports établis entre espace et temps sont en voie de transformation, voire de permutation, il sera interrogé, dans ce présent article, l'art contemporain dans ses manifestations particulières, telle celle de l'art dit "éphémère", lequel tente de s'inscrire dans l'immédiateté, c'est-à-dire dans une démarche où l'espace remplit le temps.

1. De l'art pérenne à l'art labile

Entre les mythes des origines de l'art, comme, par exemple, le Beau considéré comme essence suprême de la réalisation artistique ou encore l'interprétation psychanalytique de l'œuvre elle-même, pour ne citer que ces tentatives d'explication d'objets qui n'appartiennent plus à la contingence de la survie de l'être humain, mais au seul plaisir esthétique, notre propos sera articulé autour de l'art considéré comme objet éphémère, situé au point de rupture de l'ordre vs le désordre, dans un temps devenu labile. Donner le qualificatif d'artistique à une œuvre, revient à la soumettre à un certain nombre de critères qui définissent précisément cette qualité or, ce qui d'un regard strictement extérieur apparaît comme manifestation esthétique, ne correspond, parfois, d'un point de vue endo-culturel, qu'à la représentation des objets du monde fondant la structure sociale elle-même. Dans son œuvre "Pensée sauvage", Lévi-Strauss évoque une massue tlingit⁶ en bois de cèdre et qui sert à assommer le poisson. De cet outil posé sur un rayon de sa bibliothèque comme expression objectale d'une culture particulière, un autre observateur y aurait vu un simple objet de décoration ou le souvenir d'expéditions lointaines. À ce propos, cet auteur souligne: "L'artiste, qui l'a sculptée en forme de monstre marin, a souhaité que le corps de l'ustensile se confonde avec le corps de l'animal, le manche avec la queue, et que les proportions anatomiques, prêtées à une créature fabuleuse, soient telles que l'objet puisse être l'animal cruel, tuant d'impuissantes victimes, en même temps qu'une arme de pêche bien équilibrée qu'un homme manie avec aisance, et dont il obtient des résultats efficaces."⁷

Définir la contemporanéité dans son aspect artistique recouvre un grand nombre d'expressions singulières auxquelles de nombreux spécialistes ont apporté leur contribution. L'art éphémère, renvoie au champ sémantique de la précarité, du momentané, de l'impermanence, de l'instabilité. Ces notions sont des

⁶ Les *Tlingits* sont une nation autochtone d'Amérique du Nord.

⁷ Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *La pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), pp. 38.

cooccurrences des unités lexicales suivantes: frêle, délicat, précaire, éphémère, périssable.⁸ Or, ce qui ressort de cette forme d'art particulière, c'est sa fragilité. L'œuvre confrontée à différents facteurs imprévisibles peut disparaître, au mieux subir une métamorphose l'éloignant du projet initial de l'artiste. À moins, bien sûr, qu'elle ait été enregistrée *via* la photographie ou tout autre support mémoriel. Quand nous convoquons la notion de fragile, force est de constater qu'une pluralité de représentations sociétales lui est associée. L'approche dictionnaire nous donne la définition suivante de ce substantif : il caractérise une matière, un objet " qui se brise, se casse facilement" ou encore une personne " de constitution faible."⁹ Or, cette terminologie semble recouvrir différents objets¹⁰ qui vont de la nature des matériaux avec lesquels ils sont fabriqués (fragilité du cristal ou de la porcelaine, par exemple), aux composantes de la personnalité de l'homme en passant par des structures organisationnelles comme les gouvernements pour ne citer que celles-ci. Cependant ces instances sont toutes corrélées au phénomène de l'éphémère considéré dans sa potentialité. Qu'en est-il de celui-ci? Où se situe-t-il dans la durée de vie de l'objet lui-même? Quelle place a-t-il dans notre société et, plus particulièrement, dans l'art?

Évoquer l'impermanence d'un objet, c'est le poser comme ayant une existence à un moment T, laquelle est délimitée par un commencement et une fin. Ceci n'est pas sans nous renvoyer à la notion de négentropie dénommée encore "entropie négative" et d'entropie dont le premier terme correspond à la mise en place d'une structure ordonnée de tel objet du monde et le second, à sa désintégration brutale ou progressive. Ce qui revient à dire que l'éphémère ou l'impermanence se situerait à la jonction entre ordre et désordre. Le concept d'un *continuum* ordre vs désordre est d'ailleurs récent.

Afin d'appréhender les instances participant de ce phénomène et d'en analyser les manifestations, nous tenterons de circonscrire ce qui est de l'ordre de l'organisation dans le monde manifesté. Ce dernier est composé de systèmes plus ou moins complexes qui subsument un nombre indéterminé d'objets, ce qui permet d'endiguer l'entropie inhérente à tout système organisé. Ces derniers comprennent d'une part, des structures closes comme certains artefacts (machines industrielles ou domestiques tels que : machines-outils, robots ménagers, automobiles, etc.) et, d'autre part, des structures ouvertes. À ce propos, Morin spécifie: "un système clos, comme une pierre,

⁸ Genouvrier, Emile. *Nouveau dictionnaire des synonymes* (Paris: Larousse, 1977), pp. 199.

⁹ *Le Robert pour tous* (Paris: Éditions Le Robert, 1995), pp. 492.

¹⁰ Nous posons, dans ce présent texte, le terme " objet " comme recouvrant tout objet du monde qu'il soit matériel ou immatériel.

une table, est en état d'équilibre, c'est-à-dire que les échanges en matière/énergie avec l'extérieur sont nuls. [...] Deux conséquences capitales découlent donc de l'idée de système ouvert : la première est que les lois d'organisation du vivant ne sont pas d'équilibre, mais de déséquilibre, rattrapé ou compensé, de dynamisme stabilisé. [...] La seconde conséquence [...] est que l'intelligibilité du système doit être trouvée, non seulement dans le système lui-même, mais aussi dans sa relation avec l'environnement."¹¹ Quant au concept d'organisation, il a fait l'objet d'un certain nombre d'études. Nous en trouvons différentes définitions dont celle-ci : " l'organisation recherche l'ordre et la détermination, et s'efforce de réduire l'ambiguïté, l'incertitude ou le désordre engendrés par les actions et les interactions de ses différents constituants."¹²

La compréhension de tels phénomènes fait appel à plusieurs facteurs, tout d'abord à celui du temps qui recouvre des échelles allant de la nanoseconde au temps géologique pour ne citer que l'infiniment petit et l'infiniment grand mesurés à l'échelle humaine, ensuite à celui du paradigme à partir duquel se déroule l'observation et enfin à celui de l'évènement considéré non plus sous un angle pérenne, mais labile. Il y a ainsi déplacements et métamorphoses des notions de temps, du lieu de l'observation, de l'observateur et de systèmes qui ne sont plus considérés dans leur version stable et durable. D'une approche transgénérationnelle où œuvres d'art, architecturales ou scripturales étaient inscrites dans la durabilité, nous assistons à un déplacement de leur temporalité. Ainsi, avec le développement des outils numériques, l'écrit et la photographie se déclinent à l'aune de l'éphémère et du virtuel et nous assistons également à l'émergence d'évènements ponctuels où l'œuvre ne dure que le temps de sa réalisation, fait corps avec son environnement et dont les émotions suscitées chez le spectateur l'infléchissent dans un projet qui relève de la stochastique¹³ et qui n'appartient plus à l'artiste. C'est d'ailleurs à ce niveau que nous pouvons considérer l'œuvre comme participant d'un système de type ouvert tel qu'il a été défini par Morin déjà cité.

Le lieu de l'observation n'est plus l'homme, à la fois observateur et observé, situé au cœur des objets du monde et qui se raconte à travers croyances et réalités. L'époque moderne en a fait un des éléments d'un *continuum* qui prend en compte l'ensemble des objets du monde. L'instauration de ce nouveau rapport au monde est également corrélée à la prise en compte de tel système fermé ou ouvert, non plus considéré dans

¹¹ Morin, Edgar. *Introduction à la pensée complexe* (Paris: ESF éditeur, 1990), pp. 30-31.

¹² Hogue, Jean-Pierre, Lévesque Denis, Morin M. Estelle. *Groupe, pouvoir et communication* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1998), pp. 13.

¹³ Qui dépend, qui résulte du hasard (définition consultable sur : <http://atilf.atilf.fr/>).

son état d'équilibre, mais plutôt dans celui de sa rupture, ce que traduisent les œuvres artistiques contemporaines.

2. L'art exprimé à travers une relation nouvelle au temps et à l'espace

De la binarité manichéenne que l'artiste transmettait à travers la recherche de la beauté absolue comme en témoignent des œuvres d'art telles la Vénus de Milo ou encore la Joconde, l'art contemporain a fondé sa particularité sur des valeurs autres que celles participant de l'humaine condition; il met en relief les points de rupture, les espaces chaotiques et la beauté recomposée.

À l'appui de ce changement paradigmatique et dans un ouvrage consacré à l'œuvre de Picasso, Alberto Moravia définit ainsi les critères de l'œuvre traditionnelle: "De l'art imitant l'art. De l'art composé de rythmes, de rapports, d'itérations, de structures, d'harmonies, de correspondances, de contrepoints. De l'art qui ne parle que de lui-même et uniquement de lui-même."¹⁴ Quant à la beauté, quintessence de l'ordre et de l'harmonie, Baudelaire la chante dans ce poème extrait des *Fleurs du mal* :¹⁵

“ Je suis belle, ô mortels ! Comme un rêve de pierre,
Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,
Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour
Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière. ”

L'artiste tente désormais de retenir un instant particulier qui s'inscrit comme une résonance entre des objets que ni le lexique ni les pratiques sociales n'avaient appariés. Cette nouvelle approche artistique est articulée autour des objets du monde considérés sous l'angle du désordre qui, avec l'utilisation de la fission nucléaire, pourrait atteindre alors le paroxysme de l'entropie. À ce propos, le peintre Vassili Kandinsky souligne : "La désintégration de l'atome signifiait pour moi la désintégration du monde entier. En un instant, les murs les plus épais s'effondraient. Tout devenait incertain, chancelant,

¹⁴ Moravia, Alberto. *Tout l'œuvre peint Picasso – Périodes bleue et rose* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), pp. 8.

¹⁵ Jullian, Marcel. *Anthologie de la poésie française* (Paris: Fixot, 1989), pp. 215.

mou. Je ne me serais nullement étonné de voir une pierre se dissoudre dans l'air et disparaître ainsi complètement.”¹⁶ Né de ces changements paradigmatiques, le concept de fragile est transcrit par l'artiste dans des œuvres qui ne traitent plus de l'être humain dans ses flux et reflux émotionnels comme cœur du monde, mais de l'ensemble des objets de ce dernier pris tant dans leur entièreté que dans leur destruction ou la recomposition de chacun de leurs éléments. Dans le numéro 133 de la revue *Beaux-Arts*, Christophe Domino évoque “ une temporalité élargie, qui sait se loger dans le temps court de l'œuvre.”¹⁷

Mesurées à l'aune du fugitif instant, les séquences temporelles qu'occupent les installations éphémères de l'artiste allemand Nils-Udo sont révélatrices de la rencontre métamorphique entre objet et art. Ainsi ce sculpteur de la nature a-t-il marié le feu et la fleur dans le cadre d'une installation éphémère réalisée sur l'île de la Réunion, au piton de la Fournaise en 1990. Nils-Udo écrit: “Alors que je marchais autour du cratère, je rencontrai une crevasse impressionnante dans la lave, et j'eus une vision fulgurante : les pétales rouges de poinsettia appelés sur l'île ‘langues de feu’ surgissant de la fissure dans la lave.”¹⁸ Le mariage atemporel d'un volcan pérenne et actif avec des pétales, dont la couleur et la forme sont un rappel magnifié de la lave incandescente, témoigne ainsi de la mise en exergue du statut fragile de l'objet. Notons également que l'approche poétique et lexicale du mot “feu” s'inscrit totalement dans l'anagramme du terme “fleur”. Si les microcosmes créés par cet artiste sont voués à l'anéantissement rapide, ils ont été cependant fixés sur la pellicule photographique où ils seront restitués sous la forme de rappels de l'œuvre première. À ce propos, Hubert Besacier dans un texte qui accompagne les œuvres de Nils-Udo spécifie : “ L'installation est un acte léger et beaucoup plus savant qu'il n'y paraît. La notion d'éphémère implique que l'on travaille avec le temps, dans la précarité la plus complète (il suffit parfois d'un coup de vent ou du passage d'un animal pour que tout soit détruit), mais aussi dans le privilège d'un instant que la photographie saisira et qu'il faut savoir anticiper.”¹⁹

Ce n'est pas tant la représentation du monde de Nils-Udo, *in stricto sensu*, qui est en jeu dans cet exemple, mais la vision qu'il en donne dans le cadre d'une redéfinition du temps et de l'espace. L'artiste découvre un lien particulier entre deux objets, lien né de

¹⁶ DÜCHTING, Hajo. *Vassili Kandinsky* (Köln: Éditions Taschen, 1990), pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Domino, Christophe. “Quand les artistes font vœu de pauvreté ” in *Beaux Arts magazine* 133, 1995: 92.

¹⁸ Besacier, Hubert. *Nils-Udo l'art dans la nature* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), pp. 83.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 144.

sa sensibilité et dont il transcrit la matérialité *via* des supports déjà existants, comme, ici, le chemin de lave et les pétales rouges de poinsettia. L'artiste a inscrit cette vision dans l'immédiateté et telle qu'il l'a visualisée.

La rupture opérée avec l'art traditionnel est corrélée au support même de l'œuvre. La toile et la pierre ne sont plus, tout à la fois, grosses de l'œuvre et gardiennes de sa pérennité. Le support éphémère y fait entrer des facteurs aléatoires qui sont autant de vecteurs métamorphiques de celle-ci. Dans le cas de figure du travail de Nils-Udo, le vent peut tout aussi bien disperser les pétales de poinsettia en leur donnant un rendu plus esthétique selon certains " observateurs-spectateurs " ou encore la traversée par un animal, du chemin de lave balisé par ces expressions florales, pourra mettre à mal la vision concrétisée par l'artiste. Cela pourra également contribuer à donner une nouvelle dimension à l'œuvre, dimension que l'artiste n'avait pas appréhendée.

Jouer avec les codes du temps et de l'espace et faire pénétrer l'observateur dans l'objet exposé est illustré par cette anecdote citée par Heinich:

"Au printemps 1994, galerie Durand-Dessert à Paris, une œuvre de Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Construction-Destruction* – assemblage de miroirs entourés de marteaux – fut cassée par un visiteur qui s'empara d'un marteau pour briser le miroir. [...] L'auteur du geste déclara calmement que celui-ci faisait partie de l'œuvre."²⁰

Nous évoquons le temps comme facteur transgressé. Le travail artistique lui-même n'est plus un objet observé du dehors. Le spectateur en est partie intégrante. Ainsi l'œuvre de Maurizio Cattelan, artiste italien, est-elle une mise en scène inachevée intégrant le spectateur. À contre-courant de la " bien-pensance ", cet artiste présente des objets qui heurtent l'observateur tel cette exposition de trois mannequins d'enfants au regard vitreux pendus à un arbre de la Piazza XXIV-Maggio à Milan, en 2004. Cette réalisation avait suscité un grand nombre de réactions de la part du public. Ces dernières, vectrices immatérielles, ont opéré sur l'œuvre elle-même et l'ont intégré à la mémoire collective des spectateurs.

²⁰ Heinich, Nathalie. *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1998), pp. 159.

Ainsi l'œuvre d'art n'est plus posée comme extérieure au spectateur, rendu de l'émotion de l'artiste et sacralisée lors de son exposition muséale, mais comme participant du monde avec tous les aléas initialisant sa métamorphose. Le body-art en est une des manifestations. On prendra comme exemple l'artiste plasticienne Orlan qui s'est singularisée avec des opérations chirurgicales filmées et retransmises dans plusieurs institutions dont le Centre Georges Pompidou à Paris. Dans tous ces cas de figure, l'imaginaire, " c'est bien plus que l'imaginaire. Cela engage l'existence de l'homme sur tous les plans et à tous ses niveaux. Car nous ne faisons pas que sentir ou applaudir : nous participons à travers le lexique que nous adresse l'œuvre d'imagination à une insaisissable société ultérieure."²¹

Conclusion

Enfin, l'art éphémère est l'écho émotionnel que l'artiste donne des nouveaux paradigmes sociétaux. Ainsi la modification des concepts de temps et d'espace avec, en corollaire, l'apparition de celui " d'espace-temps ", est corrélée à celui du renouvellement du regard de l'artiste sur le monde. Le temps n'est que celui que dure l'œuvre posée dans le *hic et nunc* et que l'œil technologique pérennise dans la photographie, pour ne citer que cette technique mémorielle. L'art est devenu un espace multiforme au sein duquel, l'artiste, ce démiurge d'un nouvel arrangement des objets du monde, engage son travail dans une manière d'initiation. À charge au spectateur et à l'environnement de donner à l'œuvre un tour qui tient tout à la fois du hasard et de l'émotion.

²¹ Duvignaud, Jean. *Sociologie de l'art* (Paris: PUF, 1972), pp. 10.

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“CON FUOCO D’OCCHI UN NOSTALGICO LUPO”

Joseph Sannicandro

The following essay accompanies a 2-volume compilation of experimental Italian music. A link to a free download is included below.

Longtime readers of *The Silent Ballet* may remember a feature called *Tracking the Trends*. In fact, the feature, written by founder Jordan Volz, predates TSB itself, going back to the time of Decoy Music. Each installment took a close look at promising new artists, organized by region. Italy stood out as an important center for creative music, though grouping artists based solely on region always seemed a bit arbitrary to me. Over the years I’ve gotten to know more and more of these musicians, and found that their opinion of their homeland was more complicated than artists from other regions. Italian artists receive less state support for their work, and the Italian scene suffers from fragmentation and a lack of performance venues. Several prominent members of the musical community live and work in Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, or other cosmopolitan centers of artistic production. As a result of this, I found that many of the artists I’ve worked with were unaware of work that was going on within their own country. Certainly region alone isn’t enough of an organizing principle, but nor is it one that can be completely dismissed outright. These musicians do indeed share a linguistic and cultural tradition, and though that heritage isn’t always expressed in stylistic similarities, certain attitudes and conventions do emerge, or are at least being reacted to.

The original conception for this project was to put together a single release dedicated to artists who work with field-recordings, a project that will finally see the light of day next year. In the early stages of putting this together I realized that many of the artists were Italian, so the orientation of the project shifted, and *con*

fuoco d'occhi un nostalgico lupo was born. I was struck by the creative diversity of these artists, and so abandoned genre for nationality. I was also working on the inaugural issue of *In Circulation* at this same time, thinking about the idea of nationalism, trans-nationalism, competing globalisms, and both the inadequacies and persistence of the nation-state. I realized that I was putting together a compilation based precisely on national origin, thereby supporting, at least in the case of aesthetic output, the belief that national heritage can be an important factor.

Opera fans in Italy are known for being quite harsh and unforgiving. The widespread attention that classical music has commanded in Italy created an audience with sophisticated taste, and one that was unafraid to voice their discontent, in effect an affirmation that they have cultivated taste and that they are not averse to passing judgment. By the time rock music became popular in Italy, the psychedelic movement had already taken off in the UK, and so Italy's exposure to rock was one with expanded sonic potential. These shared conditions, linguistic and cultural heritage, create a shared aesthetic orientation, even if this orientation becomes expressed in such diverse forms. My hope is that in some way this work justifies its existence, bringing together a strong collection of artists and representing some of the most interesting music being created today.

The twenty-one tracks that are featured on *con fuoco* are not quite meant to be a "who's who" of the Italian scene but the volume does strive to be something on an anthology, showcasing this particular moment in time, bringing together established artists with emerging figures, showcasing the tremendous vibrancy and diversity of music being made by Italian artists today. Many of the tracks were composed exclusively for this volume, or else are previously unavailable.

Giuseppe Ielasi, a figure of central importance, contributed a track of a recent LP as well as having contributed to the production of other tracks. **Neil on Impression** were featured in the original *Tracking the Trends*, as were **Giardini di Mirò**, whose

keyboarding has contributed a track under the name **Pillow**. Though many of the artists come from Milan, in the end there are artists present from all over Italy.

As an Italian-American and one who has spent a good deal of time in Italy, and written much about its music, I believe that Italy has a rich tradition of interesting and unique artists. But I have found that many of my friends in Italy who make music are often unaware of many of their peers in Italy. With a little context, the various artists presented here make more sense as a group, hopefully to the artists themselves as much as to new listeners. Important historical precedents exist that, coupled with Italy's classical and avant-garde past, help situate contemporary artists in a national tradition, granted one that has also incorporated many influences from abroad as well: figures such as the Futurist painter, composer, and theorist of noise **Luigi Russolo**, psychedelic rock group **Le Stelle di Mario Schifano**, contemporary classical composer **Luciano Cilio**, and **Maurizio Bianchi** (MB), whose industrial and post-ambient noise is incomparable. It is my great pleasure to say that MB is included in this volume, a track taken from what may very well be his last album, as he has announced his retirement from music yet again. Taken together these figures represent a genealogy of sorts that all the artists included on this volume share on some level. Even if their particular work may be unknown to some, they represent, in my view, nodes in which various tendencies in Italian avant-garde music have been clearly articulated and expressed in the last century. The transnational influence of rock and punk and John Cage and Brian Eno and so on are surely audible as well, but this is not news but a lineage that musicians all over the world now share. The link between Russolo and Bianchi is quite a necessary one, both representing the camp that is deeply resisting the past, embracing noise in all its modern, ugly, and beautiful forms.

Philippe Blanche's essay "The art of duration and resonance" (2009) treated many of these connections, focusing attention on MB and the younger artists working in

his wake, outlining the aesthetic parameters they've begun to carve out, succinctly summed up in his title. Many of these younger artists of the past two decades have contributed to furthering the post-ambient work he'd returned to after a lengthy hiatus from his earlier, more industrial work, even collaborating with MB directly, as in the *Between the Elements* series conceived of by MB and **Matteo Uggeri**. This generation of musicians is represented in this volume, however they often seem to have more of a playfulness than one would expect from MB himself. Uggeri and others who have integrated field-recordings into the core of their work often feature the voices of children, a powerful transformation of MB's original stance towards industrial noise and technology. Perhaps the clearest example of this is in *Italian Plays*, a broadcast Uggeri curated for Framework, in which all the contributions features recordings of children playing games. Using an industrial process, framing a moment with simple recording technology, the resulting work is deeply hopeful. Many of the tracks on *con fuoco* express a similar sentiment, and perhaps this is at the heart of what unites these artists: a realism that lacks both irony and cynicism. What could be more refreshing?

—

con fuoco d'occhi un nostalgico lupo, a two volume compilation dedicated to experimental Italian music, is available for free digital download at

<http://lostchildrennetlabel.com/>

Download: <http://bit.ly/confuoco>

The title of this essay, and the accompanying compilation, comes from the poem
“ Con Fuoco” (1925) by the Italian poet **Giuseppe Ungaretti**:

“ Con fuoco”

“ With fire”

Con fuoco d'occhi un nostalgico lupo
Scorre la quiete nuda.

With fire of eyes a wolf nostalgic
Stalks the naked quiet.

Non trova che ombre di cielo sul ghiaccio,

Finds but shadows of heaven on ice,

Fondono serpi fatue e brevi viole.

Ignis fatuus of serpents
Merge with brief violets.

أديرُ التنفُّسُ

"إسرى التنصيبُ - أُنغاسُ" هَرَمِيَّةٌ، أَظلامُ نَمَمٍ أَسودَ يَلْمَعُ وَيُنَلِّتُ .
بُعدي يُنظِّطُ بِأَثَرِ جَدِي عَلَى الصَّبْرِ، لَكِنَّ تَنفُّسِي أَدَاغُ مَوَابِ، طَعْمُهُ، تَمِيلُ،
تَتَأَرَّجُ، تُمَارِزُ،
وَلَسَ تَعَكُّسُ إِتْدَ مَادَّةِ الْبَرَقِ"

* * *

تَمَلُّكَ الْوَطَنِيَّةُ دِينِي، وَتَطَوُّي هُدًى فِي الْوَطَنِ الْفَرَسِ
يُسَكُّ أَبَاهَا مَنِينٌ بِظَهْرِ
يَسْتَوِطُنُ لِسَانِي فِي وَجْهِي:
"بَيْتِكَ!" "زَادِيَّةُ دِيَارِي تَهْتَفْتُ"
"الْمَعْنَى السَّخِيَّةُ، وَكَانَ لِيُفِيدَ..."

أديرُ التنفُّسُ:

لَمْ يَكُنْ أَبِي أَبِي أَيْمَنَ، مَهْجُورٌ تَعَانَتْ وَتُخَلِّتُ سَاعِدِي، دُونَ رِيحِي فَرَدْتَهُ بِيَدِي
فَطَوَّلْتُ أَسْطَحِي هَدْلُ السُّرْحِ
سِرْطَانِي، لَسَقْبَلُ هَزْزُ مَيَاتِي، هِرْمَانًا يَهْرَبُ يَ حَلِي يَهْرَجُ فِي اجْتِنَائِي
عَنِّي الْعَظِيمُ مَحْمُودٌ فِينَا يَ أَسَائِمِي!
لَيْتَ النُّجُومُ تَرْتَمَتْ نَسْبًا تَهْتَفِي هَدْلُ مَيَاتِي

لَسَ أَحِبُّ الْبِلَادَ فِي الْبِلَادِ . أَحِبُّ الْأَرْضَ

أَفْرَجِي، وَالْأُسُوبَةَ، يَ أُمِّي - تَضْرِبُ عَنِّي غَرَبِي سَاحِ رَهِيلِ وَطَنِي عَنِّي،
لَتَعَانَتْ آفْرَهَا أُمَامُ وَصَوَلِي الْبَعِيدِ

جِدَارُ الدِّيَارِ تَرَابِيَّةٌ
جِهَانُ مَقَابِي، قَسَّةٌ قَلْقَةٌ كَانَتْ تَمَلُّ جِلْوًا تَعْبًا
وَنَيْمِي، هُوَ الْعَظِيمُ! لَمْ يَكُنْ فِينَا كُنَايَةَ أَسَائِمِي

تَرَكْتُ بِإِهْرَارِ الْيَدَايِ إِلَى جِهَالِي مِنْ صَمَاءِ

إِذَا كَفَيْتِي تَلْمَسُ النُّجُومَ
وَإِذَا أَعْيَدَ الْعُقُوفَ عَلَى أَوْطَانِي يَ أُمِّي
لَنْ أُنِيدَ الذَّرَادَةَ
لَكِنْ قَبْلَتُنَا بِطَبَاعِلِ لَسَ تَمَكِيمُ
وَالنُّجُومُ مِنْ هِرْمَانَةِ يَدِي سَتَبْدُرُ هَدْيِي، لَسَ رَحْمَتِي
لَسَ مَا نَمَّا هَدْيِي، لَسَ صَانِعًا
لِلْحَيِّ صِفَاتُ مَجْرِي
فِي إِسَائِمِي - سَيِّدِي، يَسِيرُ كَوَكْبًا - شَمْسًا
الْمَكَانُ تَنفُّسُ

أَهْ، وَهَنَا، أَمَا كُنَّا أَجْبَاسِي، أَسْمُ، عَامِرَةٌ بِالْقُبُورِ
لَكِنْ الْمَدَامُنُ تَدَهِّشُ، تَسْنِي، تَطْلُقُ الْحَيَاةَ

ب. ب. ٥-٦ أيار ٢٠٠٨

Rotate Breathing

"Loose your exalting – pyramidal cages, ribs of black charcoal, shining triangles.

My measure is lined by the trace of my body on eyes. But my breathing is mirror plates, mounting, tilting, swinging, and passing. Reflecting but the material of lightening."

* * *

The nationalist carries her tight religion, spreads around her statehood and pride.
Her father holds on the curve of her belly.
Her tongue settles on my destination:
"Your home!" "The outer corner of torn houses!" "That personal café, and the place of your clouds..."

I rotate breathing;

My father hasn't become my father – Releasing and holding fist on my forearm – till winds unfolded from my hand, stripped surfaces around the earth.
He will leave. I will embrace sadness in his life, privation escaping a celebrating burden in my ovation.
Even clouds are deprived, in us, of their names
I wish stars would well up tissues disappearing around my eyes

I don't like countries in countries. I like the land

You, and motherhood, leave from my mother – so she could migrate from her foreignness as home departs from me, and embrace her other, near my distant arrival.

Oh.. The walls of those old houses are sandy
Oh.. The beauty of my café, it is a disturbed straw that carried tired sitting
And my clouds, are the clouds.– They haven't satisfied their names in us

I have left insisting hands for ropes of clarity.

If my palm grasps the stars
And I return to standing on nation states
I won't return with sharp will,
Though our fist cannot seal
Stars from its circle will seed my gift to lands
I am not the giver, I am not a maker
The living has a passing character
In a Man-Thing, walking Planet-Sun

Breathing, is the place.

Oh.. and here, our places are kinds, nations, prosperous with tombs,
But burials amaze, charge, and release life

Bachar Bachara

Original text written in Arabic at Père Lachaise cemetery, Paris, France,
on May 6, 2008

Visual Essay

Toronto-based visual essayist Franke James donated the image of the mammoth that serves as our debut issue's cover. This image originally appeared in her work "What Can One Do?" The underlying current of James' visual essay calls attention to the failure of individual states to respond to problems that are global in nature, such as global climate change. Rather than lose hope, she thinks through the role that each individual can play.

View the entire visual essay:

<http://bit.ly/WhatCan1Do>