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War and Peace, Love and Hate

*To those who in times of war search for peace
through genuine dialogue (or conversation) ...*

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Editorial

The Thematic Perspective of War and Peace, Love and Hate, and the Current Entries: An Introduction

In times of war we naturally long for peace, but we often ignore the extent to which humanity's overall state depends on the prevalence of love or hate among its ranks. Mother Teresa is reputed to have said saying that "works of love are works of peace." Regrettably, in our time, with the heaviest military combat in Europe since the World War Two, this statement comes to suggest that we have given in too much to love's opposite; that is, hate. For all who care, now the question that looms is How can we retain love while keeping hate at bay to secure peace and prosperity for humanity today and in the future? As love and hate take many forms and the same is true for war and peace, the rationale appears to be that, if we are able to account for them and their interrelations sufficiently, we might be able to come up with a reliable perspective on both the chances of peace against war and the future of humanity. While realizing that this will be an open and ever incomplete task, and thus far from accomplishable in a research volume, we still believe that continuing to work on this through multiple investigative perspectives is worthwhile regardless of any possible setbacks.

The majority of critical theorists today will likely agree that a due apperception of the interrelations of war and peace, love and hate inevitably goes through a certain perspective on what in the philosophical and socio-political thought of the last century came to be known as *the Other*. Taken always in its relation to *the self* as a reflecting and knowing capacity, the Other has been construed in the perspective of the self in various ways. In ethics, socio-political research, and literary criticism, such constructions have placed the Other in the range between friend and enemy, neighbor and stranger, guest and intruder, lover and hater, peacemaker and warmonger, amongst others. This however has not always contributed, and certainly not yet achieved, the vindication of love and peace around the globe, as much as has been wished. Indeed, a critical perspective on the relation between the self and the Other suggests that it is the antagonistic construction of the Other that fails the self in its aspirations to a meaningful approach to co-existence and thus to all that helps achieve the desired world of love and peace.

It must, therefore, be acknowledged that much in the construction of the Other depends on the self itself and its capacity to open itself for the otherness of the Other. Thus, those who genuinely work for the promotion of peace and love around the globe would generally find it wise to also both know better and work timely on themselves and their ability to welcome, appreciate, and be ready for the Other. What this amounts to on individual and communal levels, in addition to self-knowledge and self-betterment, is adopting a concernful ethics and democratic politics, respectively. This means eschewing extremism in all its forms (including war and hate) on behalf of a due inclusion of all that may appear as 'Other' to serve the

objectives of a humane and productive co-existence (including peace and love). And to those who would demand specifics on what could be possibly meant by 'the Other', we can just say that it includes all other individuals, communities, societies, and cultures (regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status, religion, ability, age, etc. among their ranks), as well as nature, environment, and the planet as a whole.

This thematic issue cover topics in philosophy, socio-political theory, literary criticism, aesthetics, as well as transcultural studies, and includes original articles and a translation. Articles focus directly on the theme of "War and Peace, Love and Hate," which they address in a markedly objectivist perspective; whereas the translation with notes draws attention to a poetic philosophy which addresses the theme on an individual personal or subjective level.

Alexandra Preitschopf discusses aspects of anti-communism in Pyotr Krasnov's novel *Endless Hate* (*Nenavist*), which was published in France and Germany in the 1930s. Krasnov, a White Russian émigré, who fought the Red Army commanding Cossack military forces before moving to Western Europe in 1919, devoted his life and works in the interwar period to stirring anti-communist and anti-Bolshevik sentiment – portraying the life and politics in the Soviet Union exclusively in dark terms while glorifying the "old Russian virtues" and achievements. As he became a fascist and Nazi supporter in the process, Preitschopf is interested most of all in throwing light on the possibility for the instrumentalization of emigrant literature for purposes of anti-communist and far right propaganda which utilizes hate in various directions, including anti-democratic, racist, and anti-Semitic, amongst others.

Drawing on the thought of Søren Kierkegaard, Jacques Lacan, and Watsuji Tetsurō, Thomas Diesner endeavors to assemble a common perspective for apperception of what he sees as a special relation of aggressivity, anxiety, and the third. He links aggressive actions, as well as a number of problems of social, political, and therapeutic nature, to a bipolar structure, in which anxiety grows due to a lack of mediation between its two poles. Diesner maintains that such problems can be resolved by securing in the relational structure a place for a mediating third party, whose role essentially consists in keeping that structure open to and preserving difference, and whose aspects he identifies in the perspectives of these three thinkers, despite other their differences.

In a time of resurgence of populist and far right ideologies, David Casciola's article focuses on the capacity of art to disrupt the political project of fascism. The author utilizes viewpoints of Umberto Eco and Sven Reichardt to identify as key and essential feature of fascism its synthetico-paradoxical character – its ability to accommodate within its aesthetic and political perspectives contradictory elements and positions without being disrupted by that as a whole. Whereas this peculiar resilience of fascism has posed a challenge to its critics and opponents, Casciola finds elements of support in the works of Jacques Rancière and Walter Benjamin, amongst others, to assemble a perspective on art that maintains its capacity for political disruption – in (what appears to be) a postmodernist fashion – by challenging the sense of self-recognition of the particular individual.

Yasemin Karaağaç discusses Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* which presents us with challenges faced by two Pakistani British families finding themselves in different social situations in modern day Great Britain but with nonetheless intertwined lives. As members of one of the families appear to have strong links to jihadist movements, whereas a member of the

other holds a key governmental office with special responsibilities in what came to be known as West's war on terror, complex and tumultuous relationships between different characters involving also a conflict between politics and feelings of love and hate come to a tragic end. Karaağaç convincingly traces a parallel between Shamsie's novel and Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, representing the dramatic tension between state law and personal feelings within Giorgio Agamben's perspective on sovereign power and state of exception.

Catherine MacMillan discusses J. M. Coetzee's novel *Life and Times of Michael K* with the aim of identifying the sense of Roberto Esposito's concepts of community, immunity, and the impersonal within the events and relationships presented in the plot. Coetzee portrays the eponymous character as dwelling in a partially democratized South Africa which however is still ruled by the white minority in a way that at the bottom remains racialized and discriminatory, and at some point pushes the fate of the black majority protagonist into a prison camp. Drawing most of all on the thought of Esposito, but also of Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari and Giorgio Agamben amongst others, MacMillan insightfully juxtaposes the concepts in her focus with elements of Coetzee's narrative to advance a vision of community of tolerance and diversity without exclusion.

In continuation with our previous issue, we end up with another selection from the songs of Lalon Fakir, the unique Bengali poet-philosopher from the 19th century, again translated and with notes by Sayed Muddashir Hossain. Lalon's verse is highly metaphorical, philosophic, and insightful, whereas the songs selected here dwell most of all on the topic of the self or soul, which has had a long and vital presence in the cultural tradition of the Indian subcontinent. Hossain's notes prove informative and helpful for the uninitiated reader to enter and appreciate the moral-philosophical world of this poetic thinker.

We hope you find in these texts something valuable for yourself. Thank you for your time and enjoy!

Rossen Roussev

War, Hate, and Aggressivity

A WAR AGAINST BOLSHEVISM, FOR THE LOVE OF THE HOMELAND? THE NOVEL *ENDLESS HATE* (1934/1938) BY PJOTR KRASNOV AS AN ANTI-COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA TOOL IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Alexandra Preitschopf

Abstract

The paper explores the novel Endless Hate by the Russian émigré writer Pjotr Krasnov in the context of anti-communism in interwar Europe. The Russian version of the book was published in Paris in 1934, the German edition in 1938. This is related to the fact that Krasnov – as an exposed Nazi sympathizer – went to Germany in 1937, after several years of exile in France. Previously, he had fought as a Cossack general against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War. His deep hatred against the Soviet Union is also evident in his novel that describes the changes before and after the October Revolution of 1917, glorifying "good old Russia" and depicting an extremely dark picture of everyday life under communism. The book is only one among many anti-communist writings by Russian emigrants in Europe – despite their influence on the general discourse on the Soviet Union, their discursive impact has not yet been extensively researched. Using the example of Krasnov's novel as a historical source for opinion forming in the interwar period, my aim is thus to show how émigré literature could serve as a political propaganda tool and a call to war against Bolshevism.

Keywords: *anti-communism, Soviet Union, White émigrés, literature, propaganda, National Socialism, Second World War*

Introduction

A bunch of hungry, miserable, half-barefoot people hurriedly strove along the snowy, slippery, bad sidewalks (…). The long hours of Soviet service and the even longer "queuing," sometimes starting at night, to get a piece of stinking, dried fish or a herring, the eternal fear of doing something wrong and then being "lishenets," which means being exposed to starvation, all this wore people down.

> Everyone hid in the corners of their cold, overcrowded apartments. No one dared to speak a loud word.[1]

This gloomy insight into St. Petersburg/Leningrad in the early 1920s is taken from the novel *Endless Hate* by the Russian émigré writer Pyotr Krasnov. It was first published in 1934 under the Russian title *Nenavist* ("Hate") in Paris and awarded two years later with a literary prize by the Vatican, the German edition *Der endlose Haß* appeared in Berlin in 1938. In over 600 pages, Krasnov describes the changes before and after the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia. As the quote indicates, he depicts an extremely dark picture of the Soviet Union – misery, hunger, fear, and oppression dominate people's everyday lives. This is hardly surprising, considering that Krasnov was a prominent emigrant who dedicated his life to the fight against Bolshevism. Initially, he fought as a Cossack leader in the Russian Civil War on the side of the Whites against the Red Army. After his emigration in 1919, he began to stir up sentiment against communism and the Soviet Union in Western Europe through his publications, allied with the French extreme right and later with the National socialists.[2]

As an emigrant, he was far from being an individual case. As a result of the October Revolution and its subsequent excesses of violence, economic grievances and famines, more than 1.5 million people emigrated to Europe, above all to cities such as Berlin, Munich, Paris, Prague, Belgrade, Sofia and others.[3] Their social composition was very diverse, ranging from the monarchist far right and aristocrats to bourgeois liberals, Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, social democrats, Trotskyists, dissident communists etc. Consequently, some of them – especially military members, journalists, writers and former politicians – became important anti-communist voices in Europe.[4]

Since anti-communism in general was a central political driving force of the interwar period, be it on the part of the far right, the conservative or social democratic side, Krasnov's and other émigrés' writings easily found a wide and diverse audience. Nevertheless, their contribution to the intellectual mindset of the time and their discursive impact have not yet been extensively researched.[5] Using the example of Krasnov's *Endless Hate* as a historical source

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[1] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß* (Berlin: Vier Falken Verlag, 1938), p. 372. All quotes from the novel are taken from the German edition from 1938 and have been translated into English by the author.

[2] For more details and references, see the further explanations in this article.

[3] Pavel Polian & Myriam Ahmad-Schleicher, "Neue Heimat: Die vier Wellen der russischen Emigration im 20. Jahrhundert," *Osteuropa,* Vol. 53, No. 11 (November 2003), p. 1678; Luc van Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin & Giles Scott-Smith (Eds.), *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War. Agents, Activities, and Networks* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 3.

[4] This concerns for instance (and among many others) the Baltic Germans Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter and Alfred Rosenberg, and the Russian monarchists Vasilij Biskupskij and Fjodor Vinberg on the side of the early National Socialists, Ivan Ilyin, Zinaida Gippius, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, and Alja Rachmanova as Nazi sympathizers as well, Alexander Denikin and Georges Lodygensky as White monarchists, Pavel Milyukov and Vladimir Burtsev as more liberal voices, Boris Savinkov, Sergei Melgunov, Alexander Kerenski, Boris Mirkin-Getzevich and Oreste Rosenfeld on the socialist or social democratic side, Boris Souvarine and Victor Serge as former communists and fervent anti-Stalinists.

[5] See also Nicolas Lebourg, "White Émigrés and International Anti-Communism in France (1918–1939)," *IERES Occasional Papers,* Vol. 9 (December 2020), p. 5.

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for mind making,[6] my aim is thus to show how émigré literature could serve as a propaganda tool to influence and mobilize people and was (mis)used to mentally prepare a new war, a "crusade against Bolshevism:" What role does emotionalization and the concepts of love and hate play in this context? Thus, how does Krasnov's novel generate hate against the Soviets and appeal to patriotic love for his homeland? Moreover, how does the author deter his non-Russian readers in particular from Bolshevism and implicitly warn them against a similar system in their own country? And why and how were Krasnov's narratives also connectable to Nazi propaganda?

After a few general remarks on anti-communism in the interwar period, I will focus on Krasnov's biography and his novel and situate it in its socio-political context. In this way, my paper is intended to shed new light on this hitherto neglected source and contribute via its analysis to the research on anti-communist (war) propaganda by the Russian émigré community.

Anti-communism in Interwar Europe

In early 1933, the Vatican, under Pope Pius XI, initiated an international novel contest for anti-Bolshevik literature. In order to remain in the background, the contest was officially announced by the Catholic *Académie d'éducation et d'entraide sociales* in Paris. Nonetheless, Pius XI supervised the entire process – the call for entries, the selection of jury members, and the awarded novels. Besides the strictly catholic character of the competition, the institutions and individuals involved had also close ties to the extreme right: The *Académie d'éducation et d'entreaide sociales* was affiliated with the nationalist, right-wing *Action française*[7]; the two main persons responsible for the contest, the historian of religion Georges Goyau, who had arranged the contact with the Vatican, as well as the president of the jury, Henry Bordeaux,

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There are a large number of publications, especially in cultural and literary studies, on the Russian emigration per se, as well as a number of individual biographies of prominent representatives of this emigration. (For a general overview see for example (selective choice): Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Karl Schlögel (Ed.), *Der große Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917–1941*, (München: C. H. Beck, 1994); John Glad, *Russia Abroad. Writers, History, Politics* (Washington: Birchbark Press, 1999); Simon Karlinsky, *Freedom from Violence and Lies: Essays on Russian Poetry and Music* (Brookline: Academic Studies Press, 2013); Greta N. Slobin, *Russians Abroad: Literary and Cultural Politics of Diaspora (1919–1939)* (Brookline: Academic Studies Press, 2013).) Comprehensive studies on the contribution of Russian emigrants to anti-communism in the interwar period, especially in a transnational perspective, are, however, rather limited to the political connections of some White emigrants to fascism and National Socialism, especially to the early National Socialists in Munich until 1923. (Concerning the latter see for instance Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and for a first overview "Antirevolutionäre Emigranten aus Russland im München der 1920er Jahre," Osmikon. Das Forschungsportal zu Ost-, Ostmittel-, und Südosteuropa, accessed October 26, 2022, (https://www.osmikon.de/themendossiers/muenchen-und-die-russische-revolution/weisse-emigranten-in-muenchen). Contrary to this research tendency, research on anti-communism among social-democratic or former communist Russian émigrés is still largely lacking.

[6] To the author's knowledge, the novel has not yet been analyzed in detail in this context.

[7] Franz Stadler, "Die unterschlagenen Geheimnisse der Milchfrau in Ottakring," *Zwischenwelt. Zeitschrift für Kultur des Exils und Widerstands*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2018), pp. 8-9.

openly sympathized with fascism.[8] In this sense, it is not surprising that the third prize was awarded (in 1936) to Pyotr Krasnov for *Nenavist*. The first prize as well went to a far-right White émigré, the Austrian-based bestseller author Alya Rachmanova for her novel *Die Fabrik des neuen Menschen* ("The Factory of the New Man"), published in Salzburg in 1935.[9]

The result does not only indicate the significance of Krasnov and Russian émigré writers in general, but the contest is an ideal example of the complex, transnational interconnections of anti-communism in interwar Europe. It demonstrates the manifold lines of connection between politics, propaganda, and the literary establishment, and highlights some of its key players: religious institutions, the Catholic Church and the Vatican in particular, conservative forces, the far right and fascists, and Russian emigrants as representatives of the "old," pre-revolutionary Russia.

At this point, it has to be noted that anti-communism is a phenomenon with a multitude of manifestations with highly diverse, often contradictory and sometimes even diametrically opposed political identities and motivations.[10] With regard to the interwar period, the spectrum ranges from anarchism, the socialist left and social democracy, bourgeois circles and Christian movements, to the far right, authoritarian and fascist political systems, although the crossings were sometimes fluid.[11] In addition, important aspects of anti-communism are its adaptability, flexibility, and diverse "applicability." Jean-François Fayet, for example, speaks of a "chameleon tactic" of anti-communism in order to strengthen the respective existing order and traditional elites:

> The strength of anti-communism lay in its ability to penetrate existing structures and to blend in with local culture, and it is this that explains the diversity of the phenomenon. Unlike fascism, it was not meant in any way to compete with the established parties. On the contrary, it wished to endorse the existing order and relied on the traditional elites that it conceived of as the 'legitimate authorities'. Consequently, the modus operandi of its principal stakeholders was that of seeking to influence existing structures rather than creating specifically anti-communist institutions.[12]

Despite their diversity, the various manifestations of anti-communism are connected by the underlying expression of fear. First and foremost, this implies the often-invoked fear of

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[8] Giuliana Chamedes, "The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-communism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (2016), pp. 272-273.

[9] The second prize was awarded to the Austrian aristocrat Erik Maria Kuehnelt-Leddihn for *Jesuiten, Spießer und Bolschewiken* ("Jesuits, Bourgeois and Bolsheviks") (Stéphanie Roulin, "Le concours international de romans antibolcheviques, ou comment faire de la 'bonne littérature' médiocre (1933–1936)," in Claude Hauser, Thomas Loué, Jean-Yves Mollier, and François Vallotton (Eds.), *La diplomatie par le livre. Réseaux et circulation internationale de l'imprimé de 1880 à nos jours* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2011) , p. 6.) For Rachmanova, see further Alexandra Preitschopf, "'Gegenwind'? Antikommunistische Reaktionen nach der Oktoberrevolution anhand des Beispiels der österreichisch-russischen Schriftstellerin Alja Rachmanowa," *Acta Philologica*, Vol. 58 (2022), pp. 119–130.

[10] Johannes Großmann, "Die 'Grundtorheit unserer Epoche'? Neue Forschungen und Zugänge zur Geschichte des Antikommunismus," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 56 (2016), p. 552.

[11] Ibid.; Jean-François Fayet, "Reflections on Writing the History of Anti-Communism," *Twentieth Century Communism. A Journal of International History*, Vol. 6 (2014), p. 12.

[12] Ibid., p. 14.

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revolution, the threat to (bourgeois and entrepreneurial) property and class privileges, to bourgeois culture and individual freedom, the threat to social and political order.[13] Especially the bourgeois right and religious communities considered that the fundamental values of western civilization, such as the family, religion and homeland, were thus endangered.[14] This was all the more relevant for the period after the October Revolution, which turned a previously rather diffuse social threat into a real, concrete danger and also made the idea of an approaching communist "world revolution" more plausible.[15] The evocation of such (imagined and existing) dangers, in turn, served in particular to strengthen social cohesion, to unite societies or certain population groups against a common enemy. Therefore, anti-communism, as a kind of "integration ideology," was particularly virulent during periods of social disruption in which (new) cohesion was to be created.[16]

Even if, during the interwar period, anti-communism was sometimes expressed in terms of the defense of democratic values and institutions (especially on the part of social democracy), the threat of a communist dictatorship was often employed to legitimize other, non- or anti-communist dictatorships, some of which were among the most brutal of the century.[17] This applies, for example, to the regimes of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, for Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal, Miklós Horthy's Hungary, Józef Piłsudski's Poland or to the Austrian fascist "Ständestaat," where anti-communism was instrumentalized to stabilize the system and legitimize political violence and persecution of (alleged) communists.[18] In this context, Andreas Wirsching also speaks of a "functional anti-communism:" A real – or supposedly impending – communist revolution offered right-wing, authoritarian movements an ideal opportunity to present themselves as *the* defensive movement against the communist-Bolshevik (or even social-democratic) "red danger" and to undermine democratic structures.[19]

The complete diabolization of the enemy is another characteristic of anti-communism of authoritarian/fascist type. As Fayet puts it, its ideology was "fueled by a multitude of fantasies, fears and anxieties," often combined with racist stereotypes such as the image of the bloodthirsty "Asian barbarian" from the far Russian east and of the "Jewish conspirator" or

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[13] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche," in Norbert Frei & Dominik Rigoll (Eds.), *Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche: Weltanschauung und Politik in Deutschland, Europa und den USA* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), p. 13.

[14] Jean-François Fayet, "Reflections," p. 13.

[15] Robert Gerwarth, "Die Geburt des Antibolschewismus," in Norbert Frei & Dominik Rigoll (eds.), *Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche: Weltanschauung und Politik in Deutschland, Europa und den USA* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), p. 51.

[16] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Der Antikommunismus," p. 14.

[17] Jean-François Fayet, "Reflections," p. 11; Dieter Pohl, "Antikommunismus als Ressource von Diktaturen und autoritären Systemen bis 1945," in Lucile Dreidemy, Richard Hufschmied, Agnes Meisinger, Berthold Molden, Eugen Pfister, Katharina Prager, Elisabeth Röhrlich, Florian Wenninger and Maria Wirth (Eds.), *Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte. Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Böhlau, 2015), p. 476.

[18] Johannes Großmann, "Die 'Grundtorheit'," p. 565.

[19] Andreas Wirsching, "Antikommunismus als Querschnittsphänomen politischer Kultur, 1917–1945," in Stefan Creuzberger & Dierk Hoffmann (Eds.), *'Geistige Gefahr' und 'Immunisierung der Gesellschaft'. Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), p. 20.

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"Bolshevik Jew" as mastermind behind communism and the October Revolution[20]: There was a longstanding affinity between antisemitism and anti-Marxism, traceable from as early as the mid-nineteenth century, until it led to the National Socialist call for a "crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism" in Soviet Russia.[21] In this context, it is important to stress that in the 1930s and early 1940s the combination of anti-Bolshevism and antisemitism was a central link not only within the National Socialist leadership but also in large parts of German society. Stalin's system was seen as an ideological mortal enemy and an eminent cultural threat; at the same time, it was imagined that the moment had come for a direct confrontation with "World Jewry" which was held responsible for the Russian Revolution.[22]

These and other conditions led to a cruel, deeply racially motivated war of extermination, against the Jewish population and against Soviet Russia as a whole. A total of around 27 million Soviet citizens (soldiers and civilians) fell victim to acts of war, captivity, forced labor, massacres, mass shootings, starvation policies and deportations to extermination camps between June 1941 and May 1945,[23] among them around three million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.[24] The starvation plans in particular, clearly show that the National Socialists intended much more than the murder of Soviet Jews: Already in the months before the attack on the Soviet Union, different starvation scenarios were discussed in the German Ministry of Nutrition and among the *Wehrmacht* leadership, which made the genocidal dimensions of their war strategy apparent. A figure of 30 million people starving to death was calculated, the Soviet population was expected to decline to the level of 1913.[25]

Interestingly, this racist, genocidal anti-Russian component of anti-communism did not prevent some Russian emigrants from allying with the National Socialists. Likewise, Krasnov completely omits from all his works the Nazis' own racial anti-Slavic hate.

The Novel *Endless Hate*
Some Words on Pjotr Krasnov (1869-1947)

Before becoming an important writer and political actor within the Russian emigration abroad, Pjotr Krasnov – as a general and commander of Cossack military forces – was among the first

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[20] Jean-François Fayet, "Reflections," p. 9; see further Ulrich Herbeck, *Das Feindbild vom 'jüdischen Bolschewiken'. Zur Geschichte des russischen Antisemitismus vor und während der Russischen Revolution* (Berlin: Metropol, 2009); Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, "Jüdischer Bolschewismus." Mythos und Realität (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2010); Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[21] Jean-François Fayet, "Reflections," p. 11.

[22] Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Verbrechen 1939-1945. Innenansichten des Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2022), p. 139.

[23] Christian Hartmann, *Unternehmen Barbarossa. Der deutsche Krieg im Osten 1941–1945* (München: C. H. Beck, 2011), pp. 115-116; see further Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Verbrechen*, pp. 139-172.

[24] Ilja Altman, *Opfer des Hasses. Der Holocaust in der UdSSR 1941–1945. Mit einem Vorwort von Hans-Heinrich Nolte* (Zurich: Muster-Schmidt, 2008), p. 47.

[25] Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Verbrechen*, p. 140.

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to take military action against the Bolsheviks in the Don region in October 1917.[26] He cancelled the Bolshevik decrees and declared the territory an independent state and himself its leader. At the same time, the way he proceeded with Cossacks who were fighting on the side of the Red Army during the Civil War or supported the Bolshevik regime was utterly cruel: between 25,000 and 40,000 were executed and another 30,000 exiled.[27] In the beginning, Krasnov had Germany's support through weapon supplies, but his self-declared "tsardom" broke up when the Germans retreated from the Don region and he was forced to flee to Berlin in early 1919.[28] He shared this fate with many other anti-Bolshevik Cossacks: as the Red Army gained the initiative in the Civil War during late 1919 and early 1920, Cossack soldiers (often together with their families) withdrew with the White troops; as many as 80,000–100,000 of them eventually joined the defeated Whites in exile.[29]

In Germany, Krasnov shifted his anti-Bolshevik struggle to the intellectual sphere and published his first historic novels.[30] His writings quickly became popular in the émigré Russian community where he was still regarded by many, especially by the émigré Cossacks, as a legendary anti-Bolshevik hero. His success was, however, not limited to these reactionary Russian circles. His novels found a wide European audience and were translated into more than twenty languages, among them German, French, English or Serbian.[31] Hostile to democracy, Krasnov romanticizes in his books the patriarchal life in pre-revolutionary Russia under the Tsar and especially glorifies the Cossacks[32] – he sees old Russia as standing for "true values," morality and decency, whereas the Bolshevist regime as symbolizing absolute evil, decay and depravity. This is hardly surprising, considering that Krasnov defined himself as "a pure monarchist, a restorationist, and an extreme reactionary" and that, in general, White émigrés often held onto the Russia they had known from before they left the country.[33] This becomes clear already in Krasnov's first work, written between 1918 and 1921: *From Double Eagle to Red Flag* was published in Berlin in 1921, the French and English versions appeared in 1926.[34]

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[26] Marina Aptekman, "Forward to the Past or Two Radical Views on the Russian Nationalist Future: Pyotr Krasnov's Behind the Thistle and Vladimir Sorokin's Day of An Oprichink," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2009), p. 243.

[27] Georgy Manaev, "Between a rock and a hard place: The Cossacks' century of struggle," Russia Beyond, last modified March 29, 2014,
https://www.rbth.com/arts/2014/03/29/between_a_rock_and_a_hard_place_the_cossacks_century_of_struggle_35465.html.

[28] Marina Aptekman, "Forward to the Past," p. 243.

[29] German Olegovitch Matsievsky, "Political Life of the Cossacks in Emigration: Tendencies and Features," *Modern Studies of Social Problems,* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2013), p. 3.

[30] Marina Aptekman, "Forward to the Past," p. 243.

[31] Ibid., p. 246; John Glad, *Russia Abroad*, p. 254; Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 39.

[32] Stéphanie Roulin, "Le concours international," p. 6.

[33] John Glad, *Russia Abroad*, p. 254.

[34] "De l'aigle impérial au drapeau rouge," Librairie Gallimard Paris, last modified October 5, 2017,
 https://www.librairie-gallimard.com/livre/9782940523580-de-l-aigle-imperial-au-drapeau-rouge-piotr-krasnov/.

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As with his later writings, the novel is also deeply anti-Semitic, advocating the conspiracy theory of "Judeo-Bolshevism."[35] Here, it is important to stress that – even if there were some Jews in the Bolshevik leadership of the young Soviet State – they were far from being the majority.[36] Moreover, a number of Jews made up an important part of the opposite, anti-Bolshevik camp and thus also found themselves exiled.[37] Nevertheless, the idea of a Jewish-Communist conspiracy remained very persistent. In Germany for instance, it was particularly widespread among the Early National Socialist in Munich, also due to their close contacts with Russian White emigrants.[38]

Interestingly, Krasnov himself lived in Munich from 1920 to 1923[39] and moved then to Paris where he expanded his anti-Soviet activities: He became one of the founders of the *Bratsvo russkoi pravdy*, the *Brotherhood of Russian Truth*, a militant anti-communist organization with an underground network[40] that carried out several terrorist attacks in Soviet Russia. Besides Paris, the BRT had bases in Germany, the Baltic states, Yugoslavia as well as outside of Europe in the United States and Manchuria. It advocated for a "unified anti-Soviet front on a 'global scale' with the aim of establishing a 'liberation movement' of peoples who had come under communist rule."[41] As the French historian Nicolas Lebourg has shown, the members of the French base, led by Krasnov, were also linked to the *Russian Sportsmens' Union*, an organization that carried out paramilitary preparations under the guise of sports activities and was openly pro-Nazi.[42]

In general, Krasnov himself never made a secret of his sympathies for National Socialism; since Hitler's seizure of power, he completely supported the regime and hoped for a liberation of his homeland from Bolshevism through a new war. In 1937 he left Paris, because of concerns for his personal safety, apparently due to the activities of the Soviet Secret Police in France. From 1937 until the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Krasnov lived again in Berlin where he continued his writing and his involvement with the émigré community.[43]

He eventually allied himself, at the age of 78, with the German Army. This can also be explained by the fact that Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German and prominent Nazi ideologue in

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[35] Daniel Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero: The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 43-44.

[36] At the level of political commissars, for example, about 10-20% were of Jewish origin. (Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Verbrechen*, p. 142.)

[37] An estimated 20 percent of immigrants from Russia in Germany were Jews, and among the stateless the figure rose to nearly 40 percent. (John Glad, *Russia Abroad*, p. 140.)

[38] See in detail for instance Ulrich Herbeck, *Das Feindbild*, p. 16; Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism*. Therefore, it is also hardly surprising that, as the German historian Daniel Siemens points out, the German version of *From Double Eagle* was the favorite book of the young Nazi *Sturmführer* Horst Wessel. (Siemens 2013, pp. 43-44.)

[39] Samuel Newland, *The Cossacks in the German Army 1941-1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1991), p. 95.

[40] Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, p. 39.

[41] Nicolas Lebourg, "White Émigrés and International Anti-Communism in France (1918–1939)," p. 12.

[42] Ibid., p. 12.

[43] Samuel Newland, *The Cossacks in the German Army 1941-1945*, p. 95; Brent Mueggenberg, *The Cossack Struggle Against Communism, 1917-1945* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2019), p. 248.

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charge of the occupied eastern territories, was particularly keen on supporting the anti-Bolshevik Cossacks in their efforts to create their own state, independent from Russia. In October 1941, he persuaded Hitler to sign a decree creating special military units manned by Cossack prisoners of war and led by former Russian officers. Krasnov eventually was put in charge of all anti-Soviet Cossack units.[44] In a public address beforehand, he set out his conviction and determination, charged, once more, with crude antisemitism: "Tell all the Cossacks that this is no war against Russia, but rather against Communists, Jews and their henchmen who sell Russian blood. May God help the German sword and Hitler! Let them accomplish their endeavor (…)."[45]

His ideological conviction that the National Socialists – being anti-Semites and anti-Bolsheviks like him – would finally liberate his country and enable the creation of a separate Cossack state probably also explains why he was not troubled by their own deep anti-Slavic racism. This blindness ultimately also sealed his fate: Despite Rosenberg's support, Krasnov's work for the *Wehrmacht* was rather limited to tasks like writing letters and propaganda pleas – this was not only due to his advanced age, but also due to a general mistrust on the part of the Nazis. Finally, the German leadership did not want to enlist in their armed forces large numbers of Russians who sought to create a new Russia or a new state and utilized émigré assistance only very selectively.[46] As pointed above, their true intention from the very beginning was to wage a genocidal war of extermination against the Soviet Union and its population. By the end of the war, Krasnov himself was captured by the British Army in Austria and was forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. In January 1947, he was accused of treason, sentenced to death by hanging by order of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.[47]

Although almost forgotten in Europe, Krasnov's works are nowadays republished in Russia and gain new popularity. Since the early 1990s, there have been several attempts to rehabilitate and commemorate the Cossack general, despite his collaboration with National Socialism.[48] This is not surprising, taking into consideration that finally, his fervent patriotism, his glorification of "old Russia" and "Russian values," his references to the Orthodox religion, and even his anti-Semitic conspiracy ideas fit perfectly in Putin's Russia.[49]

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[44] John Glad, *Russia Abroad*, p. 315.

[45] Artem Kirpichenok, "Krasnov, the Cossacks' chief. Who is behind the rehabilitation of the former Nazi collaborator?," *Remembrance, Research and Justice: Heritage of WWII in the 21st Century*, last modified May 22, 2020, https://eng.remembrance.ru/2020/05/22/krasnov-the-cossacks-chief-who-is-behind-the-rehabilitation-of-the-former-nazi-collaborator/#easy-footnote-bottom-4-274.

[46] Samuel Newland, *The Cossacks in the German Army 1941-1945*, p. 96.

[47] Marina Aptekman, "Forward to the Past," p. 243, and Samuel Newland, *The Cossacks in the German Army 1941-1945*, p. 96.

[48] Artem Kirpichenok, "Krasnov, the Cossacks' chief."

[49] This applies even more to the pro-fascist White émigré author Ivan Ilyin on whom Putin, among others, bases his ideology. (See for instance for a first overview Norbert Matern, "Putins Selbstverständnis basiert auf Iwan Iljins Staatideologie", *Die Tagespost*, last modified March 25, 2022, https://www.die-tagespost.de/kultur/iwan-iljin-stichwortgeber-des-boesen-art-226652.)

A Novel of Hate and Love?

Krasnov's political ideas and his hope for liberation from Bolshevism with the help of Hitler and other fascists are also very clear in his novel *Nenavist*.[50] The title refers on the one hand to the "endless hate" of the Bolsheviks towards everything and everyone that does not correspond to their worldview. According to Krasnov, with the establishment of communist power "love, humanity, respect for personality, everything was inexorably swept away, and in their place was sown in the hearts of the people blind hatred, irreconcilable malice, diabolical indifference to the suffering of others, and scornful disdain for all opponents." [51] On the other hand, Krasnov's title also means the anti-Bolsheviks' hate towards the communist rulers to be exterminated in a future war. Love as the counter-concept of hate plays a role insofar as Krasnov's anti-communist protagonists are characterized by an unshakable, patriotic love for their homeland, the "real" Russia, with its traditions, Christian religion, and the Tsar as ruler – a selfless love for which they are also ready to die.

The Disaster Announces

To consolidate this contrast between good and evil from the beginning, the novel opens in pre-revolutionary Russia, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. Krasnov introduces his readers to the wealthy, bourgeois Shiltsov family living in St. Petersburg. Although they lead a happy, peaceful and carefree life – especially the two schoolgirls Genia and her cousin Shura, as well as Genia's little brother Gurochka – Volodya, Genia's older brother and the "black sheep" of the family, already signals an approaching catastrophe. In the summer, he visits his uncle, Tichon Ivanovich Vechotkin, a Cossack, officer in the Tsarist Army and landowner, in the Don region. The latter is very irritated by Volodya's questions on his property and by his belief that all the fields, meadows, fruit trees and the farm should not belong to his uncle but should instead become collective property. At this point, it should be already clear for the contemporary reader that Volodya was a (still hidden) communist. Tichon Ivanovich has no sympathy for his nephew's ideas; he understands the danger that lies in them, and is spontaneously seized with a deep dislike when he sees Volodya, still asleep in his bed, the next morning: "I took one look at him and thought, here he lies now, this slimy worm who knows nothing, can do nothing, and such a one will come one day and rob and smash everything... Then a fiery hate stirred in my heart..."[52]

The aversion to Volodya's views is also shared by Shura who tells her cousin Genia that Volodya took her with him to a secret communist party meeting in St. Petersburg. She remains unimpressed by the event, but describes the circumstances full of disgust:

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[50]Even though the German edition of the novel from 1938 fit in perfectly with Nazi propaganda, its publication was temporarily suspended from 1939. This was because after the German-Soviet non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939, it was generally decreed that "for the time being no literature on Russia" should be published, neither positive nor negative. Subsequently, with the German war of aggression against the Soviet Union starting in June 1941, anti-Soviet propaganda flourished again (Stadler, "Die unterschlagenen Geheimnisse," p. 9).

[51] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß*, p. 337.

[52] Ibid., p. 55.

> The intelligentsia (...), the students (...) were dressed in a decidedly dissolute manner. The women in unwashed blouses, with short-cropped, disheveled hair, with burning eyes, exalted. In front of me sat a couple (...): He – student, in a red shirt, (...) thick, sweaty, with a Jewish face, she also a Jew, puffy. Everything about her hung shapelessly, the blouse was sweaty under the arms and unwashed.[53]

In addition to the obvious antisemitism – Krasnov hardly misses an opportunity in his novel to emphasize the Jewishness of many of "his" communists – another characteristic becomes clear here: often in anti-Bolshevik writings, communists are described as especially dirty, unwashed and without hygiene (contrary to the pure, clean old Russia).[54] This repulsive image becomes all the more effective when it is combined, as it is here, with the old anti-Semitic stereotype of the "dirty Jew."

However, Krasnov does not only diabolize the Bolsheviks or describe them from the external perspective of their enemies. In general, the manipulative power in his novel also lies in the many direct speeches and expressed thoughts of his protagonists, with whom the reader can thus identify more easily. This is sometimes extended to the communist characters when Krasnov suggests looking into their minds as well. Obviously, he wants to show that some among them have doubts themselves, that they may have had the right motives, but realized that they were wrong about the communist idea. The first example in the novel is Dalekich, a party member from the beginning on who still believes in God and finally decides to work as a spy for the tsarist secret police, providing them with information about communist party activities. Exactly at Christmas he is kidnapped by other party members, among them Volodya, and internally tried. Dalekich explains to his "judges," and subsequently to Krasnov's readers, that he chose communism in the hope of love but encountered only hate and therefore turned away and began to fight the movement:

> I joined the party because I believed it gave us all equality, it gave us all love. I believed that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and socialism – were one and the same. I joined the party because I was told that it was fighting for the poor people, to free them and create a better life for them. (...) I realized long ago that socialism is not love and not forgiveness, that it does not bring equality between rich and poor, not freedom, but that it is the most blatant hatred, against everything that is higher, malice itself and the desire to destroy everything that is higher and better.[55]

Consequently, he is "sentenced to death" by the other party members, tied up and drowned in an ice hole in the Neva River to make his body disappear immediately. While the other three comrades involved in the brutal murder decide to go to the brothel afterwards – besides the cruel act itself, yet another sign of their immorality – Volodya refuses the offer, goes home where his family is about to celebrate Christmas and tries to distract himself from his bad conscience by reading Marx's *Capital*.

At this point, the communists have not yet taken power in Russia, but Volodya becomes more and more radicalized and leaves his family for his career in the party. Meanwhile, his

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[53] Ibid., pp. 72-73.
[54] Alexandra Preitschopf, "Gegenwind," pp. 123-124.
[55] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß*, p. 129.

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sister Genia falls in love with the Cossack lieutenant Gennady Gurdin. Summer moves into the country, everything seems harmonious and peaceful, until the outbreak of the First World War in July 1914. Gennady has to go to war, but he and Genia promise to wait for each other until he returns. The more the war and the political radicalization within Russia progress, the greater the worries about the political future become in the Shiltsov family. Once again, the anti-Semitic character of the novel becomes clear in this context in statements such as the following: "It will probably come to the point that an all-Russian pogrom will be organized, not one against the Jews, but one that will plunder the whole of Russia with Jewish hands."[56] The bitter irony here lies in the perpetrator-victim reversal that is typical of anti-Semitic argumentation: Not only did Jews repeatedly fall victim to cruel pogroms in tsarist Russia, especially after 1881, but also later – during the Civil War – they were a particularly vulnerable population group that suffered especially from White and sometimes also Red Terror.[57] Between 50,000 and 150,000 Jews were murdered between 1917 and 1920 alone.[58] It should be noted at this point that Krasnov himself and anti-Bolshevik Cossack troops in general were particularly known for their profound antisemitism and repeatedly carried out brutal pogroms against the local Jewish population in their territories.[59]

Under the New Regime

However, in Krasnov's novel, the members of the aristocracy, clergy, and bourgeoisie are the only true victims of the historical circumstances and are seen at the same time martyr-like heroes. Consequently, in the Shiltsov family as well, the October Revolution leads to radical changes. Matvei Trofimovich, the head of the family, immediately loses his job as a mathematics teacher in high school, because he is not regarded as convenient for the new regime anymore. Little Gurochka has grown up and became an officer – since he does not want to fight for the Red Army, he looks for a possibility to get to the south of the country to join the Whites instead. Shura works as a nurse in the hospital while her cousin Genia joins the Soviet authority *Glav-Bum* (Central Paper Administration) to financially support the family. In St. Petersburg, now Leningrad, they all live in great poverty; nevertheless, they do not lose their humanity and Christian solidarity – as many people are wanted by the communist secret police *Cheka* to be arrested, desperate fugitives ring their doorbell almost every evening. Be it a stranger or former student, "they let him in, gave him something to eat (…), shared the last of the bread with him, (…) and put him to sleep on the sofa."[60] Throughout the whole novel, especially Genia and Shura, remain – as unmarried virgins and good Christian women – a personification of purity, innocence, morality, and decency, respectively of "old Russia" itself. Others hate them for the simple fact that "for all their poverty and misery, they were always

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[56] Ibid., p. 288.

[57] See for instance Frank Golczewski, "Pogrome in der Ukraine," in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Band 4. Ereignisse, Dekrete, Kontroversen*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter 2011), pp. 303–308; Anke Hilbrenner, "Pogrome im Russischen Reich (1903-1906)," in ibid., pp. 298-299.

[58] Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy. The Russian Revolution. 1891-1924* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), pp. 676-769.

[59] Ulrich Herbeck, *Das Feindbild*, pp. 292-293; see further Mueggenberg, *The Cossack Struggle*, pp. 127-128.

[60] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß*, p. 352.

clean and neatly dressed, that they looked fresh and good, that their voices sounded kind and musical (…), but above all, for not forgetting God, going to church, and singing in the church choir."[61]

Finally, they even haunt the memories of Volodya who has in the meantime risen to become a senior communist commissar named Granitov. During a meeting with Lenin himself, he thinks back to moments spent with his sister and cousin at the home of his grandfather, an Orthodox priest, where they sang religious songs together:

> Volodya felt even now something of the feeling of a very special, unearthly emotion, the feeling of an inexplicable purity, goodness and love that had completely taken hold of him at that time. (...) He remembered how little Genia had sighed deeply and whispered: 'How beautiful!... How glorious it all is. As if the Mother of God, the cherubim and seraphim were with us!...[62]

The same uncle, Otets Pjotr, later comes back to Leningrad and holds a mass, together with a sermon following the liturgy, even though this is forbidden (a sermon would have to be approved by the Soviet authorities beforehand). The moment constitutes a climax in the novel and at the same time an irreconcilable reckoning with the grievances of the Soviet regime:

> Where are children still raised to respect their parents? Where is the family where parents and children live in peace and love? Besprisornyje [homeless children] corrupted from the bottom up roam the streets like half-starved wolves, (...) Russian children! Mountains of corpses of starved orphans lie in cellars waiting for a Christian burial!...
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> (...) But if it was not the power of God, of the Lord, that established this government of ours, then it can only have been the diabolical power of the Antichrist that brought us these commissars and communists! (...) The Lord has taught us: 'Thou shalt not kill,' but the air of our whole vast empire is polluted with the corpse stench of millions of innocent slain... 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and here marriages are contracted for days and hours and the unhappy women are pushed into the street and treated worse than slaves (...).[63]

At this point it should be borne in mind that Krasnov does address real problems of everyday Soviet life, especially of the first years after the Revolution. Marriage laws were supposed to give women more freedom, but in the beginning, they simplified divorces so much that – as a consequence – many women were abandoned by their husbands and left alone with their children.[64] In addition, there were numerous orphans – their parents had died as a result

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[61] Ibid., p. 447.

[62] Ibid., pp. 344-345.

[63] Ibid., pp. 412-413.

[64] In Lenin's theory, the bourgeois family was regarded as an "institute for the subjugation of women." With the introduction of "de facto marriage," the divorce procedure was simplified and women's right to an abortion was also legalized for the first time worldwide in order to combat illegal abortions that endangered women's health and lives (Sanita Osipova, "Sowjetisches Ehe- und Familienrecht von den Ersten Dekreten 1917 bis zum letzten Gesetzbuch 1968: vom Standpunkt der Lettischen Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik," *Právněhistorické Studie*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2019), p. 125). However, this liberal phase of Soviet marriage and family law ended as early as 1926 under Stalin and was changed entirely by the 1936 Constitution (ibid., p. 128). Homeless children, socially and economically unprotected women, and the decline in the birth rate were reasons that increasingly led to the search

of the Civil War, of famine and disease, or had been arrested as (alleged) political opponents, especially when they belonged to the bourgeoisie or the clergy. Since there were far too few places in orphanages, many of them roamed homeless and lived in extreme poverty. [65] Moreover, countless people (at least between 50,000 and 250,000 until the year 1922) fell victim to the Red Terror by the *Cheka* and its successor GPU, were arbitrarily arrested, cruelly tortured and executed.[66] Krasnov, however, uses these sad circumstances not only to deter his readers as much as possible from the communist system per se. Through the words of the priest, he also exposes the Bolsheviks (as often in religiously based anti-communist discourses of the time) as inhuman devils, as personified satanic evil par excellence. By this logic, according to Krasnov, only strong faith in God and the struggle against those in power can lead to an "exorcism" of Russia to bring back the "old order," love and peace.

In this "terrible kingdom of Satan" that "was set up in Holy Russia," [67] however, opinions like those of Otets Pyotr are not tolerated. After his sermon, he is beaten to death by Chekists in front of the church while about 800 people stand around, watching the scene and doing nothing; his dead body is taken away by the *Cheka* afterwards. The daughter of Otets Pyotr, Olga Petrovna (the mother of Volodya and Genia) asks, however, for the body to bury her father and is sent, after a long interrogation, to the *Cheka's* mortuary. Here, the reader sees once again the whole diabolical cruelty of the Bolshevik system, which has, according to Krasnov, no respect for life and not even for death: Olga learns that it was already ordered to hand over the body to Chinese butchers, "to prevent martyr relics," they chopped it up and brought it to the zoological garden to feed the predators.[68]

Warnings and Appeals

The whole Shiltsov family, except Volodya who broke off all contact, remains extremely distressed by the incident. All they have left is their hope of liberation – Genia never received any more news from her fiancé Gennady, but she thinks that he is in France: "And he is waiting for them there in Europe to finally understand who the Bolsheviks are and what a horrible goal they have. He is waiting for the crusade against the Communists to be finally declared, as Hitler

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for new solutions starting in 1929. Divorcing and re-marrying several times was more and more considered unethical and inappropriate to Soviet morality (ibid., p. 129).

[65] See for instance Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 780-781.

[66] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2011), p. 838; Norman Lowe, *Mastering Twentieth Century Russian History* (London: Red Globe Press, 2002), p. 151; Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 156-160; "Vor 100 Jahren: Beschluss des *Roten Terrors*," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, last modified September 4, 2018, https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/275169/vor-100-jahren-beschluss-des-roten-terrors/.
As contemporary sources of Russian emigrants see for example: Paul Miliukow, *Rußlands Zusammenbruch. Erster Band* (Berlin: Obelisk-Verlag, 1925); Paul Miliukow, *Rußlands Zusammenbruch. Zweiter Band* (Berlin: Obelisk-Verlag,1926); Serguei Melgunov, *La Terreur Rouge en Russie* (1918-1924) (Paris: Payot,1927); Iwan Iljin, *Welt vor dem Abgrund. Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur im kommunistischen Staate. Nach authentischen Quellen* (Berlin: Eckart-Verlag,1931).

[67] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß*, p. 426.

[68] Ibid., p. 424.

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declared it in Germany... And he will invade Russia with these armies." [69] This not only illustrates Krasnov's political stance and the hope he places in National Socialism but is also a powerful appeal to his readers – inside and outside the émigré community – to support the anti-Bolshevik struggle, by generating sympathy for the family and identification with their suffering, especially of the innocent, faithful Genia.

As mentioned above, however, Krasnov's strategy is not only to generate pity; he also suggests that communists themselves actually realize how wrong they have been with what they do and believe. Towards the end of the novel, he cleverly combines these fictional "insights" with a warning to his readers about the world communist revolution. When Volodya meets his party comrade Malinin who fears that communism could spill over into Western Europe, the latter urges him to overthrow the system from within:

> (…) the basic tendency of the war that we are planning against the ring of bourgeois states surrounding us, is the endeavor to transform the war of the Soviet Union into a tremendous civil war of the world proletariat against the bourgeoisie of the whole world. This is the war plan which I myself have worked out. (...) First suppress Christianity and destroy culture, in whatever form it may appear, and instead bring to fruition the communist movement deep in the rear of the enemy seeds. Earlier I had the impression that these plans were simply utopian, and I did not take them seriously. Now, however, I see that people in Western Europe are responding to our plans, that they want to open the gates to us voluntarily and believe our fantastic lies... Then all at once the horror became clear to me, I saw the danger and decided to take up the fight against it. [70]

Unsurprisingly, Malinin is subsequently shot. He shares this fate with Matvei Shiltsov who is executed after telling a group of foreign tourists in the Hermitage Museum that the whole Soviet Union was "one enormous swindle, the greatest swindle that ever existed on God's earth." [71] His wife Olga dies of grief, exhaustion, and hunger shortly after her husband.

Hunger is also a central issue at the end of the novel – we are now in the early 1930s – when Genia decides to go to her aunt in the Don region where she is confronted with enormous misery. Due to a massive famine, people slaughter and eat not only dogs and cats, but sometimes even humans. This is less a particularly gruesome fiction by Krasnov, but is based, again, on the tragic historical reality: indeed, dramatic famines, including cases of cannibalism, [72] occurred repeatedly in the Soviet Union. Particularly in 1932/33, supply shortages occurred throughout the country, but in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, in the Don and the Volga region, and in the North Caucasus the situation was extremely critical as a result of collectivization, and starvation resulted in a total of five to seven million deaths. [73]

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[69] Ibid., p. 458.

[70] Ibid., pp. 519-520.

[71] Ibid., p. 474.

[72] See for instance Steven Bela Várdy & Agnes Huszar Várdy, "Cannibalism in Stalin's Russia und Mao's China," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 (June 2007), pp. 226-233.

[73] See for instance Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Doubleday, 2017), pp. 186-221; Robert Kindler, *Stalins Nomaden: Herrschaft und Hunger in Kasachstan* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2014), pp. 239-262; Viktor Kondrashin, *Golod 1932-1933 godov: Tragedija rossijskoj derevni* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia, 2008).

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Although Genia is jaded after more than 15 years of living in deepest poverty and oppression, she cannot cope with the discovery that she makes in the Cossack village, meanwhile transformed into a kolkhoz called "Karl Marx." There, she finds the remains of a slaughtered woman, the communist village chief, whose flesh was processed into sausage:

> Genia could not get rid of the horrific scene. It was a horror without equal. It was an agonizing state such as she had never experienced in her entire life, a state of fear, disgust and deepest pity at how people had fallen so low. (…) She had seen a lot in the last twenty years of her life: murders, shootings, hunger... But this most horrible thing she could not bear.[74]

She leaves the village and wanders desperately through the lonely steppe, keeping, however, one last hope in her heart – after the reader has made the shocking discovery together with Genia, Krasnov repeats his appeal to support the people of the Soviet Union by all means:

> Like many others in the Soviet Union, she believed that abroad there would be a fierce agitation against the Bolsheviks, and that the moment would not be far away when the Entente, the Germans, the Japanese, at whatever cost, would eliminate the horrors of communist rule, which made a mockery of all common sense and destroyed millions of flourishing human lives year after year, so that hunger and cannibalism, class struggle and hatred would finally be eradicated from this world.[75]

Since Genia thinks Gennady lives in Paris (her family received foreign food parcels several times, the sender was a mysterious Mademoiselle Solange unknown to them), she finally decides to leave the country and look for him in France. She makes it to the Russian-Polish border where she finds the gravesite of a Cossack Regiment, dating from World War I – among others, also a certain Sotnik Gennady Gurdin is buried there, killed on September 12, 1914. Genia loses all strength, she sinks down and dies, "her body lay peacefully beside the crucifix, beside the grave of the one to whom she had promised loyalty to the death."[76]

The novel moves on to another cross in France, in the Auvergne region, on a mountain top – the reader meets again Gurochka who drives to the crucifix with a young lady and learns that the parcels were sent by him. He lives in Paris where he has worked for ten years as a chauffeur and is (presumably) engaged to Mademoiselle Solange, the lady accompanying him. In the pathetic style typical of Krasnov, Gurochka complains to her: "The sinister European lie wants you to believe that the Soviet Union is a happy country, where workers and peasants live in happiness, peace and wealth, and that only we, the emigrants slander and malign the Bolsheviks..."[77] She, however, tries to reassure him, points at the cross and says: "There it is, our faithful France... (…) The Christian France of loyalty, of the fulfillment of duty, of the warm love for the homeland and God... This France will always understand you and suffer with you... And the day will also come when this France will come to your aid and not to the Bolsheviks."[78]

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[74] Pjotr N. Krasnow, *Der endlose Haß*, pp. 597-598.
[75] Ibid., p. 604.
[76] Ibid., p. 613.
[77] Ibid., p. 620.
[78] Ibid., p. 621.

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A War Against Bolshevism, for the Love of the Homeland? The Novel Endless Hate (1934/1938) by Pjotr
Krasnov as an Anti-communist Propaganda Tool in the Interwar Period

Krasnov alludes here, at the exuberantly kitschy end of his novel, to French foreign policy, criticizing especially the pro-Soviet attitude of many French left-wing intellectuals. Whereas, in the first years after the October Revolution, France still provided support to the anti-Bolshevik Whites, by supplying them with military equipment and participating in the Allied intervention in the Civil War, it officially recognized the Soviet Union in 1924. Moreover, in the early 1930s, when Krasnov wrote his novel, the two states continued to approach each other: in 1932, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxim Litvinov, urged Stalin to attempt a rapprochement with France and the United Kingdom, to contain the advances of Nazism. Finally, in 1935, the Soviet Union and France signed a Mutual Assistance Treaty.[79] The France-based White Russians on the contrary, turned more and more to the political opposition for support and made connections with several factions of the French extreme right, as for instance with *Action Française*.[80] In this sense, in Krasnov's novel, Gurochka and Mademoiselle Solange perfectly symbolize this alliance between pro-fascist Russian émigrés and the catholic far-right who saw in communism their common enemy.

Conclusion

Compared with other contemporary writings by White émigrés or anti-communist authors, it is striking that *Endless Hate* is not particularly innovative or exceptional. On the contrary, Krasnov re-creates an already widespread, almost stereotypical image of the life in Soviet Russia. He makes use of the anti-communist discourse of the interwar period and builds his own deterrent vision of the "Soviet nightmare" on it. The description of the fate of the Shiltsov family, their integrity and faith in God, their suffering and almost martyr-like deaths can be considered as ideal-typical stereotypes of "good Russians" as well: despite their tremendous misery, they do not get involved with the new regime but carry on the former tsardom in their hearts. They face the "endless," all-destroying, diabolic hate emanating from the Bolsheviks with dignity and preserve their love for their homeland. In this sense, Genia's love for the Cossack Gennady, to whom she remains faithful till the end, is highly symbolic of this patriotic love for a world that no longer exists.

Undoubtedly, the grievances and inhumane policy that Krasnov depicts – extreme poverty, hunger and famines, including cases of cannibalism, omnipresent fear, arbitrary arrests, oppression, executions and murders, etc. – are based on tragic facts of the Soviet reality. However, the author deliberately conveys the impression that before the October Revolution, Russia was a kind of paradise, a realm of love and peace – problems such as massive poverty and social inequality, oppression, illiteracy and underdevelopment, as well as imperialism and warmongering during the tsarist regime are not mentioned at all. Similarly (and unsurprisingly), for Krasnov not a single positive achievement or improvement of the Soviet system exists. On the contrary, as we can often observe in the anti-communist discourses of the time, the Bolsheviks are accused of having turned paradisiacal Russia into a reign of Satan, into hell on earth. In this context, anti-Semitism has an important complementary key role – ultimately this almost biblical evil is not due to former Christians (on the contrary, they can come to their

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[79] Nicolas Lebourg, "White Émigrés and International Anti-Communism in France (1918–1939)," p. 6.
[80] Ibid., p. 6.

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senses again and turn against communism like Dalekich or Malinin) but due to "the Jews." According to Krasnov, only faith in and love for God and the homeland, as well as willingness to go to war against the devil, "Judeo-Bolshevism," can save the country and its people.

These images and accusations reinforce the dangerous effect of Krasnov's novel. For, in the end, his deterrent descriptions are not limited to generating disgust with the Bolshevik regime and pity for its victims. By identifying with the protagonists, the aim is rather to *provoke* hate in the readers themselves, to mobilize them through literature. It is therefore hardly surprising that Krasnov's novel is also an open declaration of support for Adolf Hitler: although, in the interwar period, the fear and fomenting of hate against the Soviet Union expressed itself in many ways, emanating from various political sides, it was – as explained above – particularly essential for the radical right, fascism and National Socialism.

While the original Russian version of 1934 was primarily aimed at the White Russian émigré community in France and contains an appeal to ally with their French (Catholic and far-right) counterparts, the German translation of 1938 is addressed directly to the German reading public. As one propaganda tool among many, it functioned as mental preparation for the "crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism" in the Soviet Union. At the same time, the novel's religious component and the steadfast Christian faith of its protagonists also made it amenable to the Vatican's anti-communist discourse (as the results of the above mentioned anti-Bolshevik literary competition show) and to a German-speaking Catholic (or generally Christian) readership.

To come back to the concept of the "chameleon tactic" of anti-communism (Fayet), Krasnov's novel illustrates how anti-communist resentment could permeate various discourses and be tailor-made for different groups within a society. *Endless Hate*, along with all its anti-Bolshevik, anti-Semitic, and emotionalizing pathos, suited the National Socialist politics, although at no time did the latter pursue the same goal as Krasnov. Consequently, it can be assumed that National Socialist propagandists recognized potential in the novel's deterrent effect, even if – unlike Krasnov – it was not their intention to generate a pity for the suffering of the Russian people among the German readers. On the contrary, and to the great error of the author, the Nazis were not concerned with liberating Russia, but with waging a war of extermination against the country and its population. The question whether Krasnov himself realized his misjudgment during or after his service for the German army, must remain open.

Krasnov's own fate, however, bears no relation to the enormous suffering of the Soviet population in the face of countless Nazi war crimes. The unimaginable cruelties inflicted on the Soviet people show most clearly the danger of propagated hate – be it hate against communists, against Jews, Slavs, or whomever. This is all the more the case when hate is veiled by supposed love for one's own homeland and declared to be a patriotic duty of war.

AGGRESSIVITY, ANXIETY, AND THE PLACE OF THE THIRD: INTERSECTING KIERKEGAARD, LACAN, AND WATSUJI

Thomas Diesner

Abstract

Aggressivity and anxiety are at the root of various social, political, individual, and therapeutic problems. Aggressive confrontations are usually based on a bipolar worldview, in which the other is experienced as the one who forces a certain course of action upon the self. What is missing in such a situation is something that enables mediation between the two sides to create an opening in its fixed structure. This is a third position or a place for a Third. Anxiety can be a reason for one to avoid an open encounter, for one tends to close, or put a limit to, the abyss of anxiety. But there is also a potential for opening, which lies in the place of the Third. In this article, I explore the possibility for such an opening along the place of the Third drawing on three authors: Kierkegaard, Lacan, and Watsuji.

Key terms: *Aggressivity, Anxiety, Third, psychoanalysis, Kierkegaard, Lacan, Watsuji*

Aggressivity and anxiety lie at the root of social, political, as well as individual and therapeutic problems. We need to cope with such problems not only in countries that have been designated as third world countries but also in the highly developed civic societies around the globe. Russia's war against Ukraine is certainly the most recent example of an engagement in aggressive confrontation involving open violence. Confrontations are usually based on a bipolar worldview – it is the other, so goes the justification, who forces a certain course of action upon the self. What is missing in this structure is something with the capacity to mediate between its two poles. Essentially, this is a third position, or a place for a Third.

Initially, the character of this Third, or that in it which would make it capable of serving as a precondition for alternative modes of action, may seem vague. However, a number of ideas on the Third can be found in a variety of contexts ranging from literature, logic, and post-colonial theory, to psychoanalysis.[1] I was particularly fascinated by some perspectives on the Third advanced in theories of intersubjectivity, in which it is understood as an intermediate

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[1] Eva Eßlinger et al (Eds.), *Die Figur des Dritten. Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010).

space between two or more people. If we take a political context as an example, the most widespread assumption there is that it is a third, neutral party that could mediate between two apparently irreconcilable positions. Mediation there succeeds, if and only if it is based on a common ground on which the opponents could reach an agreement. Such a ground could include common language, practice, or values, but in all events it will have to make reaching a unified perspective possible. What seems most important here is to create a dynamic that conditions a deviation from and overcoming of hardened bipolar positions. Such a dynamic will have to open a space that enables one to move and make shifts in the fixed constellation safe. In what follows, I will understand such an opening in the mutual dependence within the bipolar constellation as the place of the Third. I will endeavor to show that, unlike the fixed duality of the relationship of self and other, the place of the Third can make the safe encounter of two different subjects possible. Whereas without such an opening, something shared between the two poles of a bipolar constellation, such an encounter will fail.

To explore the possibility for such an opening, it will be essential to go back to one of the central characteristics of subjectivity. But contrary to the essentialist approaches to subjectivity, it will be necessary to remind and acknowledge that the subject is ultimately relationally constituted. Thus, I will draw on authors, for whom the relational approach is crucial. The existential situation in such a relational approach has been equally decisive, and so philosophizing as a practice is inevitably related to the conditions of life, or to the necessities of life (*Not des Lebens*), as Freud has put it.[2] Thus, in accordance with this approach, I will proceed to assert the importance of the place of the Third on (inter)subjective-existential grounds, while demonstrating in the process that a loss of the place of the Third – through either fixation or ignorance – will become the condition for aggressivity and anxiety to assume undue control over human action.

I would like to focus on three authors here, not least for the purpose of bringing different perspectives into dialogue, or better into polylogue. More particularly, I will try to show that the place of the Third can be identified from the perspective of Søren Kierkegaard as orientation in a relation,[3] from that of Jacques Lacan as language or the symbolic, and from that of the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (和辻 哲郎) as emptiness. Common to all three, I maintain, are two aspects: an opening that they introduce into the fixed dualistic relation of self and other and a recognition of a lack instead of its concealment. In this sense, these authors adopt a threefold structure which is more or less explicit and used to fundamentally revisit our understanding of both subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

I would like to note also that whereas the selection of these authors is indicative of the value and relevance of their philosophical thought with regard to the issue at stake here, it is also indicative of the possibility to engage them in a contribution to an intercultural philosophy, not in the sense of comparative philosophy, but rather in the sense of multicultural philosophy that is part of an ongoing conversation. Such a multicultural philosophy is meant to take the positions of both non-Western and Western authors seriously and to identify common aspects

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[2] Sigmund Freud, "Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod (1915)," *Studienausgabe, Vol. IX* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2000), p. 37.

[3] This paper is a revised and extended version of a presentation given at the Kierkegaard Conference organized by KUD Apokalypsa and Kierkegaard Institute in Ljubljana in August 2020.

of their perspectives and arguments. In this case, I will aim to show that a specific development in Japanese philosophy, and particularly in the thought of the so-called Kyoto School to which Watsuji belongs, is – following the opening of the country upon the arrival of the so-called "black ships" (黒船) of Matthew Perry in 1853 – in a special way intercultural in itself. For the double work of its main figures – of simultaneously reflecting on Western philosophy and on the thought of their own tradition – gave rise to a unique perspective on the philosophical problems, which can be seen as being at once global and local.

Søren Kierkegaard: The Self as a Third

Traditionally, Kierkegaard has been regarded as a subjective thinker. This however does not mean that he takes the subject or the self as a self-evident fact of experience, which can thus serve as a basis for further theoretical work.[4] Instead, in a well-known passage of his *The Sickness unto Death*, he defines the self as a relation:

> The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but [consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis.[5]

According to Kierkegaard, a synthesis is only a relation between two poles and, as such, it is only a negative third. This means that, if understood as a simple bipolar relation, a synthesis would not be sufficient to constitute the self. Instead, it is the relation to this synthesizing relation, to the negative third, added as a positive third, that completes the constitution of the self. As Kierkegaard puts it,

> In the relation between two, the relation is the third term as a negative unity, and the two relate themselves to the relation, and in the relation to the relation; such a relation is that between soul and body, when man is regarded as soul. If on the contrary the relation relates itself to its own self, the relation is then the positive third term, and this is the self.[6]

What is important for Kierkegaard here is that the self can miss this relation and that actually this tends to be the case, whereas despair is the expression of this missing. In the course of his work, Kierkegaard describes the structures or figures that characterize such a missing or failing in the relation of finite and infinite, possibility and necessity, as well as in the aspect of consciousness. With regard to the latter, he identifies typologically three moments that characterize it. The first of them is the ignorance of the fact that despair guides the self in the self's own actions.[7] If this ignorance is overcome, then two further structural dynamics of the self become apparent – one of the self desperately wanting to be itself[8] (in which I would like

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[4] Michael Theunissen, *Das Selbst auf dem Grund der Verzweiflung* (Frankfurt/Main: Hain 1991), p. 16.

[5] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death (Sygdommen til Døden)*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1849/1941), p. 17.

[6] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[7] Ibid., p. 66.

[8] Ibid., p. 107.

to recognize the modern day quest for authenticity), and another of the self desperately not wanting to be itself.[9] We need to emphasize here that Kierkegaard associates the former with defiance (which I would like to associate here with aggressiveness), and the latter with weakness and avoiding real social encounters.[10]

If one relates these remarks to some made in *The Concept of Anxiety*, it becomes obvious that for Kierkegaard anxiety (not fear, which has an object) arises in a leap of reflection in which the mind reflects over or refers to itself.[11] More specifically, the mind in its not-fully-conscious, "dreaming" state produces the simple synthesis of two poles; whereas the mind as fully present, as self-consciousness, as a relation to this relation, involves also 'the positive third'. Between a still 'dreaming' consciousness and self-consciousness there is a temporal gap, a lack, or even an abyss, caused by the reflexive reception of the synthesis of the two polarities (finite and infinite, possibility and necessity). Becoming aware of this abyss brings forward a manifold of possibilities for realizing a synthesis in freedom.[12] This makes the self dizzy and leads to anxiety, especially as the synthesis which is the realization of the self in self-consciousness can also be missed. Here Kierkegaard specifically stresses the ambivalent nature of anxiety: on one hand, anxiety impedes the self from being able to fulfill itself in its entirety; on the other hand, it is precisely this possibility – of the self not being able to fulfill itself – that remains present in anxiety. In the latter respect, anxiety is a driving force, a factor of the singularization and the subjectification of one's own fate. Thus, anxiety makes a liberating cut in one's own fate by producing a breach; that is, a knot and a middle ground, the subject itself, which means that without anxiety there is neither scientific, nor artistic production.[13]

This is what, according to Kierkegaard, characterizes our existential situation: the self manifests itself as an apperception of a relation of opposite determinations or modes of a possible life. That is, it manifests itself not as a substance, but as a relation, and thus also as a third position in its relation with the other. This position is such that in it one cannot and will not be certain of oneself. For, the self is a task, a cultivating effort, which is oriented towards a unified presence, the originality of the self, but can never reach it. In other words, this existential self is in itself a third position, a place of synthesis. If one remains aware of the inevitability of one's precariousness, one's anxiety, and does not try to conceal or suppress it, one becomes aware of oneself, knows oneself as existing with the other selves, and could thus become a place of encounter with such selves. For, Kierkegaard is clear that his self is not a solipsistic self and that, instead, as a doubled relation, the self is ultimately constituted by an-other. I will take this notion of the self as a point of transition to the second key author of my discussion – Jacques Lacan.

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[9] Ibid., p. 78.

[10] Ibid., p.78.

[11] Søren Kierkegaard, *Der Begriff der Angst. Eine simple psychologisch-hinweisende Erörterung in Richtung des dogmatischen Problems der Erbsünde von Vigilius Haufniensis (Begrebet Angest)* (Frankfurt/Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1844/1984), p. 47.

[12] Ibid., p. 143.

[13] André Michels, "Angst, zwischen Genießen und Begehren," *Riss Materialien. Ent-täuschung des Subjekts: Angst in Philosophie, Psychoanalyse und Kultur. Beiträge der Summerschool, Zürich 2015* (Zürich: Vissivo Verlag, 2018, pp. 23-46), pp. 31-39.

Jacques Lacan: From a Dualistic-Imaginary to a Triangular-Symbolic Relationship

Like Kierkegaard, psychoanalysis places subjectivity at the center of its attention but focuses (far more than he does) on specific relationships of the self with other people, especially with primary others, such as parents. In particular, Lacan, who works in the tradition of Freud, emphasizes the constitutive role of the other/Other for the self and maintains that the self is constituted when the dualistic relationship with its fixed character is opened and transcended, which is achieved with the help of a third party.

For Freud, the concept of the Oedipus complex stands for a decisive psychosexual experience and is used in psychoanalysis to explain the immediate relationships of the self with its parents. Freud is primarily concerned with the position of the father whose authority introduces a separation or a rupture in the relationship of the self with its mother. The outcome of such a separation is anxiety that the self experiences as loss of an originary enjoyment (*jouissance*), which is essentially a separation-castration.[14] Ultimately, the mother is given up as an object of desire and instead an internalization of the paternal authority takes place. Lacan appropriates the Freudian approach, but shifts the emphasis to the position of the mother. For Lacan, it is the mother who is the threat and against whom the self needs a defense. The mother is the Real, the nature itself, which the father, the Symbolic, aims to transcend.[15] This intervention of the paternal leads again to a division into the twoness of the dualistic relationship of mother and child, but this time setting a barrier which inaugurates desire. This is how, for Lacan, the self becomes possible in the first place. Anxiety in this Oedipal situation is linked to a lack, openness, or emptiness in the face of desire. It is both separation anxiety and its reverse fusion anxiety.[16]

In Lacan's theory, the concept of the lack plays a central role which with regard to anxiety takes on an additional doubling. For, anxiety also arises as a signal when something appears in the place of the lack; that is, when there is a lack of deficiency and thus differences seem to disappear. Indeed, on Lacan's view, only a lack, a gap in the whole, allows "the shifting and choosing in matters of identification and desire."[17] Whereas to have a desire of one's own means to have a history and to be a self.[18]

To take a step back, we have encountered here the problem of the dual relationship again, now in the context of self-realization within the Oedipal triangle. Lacan offers another perspective on that relationship by means of his notion of the mirror stage as a structural aspect of the formation of the ego. More particularly, he suggests that the identification with one's specular image constitutes an ambivalent relation with the other, involving at once eroticism and aggressivity.[19] Here I will focus specifically on aggressivity.

For Lacan, aggressivity is rooted in tensions that are internal to ego's self-image and represents the most primitive reaction of the subject against the constraints of its own imaginary

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[14] Cf. Paul Verhaeghe, *New Studies of old Villains: A Radical Reconsideration of the Oedipus Complex* (New York: Other Press 2009), pp. 33-34.

[15] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[16] Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[17] Ibid., p. 92.

[18] Peter Widmer, *Angst: Erläuterungen zu Lacans Seminar X* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2004), p. 134.

[19] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Écrits: A Selection,* Transl. by B. Fink (London: Routledge, 1949/2002).

identity.[20] Lacan regards the mirror stage as a core structural element of the ego, pointing to the infant's experience of helplessness, which involves negative affects like anxiety, distress, or frustration. For the child, the relief from this experience goes through the discovery of its body image in the mirror. This identification with its own image as a unified, integrated whole, fully coordinated as in the elder and more mature others, seems to promise an overcoming this helplessness. This is why, for Lacan, the imago of the wholeness of its body has a motivating power with far-reaching effects on the child's psychological development. Subsequently, the identification with this image becomes an anticipation and source for all its fantasies ranging from the view of a fragmented body to the *Gestalt* of perfection and the armor of a deprived identity; whereas the rigid structures of these fantasies will shape the whole of child's individual development, which is why Lacan will aptly label them "orthopedic."[21] Thus, for Lacan, at the mirror stage, the ego apperceives itself, above all, as an ideal body image which becomes a privileged object in the libidinal economy.

Now, it is important to note that, in Lacan's view, this self-identification of the self with an image is at the same time an alienation from itself and that in this very alienation aggressivity comes into play as a tension between the specular image and the real body, as the whole of the image seems to threaten the body with disintegration and fragmentation. Thus, for Lacan, the unique feature of aggressivity is in that it is not a defense of the ego but rather its rebellion against the constraints of the body image.[22] Aggressivity in this sense is a drive of violation against the imaginary form of the body.[23] In short, aggressivity is part of the register of the imaginary and represents a relationship between the body and its mirror image, a relationship which also encompasses all other objects, including other people.

To be broken up, since it is fixed, this dualistic-imaginary relationship needs an intervention from a third party. Lacan sees this third represented in language, in speaking, and thus – again – in the symbolic:

> But, thank God, the subject inhabits the world of the symbol, that is to say a world of others who speak. That is why his desire is susceptible to the mediation of recognition. Without which every human function would simply exhaust itself in the unspecified wish for the destruction of the other as such.[24]

> So we have demonstrated the necessity for a third term, which alone allows us to conceptualise the mirror transference, which is speech.[25]

For Lacan, aggressivity is caught up in the identifications with the imaginary ideal (*Idealich)* of the ego and can only be recognized and dissolved in the speech that represents it. Thus, it is

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[20] Richard P. Boothby, *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 40.

[21] Jacques Lacan, *Mirror Stage*, p. 6.

[22] Jacques Lacan, "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis," *Écrits: A Selection.* Transl. by B. Fink (London: Routledge, 1948/2002).

[23] Richard P. Boothby, *Death and Desire*, p. 39.

[24] Jacques Lacan, *Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I,* edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by John Forrester (New York, London: Norton & Company, 1975/1991), p. 171.

[25] Ibid., p. 261.

ultimately the language, or the symbolic, that enables us to reflect on aggressivity and its character.

Still, for Lacan, an absolute salvation cannot to be found in the symbolic, either. Our relationship to the symbolic remains ambivalent. This is because we are born into a complex symbolic structure, a structure that already has determined us from before our birth and that we are forced to admit. This clearly has consequences for the subject. By subjecting itself to this structure, the self divides itself and thus constitutes the conscious, as well as the unconscious. The subject is thus split by the work of language, a split which for the subject means an abdication of portions of the body's emotions and drives. Indeed, this means that a need cannot be always adequately claimed. For there remains what has been abdicated of, that which Sigmund Freud calls "Triebverzicht."[26]

Thus, it appears that the power of language, the power of the Other, is not all that innocent but often all too violent. As psychoanalyst Bruce Fink, demonstrating the ambivalent nature of language in another aspect, has put it, "words bring things into being ... naming cuts into the real."[27] My organic needs can never be fully articulated, nor fully grasped in language. What is articulated in language is just an "inscription of the elementary biological subject, of the subject of need, in the defiles of the demand."[28] What remains is that which, as the Real, drives my desire.

> Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need, this margin being
> the one that demand – whose appeal can be unconditional only with respect to the other – opens up
> in the guise of the possible gap need may give rise to here, because it has no universal satisfaction
> ...[29]

Hence, in Lacan's view, desire arises from a difference and revolves around a void, a deficiency, which appears in this difference, testifying to a primal repression, a "beyond-of-the-signified."

Here again the situation of the self, as in the existential situation described by Kierkegaard, remains precarious. On one hand, the symbolic triangulation permits the subject to leave the original and imaginary dualistic relationships, where its choice is either itself or the other, and to position itself between different others with different desires.[30] We could certainly point here to the self's reflective capacity, a "competence to look both at oneself and at another from something that we can only call a 'third position', a position outside oneself."[31] On the

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[26] Sigmund Freud, "Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (1930)," *Studienausgabe Band IX* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag. 2000).

[27] Bruce Fink, "There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship: Existence and the Formulas of Sexuation," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field,* Vol. 5. (1991), pp. 59-85, p. 60.

[28] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and its Interpretation. 1958-1959. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VI.* Translated by Cormac Gallagher from unedited French typescripts. URL: http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-06-Desire-and-its-interpretation.pdf (14.10.2022), p. 100.

[29] Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," *Écrits,* The first complete edition in English, translated by Bruce Fink (London: W. W, Norton & Company 1966/2006). pp. 671-702, p. 689.

[30] Cf. Paul Verhaeghe, *New Studies of old Villains*, p. 86.

[31] Ibid., p. 86.

other hand, we can point to the other side of the symbolic, emphasized by Peter Widmer, which is the lack, the loss, the ultimate indeterminacy of the world, and the precarity of our existential situation as coming with language:

> When we have analysed the experiences in which we have made ourselves an object, or the experiences in which we have made others an object, we are faced with the question of the other, of whom we do not know who he is. It is an unknown place ...[32]

And again as in Kierkegaard, we find a difference in the roles and values of aggressivity and anxiety in our lives in Lacan as well. In contrast to anxiety, aggressivity ultimately remains fixed in dual-imaginary identifications and can be overcome only by introducing a third. This jump into triangularity is, as we have seen, loaded with anxiety. However, what is important here is that, for both Kierkegaard and Lacan, there is a potential in anxiety, a potential which can be actualized by confronting and taking anxiety as a guide into the unknown, into openness.

Watsuji Tetsurō: The place of the Third

One can search non-Western philosophy precisely for the opening of a perspective that is unavailable in the Western tradition but would presumably allow for a productive critical questioning of the concepts of that tradition. Responding to the calls for a decolonization of philosophy can surely serve as a critique of the dualistic-imaginary construction of the philosophical concepts. As we have seen in the two Western thinkers we focus on here, Kierkegaard and Lacan, the structure of the subject is closely related to a threeness. For Kierkegaard, it is the relation to a relation that determines the self and constitutes it as a positive third. For Lacan, in a slightly different fashion, the self is already in social space of intersubjective relations, which makes of the ego a social construct and excludes the possibility for an originary self as ultimately a mythical one. We shall now see that in distinction from these two thinkers the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (和辻 哲郎) takes a different position – one of "betweenness" (*aidagara* 間柄).

Although Watsuji did not directly belong to the famous group of philosophers in the 20th century around Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎), the so-called Kyoto School, he is still considered a thinker with similar perspective.[33] It should be mentioned that Watsuji wrote the first original Japanese work on Kierkegaard in 1915. Inspired by Kierkegaard, he became the first systematic philosopher of ethics in Japan. However, as Masugata[34] notes, no trace of Kierkegaard's influence can be found in his later work.

Based on the analysis of the Japanese word for human being *ningen* (人間), Watsuji develops a position that differs from the individualistic approaches of the Western ethics, which

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[32] Peter Widmer, *Angst*, p. 161.

[33] Robert Carter & Erin McCarthy, "Watsuji Tetsurō," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta,
https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/watsuji-tetsuro/ (14.10.2022).

[34] Masugata Kinya, "A Short History of Kierkegaard's Reception in Japan," *Kierkegaard and Japanese Thought*, edited by James Giles (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 31-52.

are rooted in the assumption of sociality.[35] For him, human beings are at once both individuals and social beings:

> […] the communion between man and man does not mean their becoming merely one. It is only through the fact that men are unique individuals that a cooperation between 'man and man' can be realized.[36]

The Japanese word *ningen* is composed of two characters, *nin* (人), meaning "person" or "human being", and *gen* (間), meaning "space" or "between." The Japanese reading (*kunyomi*) of the second term is *aida* (間) ("between") or *aidagara* ("relationship")*.* In this sense, the nature of the human being is associated with "betweenness" or better "being-in-relation-to-others,"[37] which suggests that "to live as a person means … to exist in such betweenness."[38] For Watsuji, the negation of the group and the negation of the individual point to the very ground, the "home ground" of human existence (*ningen sonzai*, 人間 存在), which for him is emptiness. Following the founder of the Japanese Sōtō sect of Zen Buddhism, Dōgen Zenji (道元 禅師), Watsuji advances the view that studying the self means forgetting the self. This suggests that betweenness is ultimately emptiness (*kū*, 空) (and vice versa), which as such is the "place where compassion arises and is acted out selflessly."[39]

In order to understand Watsuji properly, it is necessary to look at the Buddhist tradition in which he places himself. Buddhism is primarily concerned with the human being as an agent understood as placed within the between of what Western philosophy differentiates as subject and other. In contrast to the Western approaches, however, for Watsuji the proper explanation of this placement demands something very different from intentionality. His point here is that actions should not be explained entirely with the human will, because such an epistemic stance would belong to the ego alone. For Watsuji, action is the movement itself, in which the duality of self and other in the "not-being-two of self and other" constitutes the being-in-between.[40] This "subjective in-betweenness," which is determined neither by a substantive self, nor by a substantive other, is itself the place of ethical action.

Watsuji assumes that we "enter the world already within a network of relationships and obligations."[41] This can be associated with Lacan's statement that the subject is intrinsically related to the symbolic even before its birth. But there is a difference. For Watsuji, the place of the third is not the symbolic, or the speech, but emptiness. This mirrors Zen Buddhism's own

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[35] Watsuji Tetsurō, *Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku* (1934), German translation by Hans Martin Krämer, *Ethik als Wissenschaft vom Menschen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005).

[36] Watsuji Tetsurō, "A Study of the History of Japanese Spirit," *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū (Complete Works of Watsuji Tetsurō)*, 27 vols., ed. by Abe Yoshishigo et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935), p. 113, quote in: Carter & McCarthy, 2019.

[37] Kyle Michael James Shuttleworth, "Watsuji Tetsurō's Concept of 'Authenticity'," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy,* Vol. 11 (3) (2019), p. 235-250, p. 4.

[38] Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body. Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory,* edited and translated by Thomas P. Kasulis & Nagatomo Shigenori (Albany: Tate University Press of New York, 1987), p. 37.

[39] Carter & McCarthy, "Watsuji Tetsurō."

[40] Watsuji, *Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku*, p. 117.

[41] Carter & McCarthy, "Watsuji Tetsurō."

idea of itself as a tradition, which is one of a special transmission, not established upon words but pointing directly to the human heartmind.[42] In more specific terms, the difference is that, while for Lacan language offers an access of the self to itself, for Zen language is an obstacle to grasping the *dao* (道). Thus, in the famous encounter dialogues of early Chinese Ch'an Buddhism, as known from the collections *The Gateless Barrier* (無門關) and *Blue Cliff Record* (碧巖錄), it is not meaning that underpins understanding but rather, as Peter Hershock notes, the *conduct* of the participants. To be able to pass the challenge of such an encounter or to understand the case it presents (as in the practice of the *gōng àn* 公案), one has to free oneself from previous identifications and basic dichotomies, from habitual impulses, dispositions, or fixations with respect to speaking, thinking, perceiving and acting.[43]

Still, this does not mean that Buddhist enlightenment draws on a linguistically purified or speechless state of mind, as alleged by Linji Yixuan's (臨濟義玄) and his yelled-out demand "Speak, Speak! Give me one true word."[44] Rather, what is most significant in Zen in this regard is, as Jin Park points out, a distinction between "live words" (活句) and "dead words" (死句), which was first made by the Han Chinese Ch'an monk Yuanwu Keqin (圓悟克勤).[45] The sense of this distinction is that one uses "dead words" if one is involved with the straightforward meaning of the words, whereas one uses "live words" if one is involved with what the words express in the specific context. Watsuji demonstrates this with an example of a common question asking of a person's well-being. As he sees it, in such a language situation, the asking was for a feeling that is expressive of the being-in-between for the person asking and the person asked. Here the question can also be understood as greeting, that is, as action in which what was asked for (the meaning of the words) is marginal. Thus, for Watsuji, speaking in being-in-between is acting and in this sense more fundamental. Its fundamentality consists in that this "in-between" is independent of any substantiality (in the Western sense of the term), and is thus empty, which is precisely what endows his position with a special critical nuance that is unavailable in the Western tradition.

The Social and the Place of the Third

Despite the differences in the perspectives of Kierkegaard, Lacan, and Watsuji on the third, I will conclude by emphasizing what they have common in this regard. In conveying our existential conditions, these three authors offer a critique of the substantive self that has been traditionally understood as self-contained. Likewise, the three of them see both the problems and the potentials which arise from an existential situation and to which we try to respond. In such a situation, the fantasies of completeness and of elimination of difference can be seen as inviting of danger. For, when lack and difference disappear, anxiety and aggressivity arise. In my reading, all of the three thinkers are ultimately concerned with preventing such an imaginary

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[42] Cf. Peter Hershock, "Chan Buddhism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/buddhism-chan/ (03.10.2018).

[43] Peter Hershock, *Liberating Intimacy. Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch'an Buddhism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 68ff.

[44] Ibid., p. 109.

[45] Jin Y Park, "Zen and Zen Philosophy of Language. A Soteriological Approach," *Dao,* I (2002), vol. 2, pp. 209-228.

closure, as well as with preserving difference and openness in the intersubjective relations, by securing a place for a Third. This becomes clear in Kierkegaard and his overcoming of despair and anxiety in faith, in Lacan and his openness of speaking and the symbolic, as well as in Watsuji and his *betweenness* as emptiness promising an ethics without an underlying substance. Finally, the approaches of the three authors also converge in that they suggest, encourage, and promote certain practices of self-knowledge and self-cultivation, which are supportive of preservation of the difference and openness in question.

For the social philosopher, the question that arises here is to what extent these approaches can be applied to pressing social and political issues. This question is certainly worth exploring within the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe[46] and their critical analysis of the political significance of the master signifier.[47] It is also relevant in the discussion of the possibility for a much-needed transformation of the antagonistic constitutions of our societies fixated on identities into an agonistic pluralism. Laclau in particular has sought to undermine the substantialist form of reductionism, very much like the three authors discussed here. Among other things, this is evident from his analysis of the relationship of universality and particularity, in which he draws attention to the difficulties and dangers of any unilateral resolution in the face of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the two poles of this relationship. Either the universal is nothing but a particular that has become dominant at a certain point in time, or the particular ignores its universal foundations (e.g. certain rights of equality) for the purpose of self-legitimation. To avoid such false resolutions, Laclau suggests an understanding of the relation between universalism and particularism in terms of a mutual dependence. Thus, the universal would remain part of the particular, which also means that the identity of the particular is to be characterized by a lack, or a crack, since in this way its putative constitution as a pure and complete particular also fails.[48] Opposite to this position would be a unilateral resolution that would bridge the gap between universal and particular by establishing, as Laclau calls it, a "true order," which however would be at the expense of society's freedom and democracy:

> ... in the case that the split could be superseded ... society would have reached its true order, and that all dissent would thereupon have come to an end. Obviously no social division or democratic competition between groups is possible in such conditions.[49]

Thus, it becomes clear also in Laclau's political philosophy that dual relations can sustain the possibility for a productive (socio-political) action, if at the same time an opening, or a place for the third, is re-established and sustained. Nevertheless, besides all theoretical insights, it remains always a new task to recognize and question – on an individual, as well as on a social level – the dead-end fixations that come along with an imaginary substantiating subject. Only in this way can the problematic consequences that such fixations bring for the

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[46] Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (Verso: London 1985).

[47] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), p 36ff.

[48] Ibid., p. 20ff.

[49] Ernesto Laclau (Ed.), *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 5.

intersubjective relations be broken off, so that one is able to dare an encounter with what is open and unpredictable in the other.

Political Paradoxes, Art, and Homo Sacer

THE SYNTHETICO-PARADOXICAL CHARACTER OF FASCISM: CAN ART DISRUPT THE FASCIST PROJECT?

David Casciola

Abstract

In this paper, I interrogate the question of how aesthetics might be used in terms of an antifascist project. The exposition includes two main steps. First, drawing on the work of Umberto Eco and Sven Reichardt, I introduce a perspective on fascism, in which I identify its character as synthetico-paradoxical. Then, I utilize Jacques Rancière's conception of aesthetics as politics to show how a decentralized understanding of what makes good art can disrupt fascism by appealing to the sense of re-recognition of the individual political subject.

Keywords: Fascism, Aesthetics, Populism, Umberto Eco, Hierarchy

I: Introduction

There is a sense in the popular imagination that ever since the fall of the fascist empires of Germany, Japan, and Italy at the end of the Second World War the threat of an extreme right-wing authoritarianism is a thing of the past and that the liberal democracies of the West would usher humanity into a new age of freedom and prosperity. This view is entrenched to such an extent that even Umberto Eco, an Italian philosopher and witness to Benito Mussolini's regime, claimed that, "if we still think of the totalitarian governments that ruled Europe before the Second World War, we can easily say that it would be difficult for them to reappear in the same form in different historical circumstances."[1] Eco's point here is that the fascist nation-empire regimes were largely products of the specific conditions of the early 20th century, even as he remained "concerned about the various Nazi-like movements that have arisen here and there in Europe."[2]

And yet, a closer look today reveals that the specter of fascism still haunts the modern post-industrial society. In response to the recent rise of right-wing authoritarian movements, Bat-Ami Bar On fittingly reminds us that "according to Arendt, it is mistaken to construe the

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[1] Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism" *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 42, no. 11 (1995), p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

Allies' military victory over the Axis as a victory over fascism."[3] The second decade of the 21st century brought the presidency of Donald Trump, whose campaign had made allusions to the "anti-interventionist movement in the early 1940s to keep the US out of World War II that was associated with Charles Lindberg and American fascist and anti-Semitic forces."[4] At the very least, the *sentiment* of fascism is still thriving in the discourse of the conservative far-right parties in the United States and Europe. Whether this sentiment is well articulated or not, it has become obvious that right wing populists today are raising the fascist torch in contemporary politics.

A discussion of fascism is notoriously difficult due to the problem of defining fascism itself. Here I will take as my point of departure several points articulated by Eco in his "Ur-Fascism," as well as from the idea of fascism as a movement and *process-concept*, as developed by Sven Reichardt. I further develop this characterization of fascism into what I call its 'synthetico-paradoxical' character, meaning that fascist movements are synthetic insofar as they assemble their ideology from different aspects and standpoints of other movements, and that they do this in a way that is necessarily paradoxical. In my view, characterizing fascism in this way will reveal and help understand the nature of the difficulty one faces when dealing with fascism from a traditional liberal standpoint. As I see it, the difficulty in question is in that regardless of how acutely one exposes the paradoxes of fascist movements or disrupts their political programs in a logical way, these movements keep finding ways to co-opt (that is, to take up or appropriate) and synthesize these disruptions within their own perspectives, thus maintaining a fundamental paradoxicality as part of their essential nature as movements'.

One can legitimately ask here, "If logic cannot disrupt fascism efficiently enough, then what else can?" I argue that art and the aesthetic sphere can become an alternative avenue through which fascist ideological and political perspectives may be challenged and disrupted. For the purpose of this paper, I will draw on Darlene Demandante's interpretation of Jacques Rancière's 'aesthetics as politics' in order to explore the realms of aesthetics and artistic expression.[5] For Demandante, aesthetics has to do with our perceptions of the social world, whereas artistic expression points to the ways we might disrupt social, political, or economic realities.[6] We will keep in mind that, due to its synthetico-paradoxical character, fascism allows for its advocates to 'co-opt' and accommodate within its perspective the practices of artistic expression that can disrupt it, thus showing a capacity to turn art also into an instrument of its own. But we will seek to get the better of fascism and its notorious adaptability via Demandante's perspective on Rancière's conception of art, if we can only safeguard the latter from the conservative cultural elitism of the likes of Roger Scruton. For, cultural elitism can only play into the hands of the ethno-nationalist project of fascism and can crystalize into an aesthetic regime of artistic hegemony. In this relation, the Italian Marxist and social theorist Antonio Gramsci writes,

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[3] Bat-Ami Bar On, "But is it Fascism?" *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 50, no. 4 (2019), p. 412.

[4] Douglas Kellner, *American Nightmare: Donald Trump, Media Spectacle, and Authoritarian Populism* (Rotterdam: Brill, 2016), p. 42.

[5] Darlene O. Demandante, "Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject," *Kritike*, Vol. 14, no.1 (2020), p. 141.

[6] Ibid., p. 142.

> The separation of powers, together with all the discussion provoked by its realisation and the legal dogmas which its appearance brought into being, is a product of the struggle between civil society and political society in a specific historical period….the Church is taken as representing the totality of civil society (whereas in fact it is only an element of diminishing importance within it), and the State as representing every attempt to crystallise permanently a particular state of development, a particular situation.[7]

Gramsci here suggests that the State crystalizes as a hegemony of power and control over civil society. I draw a parallel between how the State bureaucracy becomes 'entrenched' and how normative aesthetics – i.e. what counts as 'good' art – becomes entrenched in the same way when it is co-opted by fascist movements as they crystalize into a State hegemony.

Still, it is also through art that a true disruption of fascism can occur. I argue that a radical decentralization of normative aesthetics – by rethinking art as a sort of political speech – would undermine the concept of 'gatekeeping', so that as a society we might be able to come up with a more genuine sort of art *qua* art. In terms of theory, I will seek for the possibility for such a decentralization through the thought of Walter Benjamin, who alludes to a visceral, personal reaction of the audience to a piece of art,[8] which is consistent with Rancière's conception of aesthetics as a political perception. My aim will be to show that disrupting the barriers of what counts as 'art' through decentralization and leveling all aesthetic hegemony will allow art to subvert the fascist State hierarchy and reveal paths of resistance to it.

II: Fascism and Populism

As I indicated above, fascism is a difficult term to define. Is it just authoritarianism? Totalitarianism? Or any political ideology with a distinct, far-right conservative positioning? As a beginning, I will focus on the fourteen common features of fascism identified by Umberto Eco, as well as on Sven Reichardt's characterization of fascism as a movement (as opposed to a particular form of government with specific features). In terms of a historical analysis, these two perspectives on fascism are complementary: Eco's input is based on a first-hand experience with Italian fascism, whereas Reichardt's expands beyond its Western European instances to include Japanese fascism. In "Ur Fascism," Eco calls fascism a "*fuzzy* totalitarianism, a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions."[9] For his part, Reichardt characterizes fascism as a *process-concept* that relies on "global relations among fascisms [which] has drawn out its character as an inter-imperial phenomenon subject to radicalization."[10] For him, fascism is characterized not by a static monolith of a specific (though possible contradictory) ideology, but instead by interrogating fascism-in-action "as a genre – an ensemble of overlapping and intersecting practices and attitudes…. [rather than] as *a strictly*

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[7] Antonio Gramsci, "Selections from the *Prison Notebooks*," In *On Violence: A Reader* eds. Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 168.

[8] See Jules Simon, "Aesthetics and Politics: Reflections on Love and the Origins of Fascism," *Filosofia*, Vol. 63, (2018), pp. 133-145.

[9] Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," p. 4.

[10] Sven Reichardt, "Fascism's Stages: Imperial Violence, Entanglement, and Processualization," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 82, no. 1 (2021), p. 88.

logical ideology [emphasis added]." [11] Subsequently, Reichardt goes on to develop this conceptualization of fascism out of the historical context of the interconnections between the German, Japanese, and Italian fascist empires of the first half of the 20th century. [12] Thus, while Eco focuses on the sufficient qualities of fascism as a political *regime*, Reichardt focuses on how we might identify and analyze fascism as a political *movement*. For our purposes here, these two conceptions will help us gain some insight into the contemporary features of fascism and how these might play into fascism's appropriation of different sorts of aesthetic regimes and artistic practices.

For Eco, fascism is a distinctly nationalist and totalitarian enterprise. [13] As a movement it can be taken up in different national contexts, but the specific ideologies and theories that it might embrace locally do not matter as much as its dedication to the ethno-nationalist State. To explain why distinct fascist regimes might resemble each other despite their apparent differences, Eco appeals to the notion of Wittgensteinian language games, which work based on similarities such as the ones exemplified in the letter sequences *abc*, *bcd*, *cde*, and *def*. [14] Eco notes "a sort of illusory transitivity, a family resemblance between [*def*] and [*abc*]." [15] The first and last term resemble each other only insofar as they relate to their intermediary terms [*bcd* and *cde*] to which they bear a strict resemblance. In the same way, fascist regimes bear their resemblances to each other not necessarily by the nature of the strict resemblances they have in terms of their constituent parts (for example specific ideologies or certain sorts of state institutions), but because of this sort of intermediary mediation of relations. They bear a sort of transcendent recognition: "Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it will still be recognizable as fascist." [16] In fact, this view of the similarities between various sorts of fascisms complements with Reichardt's conception of fascisms as movements. The conjecture here is that we do not need to identify (perceive) different specific qualities of fascist regimes to define fascism; rather, we can identify fascism as an aesthetic regime that is represented by how it presents itself. In different historical, social, and economic conditions this presentation will be different, but we could still identify it by pointing to the similarities between different fascist movements. Here I do not mean to relativize the character of the fascist movements, but to point to the various distinct ways in which they might arise. Fascisms are not limited to right armed salutes and jackboots; their formation is dependent on the social and cultural context in which they take shape. But besides their cultural contingencies, we must still be able to recognize them as fascisms based on the structural and conceptual frameworks they utilize.

Reichardt identifies seven 'tipping points' that characterize the progress of a fascist movement toward a new stage in its development. [17] There are similarities between this sort of developmental framework and Eco's characterization modeled on Wittgenstein's language games based on family resemblances. Fascist movements begin as movements in "small

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[11] Ibid., p. 88.

[12] Ibid., p. 88.

[13] Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 5.

[15] Ibid., p. 5.

[16] Ibid., p. 5.

[17] Sven Reichardt, "Fascism's Stages: Imperial Violence, Entanglement, and Processualization," p. 90.

intellectual circles, usually oriented toward the tenets of Italian fascism,"[18] and develop in the direction of a violent opposition to the "prevalent forms of government."[19] These movements go on to develop further as working to destroy and appropriate the state against which they violently rebel. Reichardt describes the stages of fascism as follows,

> In the *first phase,* we can identify initially small intellectual circles, usually oriented toward the tenets of Italian fascism… This *second stage*, involv[es] militancy against prevalent forms of government…
> In the *third stage*, in which events in Italy and Germany set the global tone, mass movements arose…
> Once a regime, fascism in the *fourth stage* was characterized by what tended to be a brief period of seizing power…
> The *fifth stage* saw the development of fascistic 'mediatory dictatorships…' [which] aestheticized the sacred exaltation of the leader, the awe-inspiring uncanniness of the repressive apparatus, and the popular, carnivalesque spectacles of their base-oriented mass organizations…
> [The] *sixth stage* coupled tendencies to disempower domestic conservative allies and effect a self-perpetuation of fascist machinery with pressure toward radical colonial wars of destruction…
> In its last, *seventh stage*, finally, fascism removed all limitations on genocidal policy.[20]

As fascist movements progress through these stages mutating from ideas in the enclaves of conservative intellectuals into the street violence of mass movements, they eventually find themselves in the structures of the states which they initially opposed. The transitory and pliable nature of fascist movements is what makes providing a concrete definition of just what it means for a movement or individual to be fascist or fascistic so difficult. It is also this nature that enables fascist movements to co-opt so many different strategies, practices, and *aesthetics*. This allows fascism to easily permeate through different social groups and to become the very nature of a social organization, especially in our age of mass media. In particular, the ubiquitous character of mass and social media in our age provides an environment for the fascistic ideas to flourish and disseminate, even as the aesthetic character of fascist movements leaves them open to and susceptible to interrogation by artistic disruptions.

Despite its definitional 'fuzziness', Eco delineates fourteen characteristics which are typical of fascism and can be considered as determining the sense of something like an 'Eternal Fascism.' Each of these characteristics alone is *sufficient* for the qualification of a movement as fascist; but at the same time none of them is individually *necessary* for such a qualification. Taken together they form a popular view which manifests itself as a heuristic for identifying fascistic tendencies and movements. They also point to the synthetico-paradoxical character of fascism as drawing on social frustration (of the middle class), popular elitism, and selective populism.[21] And finally, they explain why fascism is a pliable and malleable political force which can uniquely co-opt the features of other political, social, and economic ideologies into its own perspective.

Eco describes one particular feature of Ur-Fascism as "individual or social frustration," pointing that "one of the most typical features of the historical fascism was the *appeal to a*

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[18] Ibid., p. 90.
[19] Ibid., p. 90.
[20] Ibid., pp. 90-93.
[21] Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," pp. 6-8.

frustrated middle class, a class suffering from an economic crisis or feelings of political humiliation, and frightened by the pressure of lower social groups."[22] Fascism appeals to individuals who have been disaffected and as a result feel that their society has left them behind. Thus, fascism reaches out to the dominant social or economic class which sees its dominance as threatened by policies that seek to redress the failings of equality, equity, and justice. Subsequently, this appeal to frustration crystalizes into a popular elitism. As Eco notes, "elitism is a typical aspect of any reactionary ideology…. [which] cruelly implies *contempt for the weak*."[23] What characterizes the elitism of Ur-Fascism is that it places the citizen of the nation above all other citizens. At the same time, the party members are above the citizens, whereas the party leaders are above its members. Thus, the fascist movement advances a hierarchy that engenders a disdain in its members not just for the Other, but also for those immediately above and below each individual's own position within that hierarchy. This is indicative of one of the paradoxes that fascism maintains and utilizes: a fascist movement demands a mass of people who are simultaneously weak enough for a leader to conquer and at the same time the greatest people in the entire world. "For Ur-Fascism, however, individuals as individuals have no rights, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will. Since no large quantity of human beings can have a common will, the Leader pretends to be their interpreter."[24] Thus, in fascist movements, individuality melts away into the totality of their social identities; whereas the 'Common Will' becomes aestheticized in the realization of the Leader as the people's voice. In a statement that seems much more prescient today than in 1995 Eco said, "[t]here is in our future a TV or Internet populism, in which the emotional response of a selected group of citizens can be presented and accepted as the Voice of the People."[25] This means that the 'Voice of the People' becomes an aesthetic representation of the (supposed) 'will of the people.' We must note, however, that this is a false actualization because the 'people's will' can never be agreed upon due to the diversity of interests in the society. In this way, we come to another paradox of the fascist project: the fascist Leader uses this false crystallization of the Will of the People to become the Voice of that which cannot form a coherent voice. Fascist dedication to the Leader as personification of peoples' will demonstrates the anti-parliamentarianism and anti-democratic nature of fascist movements, as well as their 'populist turn'.

Federico Finchelstein says that populism "is a form of democracy that is nonetheless authoritarian."[26] For him, the tension between the radically democratic nature of populism and the threat of authoritarianism as a dictatorship of the majority is characteristic of the contemporary version of populism. Finchelstein contends that contemporary populism began to take its shape after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 pointing that "populism has been often a democratic consequence of the fall of dictatorships rather than the creator of a new dictatorship."[27] These contemporary strains of populism give rise to a paradox: "the new

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[22] Ibid., p. 7.

[23] Ibid., p. 7.

[24] Ibid., p. 8.

[25] Ibid., p. 8.

[26] Federico Finchelstein, "Populism without borders. Notes on a global history," *Constellations*, Vol. 26 (2019), p. 419.

[27] Ibid., p. 419.

populists are extreme nationalists", "form a new international right-wing bloc based on the similarity of their xenophobic politics," and "share a common enemy in the democratic legacies of the Enlightenment."[28] Eco's Wittgensteinian games come handy here again – to characterize these new right-wing populist movements, which may differ in their national peculiarities but still bear a number of similarities that allow to classify them as populist. Finchelstein denies that populism is fascism, despite both being similar insofar as they both have populist leaders who "equate their voice with that of the people,"[29] while appealing to a notion of direct democracy that is not to be mediated by supposedly corrupt institutions of liberal democracy. However, Finchelstein notes, "when populism becomes a power regime the crisis of political representation is not reduced but often increased."[30] Thus, despite claiming that it represents radical democracy, when populism ascends politically it is the populist leader, not the people, who takes control. As fascist movements adopt a populist agenda to serve their popular elitism they dovetail with right-wing populism forming a synthetic regime that uses a proletarian aesthetic in service of a fascist agenda. As Finchelstein puts it: "Populism is the opposite of pluralism in politics. It works in the name of an imagined majority and dismisses all views that it considers come from the minority."[31] This definition of populism indicates that it is an essential part of fascist movements and that its paradoxical nature serves more or less as the foundation for these movements. In this sense, it also becomes clear that fascist movements cannot achieve their goals if they remain purely intellectual or ideological trends in the halls of academies or think tanks – what they need is to actualize themselves as social movements driven by real people.

A good sense of the connection between contemporary populism and fascist movements can be found in Cas Mudde's definition of populism: "*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the* volonté générale *(general will) of the people*."[32] The connection here must be clear: Mudde's conception of populism offers a broad understanding of the ideology as it is used by different kinds of political organizations. What I want to highlight here is how Mudde's definition points to the development of fascist movements today. As discussed above, some of the characteristics of fascist movements are appeals to a (supposed) will of the people, and potentially the connection between populism and fascism is indicative of how the 'populist zeitgeist' allows for the creation of an illusory will of the people. In this regard, Mudde very indicatively notes that, for populists, "*perceptions* seem to be more important than *facts*."[33] This links directly to what I intend to show in my discussion of the aesthetics of the political process below, namely, that perception is integral to how we understand the individual political subject's connection to their political and social world. I will specifically maintain that contemporary fascist movements create an image or perception of themselves – perhaps an aesthetics – which appeals

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[28] Ibid., p. 420.
[29] Ibid., p. 420.
[30] Ibid., p. 420.
[31] Ibid., p. 422.
[32] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004), p. 543.
[33] Ibid., p. 553.

to contemporary populism and enables them to take on the populist zeitgeist to advance their own political project.[34]

The different versions of fascism seek to create a monolithic society that reinforces the state structures they have taken over. They take an 'aesthetic turn' by creating a paradox that focuses on the body of the subject of social action now understood as political individual of mass movement. As Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi puts it, "the body, along with intellectual symbols and moral rules, i.e. psyche and society, equally participates in many of the social facts that make up the human world."[35] The body is thus part of the movement of the social-political practices which integrate aesthetics into the fascist political project. Falasca-Zamponi brings this thought even further, drawing on "Walter Benjamin's notion of aestheticized politics" and arguing that "fascism's aesthetic understanding of politics was founded on the sublimation of the body and the alienation of sensual life."[36] By aestheticizing politics, fascism turns the general totalitarian project of the complete domination of the social realm into a project that it actualizes at the level of each political subject's individuality. In this sense, fascism becomes truly totalitarian not just because it puts the political or social realms into the service of the fascist state, but because even at the individual level the very aesthetic conception of the self begins reinforcing the logic of the authoritarian fascist project.

In the remainder of this paper I intend to show that conceptualizing fascisms as movements and processes as opposed to static regimes is appropriate, as it will help revealing their synthetico-paradoxical nature. Fascisms have displayed a unique capacity to appropriate different concepts, practices, and aesthetics, which do not necessarily require logical consistency other than in their own specific ideologies. This consistency is built as an orientation into a total ethno-nationalist reformation of the State. Whether this state is monarchical, democratic, or parliamentarian is of little concern to the fascist movements, so long as such a reformation serves their larger project of total political domination.

III: Aesthetics

At first glance, it does not seem that there is a clear-cut connection between aesthetics and politics. But Darlene Demandante's analysis of Jacques Rancière makes a different point:

> Aesthetics is the sense perception of social realities – ways of perceiving, doing, and making of the various actors involved in the social and political realm, the part of those who have no part, the worthy and the unworthy subjects, those who are counted and those who are excluded...[37]

The sensible (or the aesthetic) realm is integral to the political realm because it is through the faculty of sensibility itself that political subjects are perceived. Indeed, it is through this act of perception (or recognition) that political subjectivity is constituted. As Demandante puts it, "Aesthetics is politics in as much as it has to do with the move to be perceived and recognised as subjects who were not originally counted as parts of the community and thus it challenges

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[34] I am indebted to one of my anonymous reviewers for suggesting the connection with Mudde's scholarship.

[35] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, "Fascism and Aesthetics," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 15 no. 3, (2008), p. 351.

[36] Ibid., p. 353.

[37] Darlene O. Demandante, "Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject," p. 141.

structures of exclusion." [38] Aesthetics and politics are thus linked because our political subjectivity is created when we are recognized. Aesthetics, then, opens up a possibility for a disruption of the political structures and hierarchies because it allows us to recognize their paradoxes and inconsistencies. If politics "primarily has to do with what is made visible, perceivable, and speakable by existing symbolic and material divisions, separations, and hierarchies within society,"[39] then aesthetics determines the manner in which we communicate in the political realm and becomes a language of political discourse. We see the effects of this type of aestheticization of politics in contemporary discourses, in which the value of a political argument is not determined by its logical consistency, but by the extent in which it conforms to the perception of its fundamental ideology.

For its part, the relation of art to 'pop' culture in its more general sense appears paradoxical, especially when treated of hierarchically. Andy Hamilton notes in this regard that, "although high culture is an elite product, it also has a communal reference."[40] This apparent tension between the high culture and the 'popular' culture of the broader community becomes particularly important within the sense of 'culture' advanced by Roger Scruton, according to which "the culture of a civilization is 'the art and literature through which it rises to consciousness of itself and defines its vision of the world.'"[41] What is at stake here is that art and its aesthetic representation are understood as integral to the cultural identity of a society, insofar as art represents a form of actualization of a tribal self-identity. It must be pointed, though, that Scruton's conservative position creates a binary between 'high' and 'popular' culture, which Hamilton critiques because "a simple polarity of high and popular culture ignores the popular classics, and avant-garde genres arising from popular culture."[42] In other words, opposing high and popular culture ignores the interplay between the two, in which they pull from each other in a shared cultural and artistic ecosystem.

Furthermore, Hamilton takes issue with the elitism and cultural ethnocentrism that arise from Scruton's conservative aesthetic position.[43] This criticism is motivated by the effects of globalization, which have made it plain that views of strict cultural hegemonies are ultimately just elitist mythologies. Different cultures borrow from each other just like high and popular cultures do. Hamilton suggests that the way to disentangle Scruton's conservatism is to disregard high art and instead to refer to the classics as "excellencies of their kind."[44] Scruton maintains that a sort of elitism is still required for the developments of these 'classics,' but he allows for their accessibility to the common folk, as they are no longer private property of the upper class.[45] This is a semi-decentralization of aesthetic products that still maintains a level of elitism, for while the common folk may benefit from the insight of the arts, it is not produced for them or about them. What Scruton offers here is an access for the lower classes to the

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[38] Ibid., p. 142.

[39] Ibid., p. 142.

[40] Andy Hamilton, "Scruton's Philosophy of Culture: Elitism, Populism, and Classic Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 no. 4 (2009), p. 390.

[41] Ibid., p. 390.

[42] Ibid., p. 391.

[43] Ibid., p. 392.

[44] Ibid., p. 400.

[45] Ibid., p. 401.

experience of the upper class, which plays into the hands of the fascist project of melding the classes into a single class through a singular experience of high art whose sense is defined by the social elites. Thus, on Scruton's view, it is ultimately culture in a certain elitist sense that determines what is allowed as high art and at once acts as a gatekeeper for the kind of artistic projects which are allowed as 'relevant.'

Taking into account Umberto Eco's paradoxes of fascism and the populist elitism which characterizes fascist movements, we can see how they align with Hamilton's critique of Scruton's philosophy of culture. Fascist movements utilize the creation of an 'aesthetic upper class', and without a radical decentralization of such an aesthetic hierarchy, the conservative cultural hegemony which Scruton appears to advocate essentially becomes the cultural foundation of the fascist project. The kind of 'aesthetization' thus advanced creates its own logic in which the 'low' or 'folk art' paradoxically elevates itself to the level of a highest art of a nation, whereas the 'high art' of the elites becomes accessible to all who take a part in the nationalist project. In this way, fascist aesthetics appropriates the artistic process in service of a continual reconstitution of the fascist movement and state, by formalizing the concepts of 'good art' and 'bad art', "and then forcing them into a hierarchy."[46] Such a hierarchization of the cultural milieu is only made easier when a culture already has its own established hierarchy, as fascist movements are ready to co-opt it to justify their ideology and recruit more people to adopt its terms.

Spencer Bradley argues that "fascism functions through binaries, as a moralization and legitimation of a specific type of humanity… [and] the creation of institutionalized subjectivity as a member of the accepted social norms or existing as the 'other.'"[47] In this way, by means of aesthetics and its peculiar language, fascist movements manipulate and force culture into conformity with their own hierarchies and systems. They create the binary of good and bad art, by which they can sanction both all art that is useful for their project as 'good' and all art that is not as 'bad'. The content of art in this sense is not important; what matters is its conformity to the fascist system. In this way, as fascism co-opts different sorts of art and aspects of culture, it dictates the language of culture and frames the future aesthetic conversations and creations. And as "artistic works are given legitimacy as artistic works when culture accepts it,"[48] fascist movements thus self-position themselves as the dictators of cultural legitimacy, whereas the cultural elitism of the existing hierarchical social system only serves to enable them.

In effect, the goal of fascist art is to establish its own cultural hegemony. This view comes from Antonio Gramsci's conception of political hegemony, which conceives of "the State as representing every attempt to crystallise permanently a particular state of development, a particular situation."[49] Fascist art works in a similar way: as the State creates a political hegemony by formalizing a particular position or stage of the complex of political, economic, and social development, so art, when formalized and forced to conform to a strict structure of

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[46] Spencer Bradly, "The Face of Modern Art: The Creation of Fascist Art." *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 22 no. 1, (2015), p. 81.

[47] Ibid., p. 82.

[48] Ibid., p. 82.

[49] Antonio Gramsci, "Selections from the Prison Notebooks," p. 168.

what is 'acceptable' or 'palatable', becomes totalitarian and serves the ends of the fascist project.

Rancière's conception of aesthetics as politics can be seen as suggesting a way of overcoming the fascist view of art via "what he calls aesthetic modernity or the aesthetic regime of arts as a period where democracy has become a real possibility."[50] In particular, Demandante argues that Rancière constructs a counternarrative to the traditional interpretation of the history of art as moving "towards the perfection of a medium, for example, from classical to abstract painting, or the metaphysical/teleological view about the end of art."[51] On her view, for Rancière, art is not a teleological endeavor, and there can be no final piece of art that will complete the project of aesthetics. The progression of different sorts of artistic expression – for example, from realism to romanticism – is not a development in the craft in the same way as something like agriculture would develop. Instead, artistic development is more of a dialectical process[52] which is the manifestation of a conversation between a society or culture and its critics. Art thus possesses a critical power, which is indicative of its potential to disrupt hegemony. Art, for Rancière, is not about perfection, but about representing the paradoxes of a political hegemony.

The problem that remains here is that paradoxes are fundamental to the nature of fascism and that fascist movements can thus easily accommodate the paradoxes that artistic expression could reveal. These paradoxes can just be adopted within the fascist project and art would become appropriated for that project's purposes – artistic expression revealing the paradoxes of fascism would fail to disrupt fascist movements because of their synthetic nature. It is thus not a surprise that the intellectual theorizing which according to Reichardt characterizes the first stage of fascism advances an aestheticized populist elitism which is also highly appealing to the disaffected social groups. By such populist aesthetics, these groups can coalesce into a movement that mobilizes to turn fascism from something conceived in the minds of conservative intellectuals into a mass social and political movement. What is important for us here is that fascist movements do not have a specified aesthetics or even sorts of aesthetics; they would take anything that seems to ennoble the nation and put it to the task of reinforcing their violent logic. The ultimate goal of these movements is to transform the government which they initially opposed into a tool for a national-imperial purpose.

IV: Fascist Co-Opting

Fascist movements do not co-opt aesthetic properties and characteristics to simply further their political ends. I contend that this concept of co-opting – taking on some aspect or property of another movement (a set of social norms, a cultural sphere, etc.) and utilizing it to further their own purposes – is in fact foundational for the fascist movements. It is because of the fundamental paradoxicality of fascisms that they are in the unique position to co-opt aspects of other movements, including ones that pursue goals contrary to their own. This for instance is indicated in the far-right's apparent obsession with the Russian Revolution and Lenin, as well

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[50] Darlene O. Demandante, "Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject," p. 143.

[51] Ibid., p. 144.

[52] Obviously, there are technological developments that enable new or different modes of artistic expression such as photography and digital arts.

as in the pursuit of social recognition (on the part of the disaffected middle class as integral to fascism) to justify political and social violence.[53]

Ironically, there is a certain transposition of means and goals within the traditional oppositions of the broader political spectrum at the moment. The left has seemingly abandoned the heritage of the Russian Revolution while the far-right has appropriated its anti-status-quo spirit.[54] As David Ost puts it: "Today Lenin is often appropriated by the right. Not the conservative right but a reactionary, radical populist right that has suddenly burst back into relevance by the sputtering crisis of neoliberalism."[55] The populist far-right has looked to the communist revolutionary leader and authoritarian figure of Lenin in admiration for his "determination to attain state power… [and] to smash [the system]."[56] It is this sentiment of wanting to destroy the system and reconfigure state power for their own ends that the contemporary versions of fascist movements take from Lenin's legacy. While they certainly disregard the ultimate goal of leftist revolution this demonstrates that nothing is to be excluded with regard to what fascist movements might want to co-opt in order to further their goals. And this is not limited to the sphere of political revolution. As Ost points out, the anti-institutionalism and anti-intellectualism of far-right movements can be traced back to the cultural revolutions of the Soviet Union in the wake of Lenin's death.[57] While the Soviets purged the supposedly bourgeoise intelligentsia from their universities and cultural institutions in an effort to create a truly proletarian culture, the far-right has worked to curtail the pluralistic university which enshrines the liberal-progressive left.[58]

Fascist movements appropriate not only leftist revolutionary strategies; to justify their violent agendas, they also draw on the liberal ideas of self-recognition. Cécile Lavergne argues that violence can be a justified and meaningful form of political protest only when it gains a recognition for those who are oppressed in some way.[59] The point here is that, if all other avenues for recognition have been blocked, violence is the last resort for political expression. In this regard, Lavergne notes, fascist movements draw on a provision in the social philosophy of Axel Honneth that "if subjects and groups construct their identities and achieve a degree of autonomy only through struggles for recognition, then it means that there might be a moral justification for violence."[60] The justificatory motive here is Hegelian in the sense in which there is a fundamental struggle for politico-social recognition and when the nonviolent forms of this struggle are exhausted the only option left is violence in some form. Two sides of violence are acknowledged here: one that denies the recognition of the self (trauma), and one that continually asserts this recognition (action).[61] In this sense, self-identity – "the way in

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[53] David Ost, "The surprising right-wing relevance of the Russian Revolution." *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Thought*, Vol. 24 (2017), p. 516.

[54] Ibid., p. 516.

[55] Ibid., p. 516.

[56] Ibid., p. 517.

[57] Ibid., p. 522.

[58] Ibid., p. 522.

[59] Cécile Lavergne, "Questioning the Moral Justification of Political Violence: Recognition Conflicts, Identities and Emancipation," *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (2011), p. 211.

[60] Ibid., p. 212.

[61] Ibid., p. 213.

which individuals themselves see their own singularity and worth"[62] – appears as integral to the justification of violence and fascist movements make use of it for their own ends and development.

What the apparent popularity of fascist movements points to is a loss of the characteristic self-identity of the middle class. If the 20th century was the century of the middle-class, the 21st century now appears to be the century of its disappearance. Here we can recall the characteristic frustration of the middle class from Umberto Eco's discussion of fascism. This frustration is a result of a certain lack of, or violence to, the self-identity of the middle-class individual. Typically, the members of the middle class see themselves as the primary social group of a liberal democratic society, and they are the first group whose rights are extended in full. But as the society further liberalizes and more social groups (the working class, women, racial, religious, and other minorities) have their rights extended, a considerable number of the members of the middle class perceive this as an assault on their position. Here, I do not mean to say that this is what makes them fascist but that it provides for their predisposition to fascist thought. Thus, looking back to 'when times were good', they could reimagine and see the conservative past through rose-tinted lenses. It is to be noted here that much of what is happening in such a retrospection is a kind of *aesthetic perception*. In a sense, much of the middle class finds itself in the position of romanticizing both how their world was before other people started sharing in its socio-political wealth and how they might return to their dominant social position in that world. This is where the fascists enter the stage to appeal to the middle-class sense of an average 'working person,' despite the fact that they are anything but such people (we recall how fascism originates ideologically in elite, conservative intelligentsia). Thus, I am back again to the theme of paradoxes that reinforces the populist elitism which fascism entails. These paradoxes do not seem to bother much of the middle class, not least because people are not fundamentally logical automatons but are looking for a way to reassert their identity. This reassertion now is not done by way of logical analysis or construction but by an assertion of their recognition.

The use of 'looking back' with its intrinsic aesthetic aspect is important here. In accordance with Jacques Rancière's conception of aesthetics as utilized within our perceptions of social realities, aesthetics can be seen as integral to politics. It is aesthetics in this sense that takes on a formalistic character and creates an artistic hegemony which crystallizes in the formation of fascist art. Thus, along the lines of this aesthetics as politics, which promotes a particular type of artistic hegemony, fascist art advances and reinforces the totalitarian nature of its political project, while also demonstrating that aesthetics and politics together enact a cycle of continuous mutual reinforcement. A result of this political appropriation of aesthetics is that art fails to disrupt fascism because, even if it reveals the paradoxes of fascism, fascism's synthetic and paradoxical nature weakens the effects of these disruptions by subsuming the potentially disruptive art into its own project. The question that arises here is: Is there anything at all that art can offer for an antifascist project, if art is at the constant risk of being co-opted by the fascist movements?

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[62] Ibid., p. 214.

Fascism's resilience to artistic disruption reveals fundamental shortcomings of its liberal critique. As Gramsci puts it, "liberalism's weakness ... is the bureaucracy – i.e. the crystallisation of the leading personnel – which exercises coercive power, and at a certain point it becomes a caste."[63] Artistic hegemonies produce a similar effect: they create their own artistic bureaucracy that promotes what is deemed socially acceptable, but this bureaucracy in turn becomes a source of weakness as well. More particularly, in a liberal-capitalist economic system this weakness is rooted in that such bureaucratized hegemonies are largely motivated by profit. When art is tied to what will create the most profit (as opposed to the sort of artistic expression which is motivated by art *qua* art), it loses its ability to reveal the paradoxes of hegemony and social order. Likewise, when this ability is lost, fascism can much more easily turn art into a tool for the purpose of establishing its own political hegemony. Art, then, would not be in a position to advance the sort of radical aesthetics as politics envisioned by Rancière. Demandante writes that "the definition of politics as having to do with challenging hierarchies and changing the distribution of the sensible through the assertion of equality by individual subjects and communities, as well as Rancière's focus on the writings of the proletarians in his archival work, demonstrate the connection that he proposes between aesthetics and politics."[64] But if fascist movements are able to co-opt art and integrate it into a cultural hegemony, then art would in fact do the opposite – it would fortify the fascist political project and its totalitarian status. It is therefore only by extricating artistic work from the motivations of profit and hierarchical hegemonies that art could achieve the kind of political disruption which Rancière conceived of as proper to democracy. For art to function in the aesthetic-political process it must be able to disrupt hierarchies, not become subsumed within them.

Now even if art were able to properly disrupt fascist political projects, it would still need to deal with fascism's synthetic and paradoxical nature. While this may be more difficult for the totalitarian side, it still poses the question of how we might be able to engage in an efficient disruption of right-wing authoritarianism. Jules Simon interprets Walter Benjamin's notion of 'authentic art' as presenting "experiences *indirectly* and thereby as resistance to or negation of a totalizing, fascist political world" pointing that "one of the functions of 'good' or authentic art is to create shock and renewal in such a way that a process of judging of the world begins to occur."[65] There is still a sense of disruption here but instead of targeting the hegemonic order directly, the disruption is aimed at the audience of art. Because fascism appeals to the self-identity of its typical political subject, that self-identity is what must be disrupted. Visceral and shocking reactions reveal the problems that are truly unavoidable for fascist movements. This is linked to the idea of embodiment discussed earlier – while fascist projects may use embodied subjects as a means for advancing their own agendas, art that demonstrates to the audience of political subjects their own embodiment serves to properly disrupt the fascist movements themselves. Indeed, when its political hegemony is disrupted, fascism would simply venture to co-opt that disruption within its own synthetico-paradoxical project. But the aesthetic disruption at an individual level along the avenues of art can disrupt fascism's very capacity for co-opting

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[63] Antonio Gramsci, "Selections from the Prison Notebooks," p. 169.
[64] Darlene O. Demandante, "Aesthetics, Politics, and the Embodied Political Subject," pp. 142-143.
[65] Jules Simon, "Aesthetics and Politics: Reflections on Love and the Origins of Fascism," *Filosofia*, Vol. 63 (2018), p. 144.

because it disturbs the process of recognition on which the fascist movements draw in their totalizing advances.

Artistic expression will not disrupt the specific hegemonic structure of fascism, because even if art forms its own aesthetic hegemony fascism would quickly co-opt it. This is indeed an apparent paradox in fascism's operation that allows it to appropriate something that reveals its inconsistencies and contradictions to its own advantage. But fascism can and must be disrupted at the lower level of individuals. Art can possibly achieve this through Benjamin's conception of 'good art', on the condition that in this process we cannot assign a gatekeeping role for what is considered good art. For, such a gatekeeping itself creates hegemonies – of what is considered good or acceptable – on its own. That is, when art advances such type of value judgment, even if it does so in its own way, it becomes a part of a totalizing process and thus a totalized tool of a hierarchy. Thus, if good art (or indeed art itself) is to disrupt the aesthetic-political perception of its audience, all the barriers which might restrict it ought to be broken down, in service of what can thus be called an anarcho-aesthetic project. In our view, it is this kind of decentralized anarcho-aesthetic art that can help reveal the synthetico-paradoxical nature of fascism at an individual level and that can thus help establish the self-recognition proper of the subject as such.

V: Conclusion

Fascist movements are not necessarily exemplified by any particular type of regime or state system. They are socio-political movements and *process-concepts*. Their unique synthetico-paradoxical character enables them to synthesize social, political, and aesthetic approaches of other movements that may even be radically opposed to them. Indeed, the paradoxes that constitute the character of fascist movements do not appear to disturb them as one might expect at first. Instead, such paradoxes appear to fuel their advancement in a synthesis that fosters a stronger bond with the variety of populations they target. The liberalization of modern democratic societies feeds into the machine of the fascist movements allowing them to capitalize on the vulnerability of a middle class that is alienated from its own self-identity. Fascist movements take advantage of the middle class precisely by co-opting its idealized aesthetics. This co-opting, which is part of a process of establishing artistic hegemony, completes the fascist project and reinforces its totalitarian logic on a broader scale in society and culture. While in the perspective of art we backed up with Rancière and Benjamin artistic expression seems to provide a way to disrupt fascist movements, we also acknowledge that the totalization of art in a liberal-capitalist hegemony would prevent it from disrupting fascism in a meaningful way and at the same time from safeguarding itself from being co-opted and subsumed back into the fascist political project.

Thus, the positive answer to the question at issue here can only be a radical decentralization of artistic expression, in which art has abandoned any possible gatekeeping function. That is, only when all the barriers on what is considered 'good art' are removed, such that individuals are free to create and experience art as individuals, only then a visceral and embodied reaction to art becomes possible that disrupts the fascist project without being co-opted by it. By liberating art from any artistic hegemony, and thus allowing individuals to engage with art in a kind of personalized artistic experience, individuals can disentangle

themselves from the nets of the fascist movements. This disentanglement could lead to a recognition which is not necessarily asserted through an explicitly political movement, but a recognition asserted through expression of individual's own particularity, a recognition which as such liberates them from the totalizing conditions of fascism.

STATELESSNESS: THE CONCEPT OF HOMO SACER IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *HOME FIRE*

Yasemin Karaağaç

Abstract

This article analyzes Kamila Shamsie's novel Home Fire (2017), which is a contemporary remake of the family tragedy of Sophocles' Antigone. The novel focuses on the lives of three orphaned siblings, Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz, who are British-Pakistani citizens, living as a minority group in multicultural British society. However, following in his father's footsteps, Parvaiz makes the decision to leave the United Kingdom and join a jihadist movement, which constitutes a threat to his citizenship rights. Later on, he regrets being a part of a radical group and decides to come back home in the United Kingdom, but the government has already revoked his citizenship. The situation becomes complicated when, following the death of Parvaiz, her twin brother, Aneeka makes a demand to the British authorities to bury her brother's body on British soil. Thus, Aneeka finds herself in a situation of confronting the sovereign power represented by the British Home Secretary, Karamat Lone, who has revoked the citizenship of both her and her brother for acting against the vital interests of the state. In this context, I will explore the characters of Parvaiz and Aneeka as stateless people, drawing on Giorgio Agamben's notion of homo sacer, understood as someone condemned to 'bare life' and thus as vulnerable to sovereign violence. The paper will focus on the excess of sovereign power exercised over these two characters, which will be analyzed drawing on Agamben's arguments of state of exception, bare life, and homo sacer.

Keywords: Homo Sacer, State of Exception, Bare Life, Agamben, Biopolitics

1. Introduction

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* (2017) offers a modern-day version of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*. It deals with the themes of identity crisis, Otherness, and sovereign power, focusing in particular on the experience of three British-Pakistani siblings – Isma, Parvaiz, and Aneeka – living under sovereign surveillance as a consequence of their father's involvement with jihadism. As Claire Chambers puts it, "*Home*

Fire operates as a post-9/11 *Antigone*, and its adaptation element is immediately signaled by the novel's epigraph from Seamus Heaney's translation of Sophocles' play: 'The ones we love. . . are enemies of the state (n.p.)'."[1] More specifically, Shamsie portrays "the struggle of those stuck between increasingly authoritarian, post-9/11 governments in the West and religious fundamentalist groups in the East."[2] The events in the novel take place primarily in London, but also in other locales, such as Amherst (Massachusetts), Istanbul (Turkey), Raqqa (Syria), and Karachi (Pakistan). The story in *Home Fire* encompasses the fates of two British-Pakistani families, the Pashas and the Lones, which are closely entwined with one another. They both shared a Muslim cultural background but were otherwise exact opposites. Adil Pasha, the father of the three siblings at the center of Shamsie's narrative, was a member of a radical Islamic group and upon detention died in Guantanamo Bay. Karamat Lone, for his part, is a Home Secretary with the British government, seeking a political career and acceptance in the British society, while distancing himself from his Muslim background in the process.

The main action of the story begins with the disappearance of Parvaiz, who decides to join the Islamic terrorist group ISIS. He follows in the footsteps of his jihadist father, whom he never met in person, under the influence of his father's friend and jihadist recruiter Farooq. Later on, Parvaiz realizes that he has made a horrible mistake and wants to come back home to Britain, asking Aneeka for help. His life ends outside the British consulate in Turkey, where he is likely killed by Farooq for betrayal. Named a dead terrorist and a traitor in the news headlines, Parvaiz is no longer regarded as British, as the Home Secretary revokes his British citizenship.[3] Lone's decision is to ban Parvaiz' burial on British soil, repatriating his body to Pakistan. Unable to bring Parvaiz' funeral to Britain, Aneeka initiates a protest against the sovereign decision of the Home Secretary by sitting next to her brother's coffin outside the Karachi British High Commission in one of the city parks.

Aneeka's steps to secure burial rights and justice for her brother via her public presence. The media does not change Lone's mind, who remains opposed to bringing Parvaiz' body to the UK. Instead, the Home Secretary revoked her citizenship as well, for acting against the vital interests of the UK. His position is laid bare in the suggestive statement "Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain."[4] Meanwhile, Eamonn, Lone's son, and Aneeka start a relationship; he tries to convince his father to have Parvaiz' body brought back to Britain but was not able to change his mind. Thus, Lone's unyielding political ambition and British nationalism contributed to the lovers' downfall and death – at the end of the story, the two were reunited in the park but were targeted and ultimately blown up by jihadists. In this relation, Rehana Ahmed very properly points out that "The novel's emphasis on performance and surveillance highlights the role of the visual in shaping or entrenching perceptions of others, and thereby entrenching barriers between cultural groups, or impeding communication across

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[1] Claire Gail Chambers, "Sound and Fury: Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire," *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 3 (2018), p. 208.

[2] Peter Krause, "Antigone in Pakistan: *Home Fire*, by Kamila Shamsie," *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, Vol. 43, No. 3, (2020), p. 15.

[3] Kamila Shamsie, "Exiled: the disturbing story of a citizen made unBritish', *The Guardian* (November 17, 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/17/unbecoming-british-kamila-shamsie-citizens-exile.

[4] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 230.

them."[5] This concern can be pointedly traced in the novel, as Shamsie draws attention to cultural differences which can become a source of problems and threats, thus raising the question of the possibility of a non-homogenous community. In this regard, Stuart Hall says,

> What are the terms on which people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, and historical backgrounds, who have applied to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city or a nation, or a region, to live with one another without either one group (the less powerful group) having to become the imitative version of the dominant one-i.e. an assimilationism- or, on the other hand, the two groups hating one another, or projecting images of degradation?[6]

We need to note here that, since Shamsie's novel lays out the discussion about the ways of belonging and not belonging around citizenship rights, multiculturalism, and resistance to assimilation, the novel answers Hall's question with a resounding 'no'. As Debjani Banerjee points out, Shamsie succeeds in analyzing the issues precisely by providing "a deeper look into the community to show the nuanced relationship within British Muslims and their multilayered connections with faith and with state machinery."[7]

In this context, sovereign power over citizenship and human rights appear as important themes of the novel, which challenge the idea that liberalism, democracy, and totalitarianism are mutually exclusive opposites. Shamsie narrates her story by juxtaposing them in the course of the events. Notably, once Parvaiz and then Aneeka are condemned to being stateless and outside the law, we can think of them as a kind of "living dead," in Agamben's terms *homines sacri/homo sacer*. We can thus examine the themes of the novel, including being stripped of legal rights, deprived of citizenship, and statelessness, through Giorgio Agamben's work *Homo Sacer* and particularly drawing on his discussions of the suspension of the law, the state of exception, and the production of bare life.

At this point, we will need to note that for Agamben the political subject of modern life is "not man as a free and conscious political subject but, above all, man's bare life."[8] But to understand what Agamben means by "bare life," and the transformative effects of the sovereign power on it, we will need to look at the Western politics, in which these effects show in the life of individuals. We will discuss this further in the following section.

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[5] Rehana Ahmed, "Towards an Ethics of Reading Muslims: Encountering Difference in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*," *Textual Practice*, Vol. 35, No. 7 (2021), p. 13.

[6] Stuart Hall, "Rethinking the cultural question" (a video conversation with Nira Yuval-Davis), shown at the interim conference of the International Sociological Association with heading *Racisms, Sexisms, and Contemporary Politics of Belonging* (London, August 2004); see also Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), p. 26.

[7] Debjani Banerjee, "From Cheap Labor to Overlooked Citizens: Looking for British Muslim Identities in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*," *South Asian Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3-4 (2020), p. 289.

[8] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 128.

2. Sovereignty and Homo Sacer

Sacredness is a line of flight still present in contemporary politics, a line that is as such moving into zones increasingly vast and dark, to the point of ultimately coinciding with the biological life itself of citizens. If today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually homines sacri. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 114-115

For Agamben, "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power"[9]; thus, the latter controls the individual human rights and decides who is inside and outside the law. Since in this way individuals become the biopolitical tool of the sovereign, the latter regulates the juridical order through them, including by suspending the law "and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception," that is, by "first constituting itself as a rule."[10] In other words, within Agamben's perspective on sovereign power, the sovereign, as the decision-maker over law and political life, has the power to decide who is inside and outside the law. Also, the sovereign can exclude itself from the law because the sovereign is the creator of the juridical order. This is a preferable exception for the sovereign because in this way it resides outside that order and is excluded from any restrictions and penalties of the law while it is under the protection of the law.

Since the law is related to "bare life," in the state of exception, human life and rights are captured by sovereign power. The sovereign can thus decide that certain individuals can be excluded from full participation in political life. From this perspective, Being can be seen as "nothing other than Being in the ban of being,"[11] which backs up the idea that "the original political relation is the ban."[12] In this sense, the state of exception becomes a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion, which produces the form of bare life as the fundamental act of sovereignty in the sense of being included in the political realm by virtue of being excluded.[13] Thus, this paradoxical "inclusive exclusion" paradigm becomes significant for the analysis of the act of sovereign exception in the production of bare life.

Agamben proposes that this exclusive operation is intimately bound up with the distinction between *bios* and *zoē*, which is found in the ancient Greek conception of life. Thus, *zoē* refers to the natural life (common to humans, animals, and gods), whereas *bios* indicates the form of qualified life peculiar to a single individual or a group. In this context, *bios* indicates that individuals' lives are grounded in the political form of life, while *zoē* can be associated with a kind of animalization. That is, *zoē* can be seen as opposed to or excluded from the political life. All in all, the binary confrontation of *bíos* and *zoē* highlights the biopolitical division between political and natural life. At this point, *homo sacer* is not the same thing as

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[9] Ibid., p. 6.
[10] Ibid., p. 18.
[11] Ibid., p. 60.
[12] Ibid., p. 181.
[13] Nasser Hussain & Melissa Ptacek, "Thresholds: Sovereignty and the Sacred," *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2000), p. 496.

zoē, but rather stands on the "threshold between nature and culture, zoē and bios."[14] That is, the division between political and natural life relates living beings to bare life, places them on the threshold of the juridico-political realm.

Bare life, in this sense, is a product of the state of exception, or as Agamben puts it, "the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty."[15] This means that "bare life" is different from *zoē* and that instead it is produced by the sovereign power which captures the living beings from the very "arising of the political in the West, Greek democracy and Roman law."[16] As Agamben explains,

> The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/ enemy but that of bare life/political existence, zoē /bios, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.[17]

Agamben suggests that this biopolitical paradigm captured in the distinction between bare life and politics originates in Ancient Athens and runs through to modern Western history, while still determining and obscuring the very nature of politics. As he writes, "in Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men."[18] In this sense, bare life becomes indistinct from a basic form of life, whereas its eventual differentiation becomes possible through a politicization by way of exclusion.

In this framework, Agamben discusses the historical figure of the archaic Roman law, *homo sacer*, the outlaw who has been excluded from the religious and the juridical-political community and thus "may be killed and yet not sacrificed."[19] According to the Roman law, the *homo sacer* can be killed by anyone without this constituting a homicide as this banned person no longer has a political identity and is seen as a mere bare body. For Agamben, *homo sacer* is deprived of "normal political rights and legal safeguards" by the sovereign, who forces him out of *bios* and thus reduces him to bare life.

At the same time, it is impermissible for *homo sacer* to be sacrificed because of his sacredness. As Agamben claims, "*homo sacer* belongs to God in the form of unsacrificeability and is included in the community in the form of being able to be killed."[20] This, then, is a situation in which, as a result of a double exclusion, *homo sacer* is excluded from both the sphere of the profane law (*ius humanum*) and that of the divine law (*ius divinium*). Agamben explains,

> What defines the status of homo sacer is therefore not the originary ambivalence of the sacredness that is assumed to belong to him, but rather both the particular character of the double exclusion into which he is taken and the violence to which he finds himself exposed. This violence – the

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[14] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 181.

[15] Ibid., p. 83.

[16] Ibid., p. 32.

[17] Ibid., p. 8.

[18] Giorgio Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), p. 10.

[19] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 8.

[20] Ibid., p. 82

unsanctionable killing that, in his case, anyone may commit – is classifiable neither as sacrifice nor as homicide, neither as the execution of a condemnation to death nor as sacrilege.[21]

Thus, by being banned, *homo sacer* is left to live under the sovereign power and – via his unsacrificeability – also outside the realm of God. In this way, his two forms of existence are caught in the zone of indistinction as inclusive exclusion.

In the light of these explanations, Shamsie's novel can be seen as offering a discussion of characters that are *homines sacri* and are thus marked by a border status of indistinction as belonging to neither *zoē*, nor *bios*. That is, as *homines sacri*, the lives of Aneeka and Parvaiz are included in the law by being excluded from it, which is always related to the possible and present state of exception. In this sense, we can say that, for Agamben, sovereign power is embedded in biopolitics and this indeed implies the paradox that life conditioned in the sphere of sovereignty is life that has been abandoned by its juridico-political order.[22]

As it has been noted, since Shamsie depicts her characters as being on the threshold between inside and outside of the juridical order, we can speak of a zone of indifference identifiable in her novel. As *homines sacri*, the siblings now can be seen as being in a liminal position which is neither that of simple natural life, nor social life, but bare life. That is, they exemplify a situation, in which bare life and juridical order appear at the threshold of indistinction, of a paradoxical 'inclusive exclusion'. This peculiar condition is identifiable in terms of Agamben's sense of *Homo Sacer* and allows for the novel *Home Fire* to be read through the lenses of his critique of sovereignty as enacting a state of exception.

3. Homines Sacri in *Home Fire*

As the novel tells us, the young orphaned Muslim siblings had a financially constrained life in a London suburb near Wembley. After their father, Adil Pasha, became a terrorist, they lived under the surveillance by MI5 officers. The siblings feared that the British government would withdraw the state welfare benefits from any family it suspected to be siding with terrorists.[23] They had to be mindful about pretty much everything they did in this society, for fear of being harassed by the Special Branch of the security agency, as well as by people in the neighborhood who suspected their sympathies based on the story of Adil Pasha.[24] In an important sense, their father's criminal past had already placed them outside British society, as they were already regarded as members of a more or less disenfranchised social group. We can therefore think of them as a kind of *homines sacri* endeavoring to survive in the multicultural British society while being placed in a disadvantaged position.

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[21] Ibid., p. 82

[22] It is to be noted that Agamben criticizes Michel Foucault for limiting his studies to hospitals and prisons and not focusing on the concentration camp as a peculiar example of disciplinary biopolitics. According to Agamben, Foucault in this way has ignored the politics of the totalitarian states of the twentieth century (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 118). Similarly, he criticizes Hannah Arendt for the lack of biopolitical analyses in her investigations, even though she did discuss the link between totalitarian rule and the concentration camp. Agamben thus suggests an analysis of sovereignty as making up for the deficiencies in the views of these two thinkers with the political sense of bare life.

[23] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 49.

[24] Ibid., p. 49.

While accepting that the sovereign and *homines sacri* stand in opposition to each other, Agamben also claims that they are at the same time symmetrical and belong to the same order. In his own words, "the sovereign and homo sacer present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially homines sacri, and homo sacer is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns."[25] Thus, while the Pasha family had to live with the anxiety of being constantly questioned regarding their loyalty to the British nation, Karamat Lone, as a sovereign figure, was in a position of privilege which potentially enabled him to designate a person as *homo sacer* in Agamben's sense. That the Home Secretary fittingly exemplifies this Agambenian sense of a sovereign who is ready to differentiate and thus designate *homines sacri* within society as a whole becomes clear in a statement Shamsie has him making:

> You are, we are British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you. But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: don't set yourselves apart in the way you dress, the way you think, outdated codes of behaviour you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently – not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours.[26]

In brief, just as the two opposite figures of the sovereign and *homines sacri* can be seen as symmetrical and belonging to the same order in Agamben's perspective, so too Lone's speech appears to ordain the position and correlative relationship of the siblings with British society.

As perceived throughout the novel, the sense of this ordinance becomes particularly somber. For, the predominant public view associated these British siblings of Pakistani descent with terror, which by itself is indicative of the discrimination each of them was exposed to personally. When Isma appeared at the airport on the way to her doctoral studies in the United States, she was interrogated for nearly two hours by the immigration officer: "'Do you consider yourself British?' the man said./ 'I am British.' / 'But do you consider yourself British?' / 'I've lived here all my life' […]. /She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive'."[27] These experiences that resulted from prejudice toward their descent came on top of an extremely difficult childhood which the siblings had to endure upon the loss of their mother (shared between Aneeka and Eamonn): "Everything else you can live around, but not death. Death you have to live through."[28]

In this sense, the novel presents the characters in-between spaces and on bordering thresholds, positioning them somewhere between dead and living subjects in a way that reflects the contradictory positions they attain with regard to the law. In this intermediary position, the characters in the novel, being neither dead nor alive, can be seen as representing the figure of *der Muselmann* who stands on a "moving threshold" between the human and inhuman.[29] Being

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[25] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 84.

[26] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, pp. 88-9.

[27] Ibid., p. 59.

[28] Ibid, pp. 93-4.

[29] Giorgio Agamben*, Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and The Archive*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Zone Books, 1999), p. 48.

like a living dead, a ghost-like figure, the *Muselmann* here can be seen as symbolizing the border of bare life and political existence, and thus as representing the impossibility of testimony. It is in this sense that, for Agamben, der *Muselmann* is the *faceless center* of the concentration camp[30] and represents the impossibility for ethical resolution in Auschwitz, where the very idea of an ethical limit loses its meaning.[31] That is why Agamben's conclusion is that the camp is "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity."[32]

The figure *der Muselmann* is of particular interest here. Etymologically, it comes from the word Muslim, which in Arabic refers to the person who unconditionally submits himself to the will of God. In the chapter "The Muselmann," Agamben focuses on the figure of the *Muselmann* who survives in the concentration camps as a particular type of deportee while also representing the other deportees who endure the worst level of the camp before being killed in a gas chamber.

In this sense, every character of the novel can be seen as representing the status of the *Muselmann*, viz. Muslims, as living in the British society "on a moving threshold." This is attested by Aneeka's statement: "Why didn't you mention that among the things this country will let you achieve if you're Muslim is torture, rendition, detention without trial, airport interrogations, spies in your mosques, teachers reporting your children to the authorities for wanting a world without British injustice."[33] Notably, this statement aligns with Agamben's point that the *Muselmann* occupies "a zone of the human where not only help but also dignity and self-respect have become useless."[34]

Living under surveillance on the margin of society, as a member of the working class, and as a Muslim colonial subject, Parvaiz "hated his life, this neighborhood, the inevitability of everything."[35] He already felt alienated from his environment, which conditioned his sense of unbelonging, identity crisis, and ostracization. Thus, he was aware that he dwelled in-between spaces trying to sustain his political existence. Like Agamben's figure of the *Muselmann*, Parvaiz' character marks the presence of the moving threshold, across which he becomes one of the living dead. Here the figure of the *Muselmann* looms particularly large, as Parvaiz' alienation appeared to be transmitted to him by his own family – his cousin tells him "I'm a Pakistani and you're a Paki."[36] Still, for Parvaiz, his two sisters too allowed themselves to become part of the corruption, as one of them was going to study in America, "the nation that killed their father, whereas the other was propping up the lie that theirs was a country where citizens had rights and courts of appeal."[37]

Learning that Parvaiz had joined ISIS, Isma decides to report him – in a gesture of co-operation with the state – for the sake of the safety of all three siblings, including for the safe return of her brother. Aneeka thought that in this way Isma betrayed her siblings: "Parvaiz is

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[30] Ibid., p. 52.

[31] ibid., p. 63.

[32] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 123.

[33] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 91.

[34] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 63.

[35] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 123.

[36] Ibid., p. 150.

[37] Ibid., p. 148.

not our father. He's my twin. He's me. But you, you're not our sister anymore."[38] But Isma performatively maintained her loyalty to the state, warning Aneeka "We're in no position to let the state question our loyalties."[39] She was similarly determined to help Parvaiz return safe home, but her position stands in sharp contrast to that of Aneeka. Like Karamat Lone, Isma can be seen as a law-abiding person trying to legitimize herself as a loyal British citizen, though in a way that seems to condone the apparent discriminatory practices of the state authorities. Aneeka, for her part, stood up to what she saw as conflicting notions of citizenship rights for the sake of her family.

Although Eamonn showed a reaction to Aneeka after learning that she used him to access Lone's political power to rescue her brother, he still decided to talk with his father on her behalf, believing that there was nothing his father would not do for him.[40] Eamonn's expectation was not met, though, for "where there had been a father, now there was a Home Secretary."[41] Lone, who worked for the public service and national good his entire life, knew everything about Adil Pasha and his brainwashed son. Consequently, he decided to restrict the contact of his son with Aneeka: "you will have no more contact with this girl. I'm setting up a security detail for you."[42]

Lone was known as a man with a Muslim background, but Muslim groups questioned his "Muslim-ness"[43] and called him a "hate preacher."[44] Indeed, "the press tried to brand him an extremist" but it was actually London's Muslim population "who had turned their back on Karamat Lone and voted him out," because "he expressed an enlightened preference for the conventions of a church over those of a mosque, and spoke of the need for British Muslims to lift themselves out of the Dark Ages if they wanted the rest of the nation to treat them with respect."[45] As a sovereign figure, he has the power to impose bare life upon the Muslim society, exemplifying in this way Agamben's point that in performing this task the sovereign constitutes itself as sovereign.[46] In other words, whereas sovereignty comes into being out of a politicized bare life, it at the same time produces bare life.[47]

Upon witnessing beheadings and tortures by ISIS, Parvaiz decides to return to London. He has no illusions about his situation and declares his readiness to face the consequences of his actions: "I made a mistake. I'm prepared to face trial if I've broken laws. Just let me go to London. But he was the terrorist son of a terrorist father. He rested his head on his knees. He did not know how to break out of these currents of history, how to shake free of the demons he had attached to his own heels."[48] Indeed, he did believe that he could find his way to honor the

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[38] Ibid., p. 42.

[39] Ibid., p. 42.

[40] Ibid., p. 80.

[41] Ibid., p. 109.

[42] Ibid., p. 109.

[43] Ibid., p. 33.

[44] Ibid., p. 35.

[45] Ibid., p. 59.

[46] Mika Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue on Bio-power: Agamben and Foucault," *Foucault Studies*, *No. 2* (2005), p. 7.

[47] Peter Fitzpatrick, "Bare Sovereignty: Homo Sacer and the Insistence of Law," *Theory & Event*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2001), retrieved, October 21, 2011, from https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32622).

[48] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 171.

memory of his father with the help of Farooq, but what he found simply did not meet his expectations.

Parvaiz was manipulated by Farooq who told him heroic stories about Adil Pasha in order to recruit him. He "would listen to those stories of his father for which he'd always yearned… a man of courage who fought injustice, saw beyond the lie of national boundaries, kept his comrades' spirits up through times of darkness."[49] The ISIS media wing gave Parvaiz a position in Raqqa and he took a place in a villa, which made him happy for three months.[50] The media wing accepted Parvaiz, trained him, and he found pleasure in the learning. For a time, Parvaiz felt like a powerful, manly, and proud member of ISIS happy to explore his father's history. The role and the benefits he gained as a media sound technician helped him to suppress the identity crisis he had been living through since his childhood.

Before he was shot outside the British High Commission in Turkey, Aneeka suggested that he go to the British Consulate and ask for a passport. Trying to persuade him to return home, she assures him "What happened to our father won't happen to you."[51] After Parvaiz was killed, the media presented him as a London-born terrorist who joined people the state regarded as enemies of Britain.[52] Meanwhile, Lone declared, "I revoked the citizenship of all dual nationals who left Britain to join our enemies […] His body will be repatriated to his home nation Pakistan […] We will not let those who turn against the soil of Britain in their lifetime sully that very soil in death."[53] The fact of the matter, though, was that both Parvaiz and Aneeka were not Pakistani citizens, even though they held NICOP (National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis), which exempted them from visas or bureaucratic procedures if they wished to travel and work there.[54] Thus, Lone appears in the position of determining and ensuring the state of exception, which confirms Agamben's claim that the state of exception is the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics and that the sovereign has the authority to suspend the law by placing itself outside it.[55] In other words, the sovereign holds the right to a state of exception that leads to the suspension of the law. We need to note here that on this basis Agamben claims that it is impossible to differentiate between the violation of the law and its execution.[56]

At this point, it appears feasible to suggest that Shamsie depicts the character of the career politician Karamat Lone by reimagining Antigone's uncle Creon. Lone's revocation of Parvaiz' British citizenship and repatriation of his body to Pakistan evokes Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices. In the process of investigation of the crime, Lone sought to determine the exception of all British passport holders by declaring that it is "possible to strip any British passport holders of their citizenship in cases where they acted against the interest of the UK. Under present rules, only dual nationals or naturalized citizens with a claim to another

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[49] Ibid., p. 128.

[50] Ibid., p. 167.

[51] İbid., p. 175.

[52] Ibid., pp. 197-198.

[53] Ibid., p. 188.

[54] Ibid., p. 202.

[55] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 15.

[56] Ibid., p. 57.

nationality can have their citizenship revoked."[57] Thus, Lone's activity as a public official again fits Agamben's concept of sovereignty. It indicates that the sovereign has the power to declare inhabitants as non-citizens; that is, to create – through the sovereign right of exception – a *homo sacer* that dwells in the condition of bare life.[58] In this sense, the sovereign's act of declaring people outside the law and thus reducing them to bare life also indicates that one's natural life is captured in the mechanism and calculation of the sovereign decision.[59]

In this context, bare life is the life that is produced exclusively by the sovereign power and is thus characterized and determined by the paradoxical logic of sovereignty. This exclusion, however, is not totally exclusive but is also inclusive by the manner of its constitution. It is very indicative that the Home Secretary "expanded on his predecessor's claim that 'citizenship is a privilege not a right' to say 'citizenship is a privilege not a right or birthright',"[60] because for Lone, "someone's fitness for citizenship should be based on their actions, not on accidents of birth."[61] In the context of removing rights, Lone's statement can be read as pointing to the paradoxical character of the state of exception[62] which is based on the idea that "fact and law [or the exception and the rule] are indistinguishable," and so "the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside [of the juridical order] do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other."[63]

In this regard, it is possible to maintain that Parvaiz' dead body is indicative of the sovereign act of the ban on the human body. As Agamben claims, "the relation of the exception is the relation of the ban. He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable."[64] Thus, Parvaiz' dead body is also indicative of biopolitics as a ban or as a tool of sovereign power, as much as of bare life placed outside the law, outside *bios*, or on the threshold of *bios*.

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[57] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 198.

[58] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 171.

[59] Ibid., p. 113.

[60] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 198.

[61] Ibid., p. 214.

[62] Agamben's main argument for the state of exception is influenced by Carl Schmitt. Schmitt discusses the sovereign in his book *Political Theology*. For him, "sovereign is he who decides on the exception." [Carl Schmitt, *Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 5)]. Schmitt writes, "The exception reveals most dearly the essence of the state's authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law." (Ibid., p. 13). Schmitt also points out that "the exception is to be understood to refer to a general concept in the theory of the state, and not merely to a construct applied to any emergency decree or state of siege." (Ibid., p. 5) Instead, the suspension of the law needs to create a state of emergency for the preservation of the juridical order: "The state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right of self-preservation, as one would say" (Ibid., p.12). See also, Giorgio Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*, pp. 17ff.

[62] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 2005), p. 23.

[63] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 2005), p. 23.

[64] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 28.

Meanwhile, the human rights campaign group Liberty issued a statement to show their reaction against the sovereign: "Removing the right to have rights[65] is a new low. Washing our hands of potential terrorists is dangerously short-sighted and statelessness is a tool of despots, not democrats."[66] The British media supports Parvaiz and criticizes the sovereign for excluding him from the legal rights of human beings. Reporters blame the state for not paying enough attention to children like Parvaiz: "It's a cause of profound concern that the children of jihadis, many of them British born, are not closely watched by the state. How many more Parvaiz Pashas will it take for things to change?"[67]

Before going to Pakistan to receive his body, Aneeka asked Isma for help only to be warned by her again not to attempt anything against the state: "Why can you never understand the position we are in? We do not have that liberty. Remember him in your heart and your prayers, as our grandmother remembered her only son. Go back to uni, study the law. Accept the law, even when it's unjust."[68] Still, Aneeka endeavored to bring Parvaiz' body to London where she believed he properly belonged. And when a journalist asks her why she is going to Karachi, her answer is straight: "For justice."[69]

Aneeka starts her protest against the Home Secretary in front of the British Deputy High Commission with the thought that "here she would sit with her brother until the world changed or both of them crumbled into the soil around them."[70] In this sense, Parvaiz' body is politicized by the sovereign power, which links to Agamben's claim that politics is always already related to biopolitics and is at the core of sovereign power to such an extent that – by declaring a state of exception – it transforms the political realm into the realm of bare life.[71]

Here, Shamsie provides "a fresh layer to the classic by reconsidering the issues Sophocles raised against the backdrop of racist immigration laws and radicalization."[72] Like Antigone, Aneeka tried to claim the right to bury her brother in his place of birth; she made her point in front of cameras that were recording her: "In the stories of wicked tyrants men and women are punished with exile, bodies are kept from their families – their heads impaled on spikes, their corpses thrown into unmarked graves. All these things happen according to the law, but not according to justice. I am here to ask for justice. I appeal to the Prime Minister: let me take my brother home."[73] Her quest for justice can now be readily revisited in Agambenian

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[65] According to Arendt, "right to have rights" (right to membership) should be a basic human right in order to preclude the possibility of being stateless. The cases of stateless people show that having human rights is necessary for every human being in the World. Thus, "right to have rights" needs to be an integral part of any politics. But if belonging to a political community is prevented, the "right to have rights" is no longer present. Hence, Arendt's emphasis on belonging to a political community as a basic human right. See, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1951), p. 296; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 309.

[66] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 198.

[67] Ibid., p. 201.

[68] Ibid, p. 196.

[69] Ibid., p. 207.

[70] Ibid., p. 210.

[71] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare life*, pp. 6-55.

[72] Claire Gail Chambers, "Sound and Fury: Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire," *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (2018), p. 208.

[73] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, pp. 224-225.

perspective, as by that time Parvaiz' politicized body had turned into a tool of biopolitics quite articulately: "the 'body' is always already a biopolitical body and bare life, and nothing in it or the economy of its pleasure seems to allow us to find solid ground on which to oppose the demands of sovereign power."[74]

Lone asked for the removal of the corpse from the park and for an end to Aneeka's protest, but the Pakistani Home Commissioner did not intervene, making clear in a statement the possibility for another perspective on the matter: "The people, and several opposition parties, have decided to embrace a woman who has stood up to a powerful government, and not just any powerful government but one that has very bad PR in the matter of Muslims and as recently as yesterday insulted us directly. So, now it's political suicide for my government to get involved."[75] The controversy was further fueled by a representative of the Muslim Association of Britain and British Muslims, who claimed that Lone hated Muslims, as well as by Lone's staunch defense – "I hate the Muslims who make people hate Muslims."[76] In fact, these adverse reactions to his politics apparently played a part in Lone's decision to go on with revoking Aneeka's citizenship. Thus, acting from the position of the sovereign, the Home Secretary institutes an exception that takes place in conditions very different from those of Auschwitz – indeed in the present conditions of the contemporary political order.[77] His political actions practically confirm that the contemporary political conditions equally provide for a transformation of the citizens into bare life and homines sacri.[78]

Aneeka's wish was to receive her brother's corpse, but for Lone she was a "slag, terrorist-spawn, and enemy of Britain."[79] He decided to "strip her of her citizenship, a move that could be traced back to personal motivations,"[80] making it impossible for her to return to the UK without applying for a visa. Consequently, her British passport was confiscated by the security services as she attempted to board a flight to Istanbul, and so the position of the Home Secretary to keep her outside Britain was upheld – "let her be British outside Britain."[81] Lone's aim was to send "a message to those who treated the privilege of British citizenship as something that could be betrayed without consequences."[82] Thus, based on the definition of *homo sacer* as being included in law through exclusion, Aneeka's character comes to symbolize a living dead figure that has turned into an unrecognized part of politics. This symbolism, therefore, asserts once again Agamben's point that in the modern world there is no clear-cut zone between *bios* and *zoē*, and that '"bare life is no longer confined to a particular place or a definite category," but instead "it now dwells in the biological body of every living being."[83]

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[74] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* p. 187.

[75] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 228.

[76] Ibid., p. 231.

[77] Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*, translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 6.

[78] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 111.

[79] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 229.

[80] İbid., p. 230.

[81] İbid., p. 230.

[82] İbid., p. 231.

[83] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 140.

In this sense, Aneeka and Parvaiz are subjected to the sovereign power by being politicized as liminal figures. They appear caught in the zone of indistinction between human and non-human, whereas this paradoxical situation can be fittingly apprehended within the terms of a possible and present state of exception. As Agamben puts it, "this threshold alone, which is neither simple natural life nor social life but rather bare life or sacred life, is the always present and always operative presupposition of sovereignty."[84] We can therefore affirm with the help of these characters our point that liminal figures come into being on the threshold between *zoē* and *bios* through the sovereign act of ban.

In another related development, to clear speculations about the Pasha family, Eamonn released a video, in which he admitted that he talked to his father about Parvaiz Pasha because he felt honor-bound to tell his father that his personal life and his father's professional life were on the way to collision. Eamonn pointed out that Parvaiz Pasha was, in fact, trying to get to the British Consulate in Istanbul not to carry out a terrorist act but to apply for a new passport to return home. Eamonn thus stood with Aneeka in this process: "While her brother was alive that love was turned toward convincing him to return home; now he's dead it's turned to convincing the government to return his body home."[85] Similarly, Terry, Lone's wealthy Irish-American wife, also made her point for justice in an argument with her husband: "I am talking about a nineteen-year-old, rotting in the sun while his sister watches, out of her mind with grief. He's dead already; can't you leave him alone?"[86] To make herself clear, she pulled no punches in arguing with Lone:

> your political mind is not as sharp as it was [...] You arrogant idiot [...] this orphaned student who wants for her brother what she never had for her father: a grave beside which she can sit and weep for the awful, pitiable mess of her family life. Look at this sad child you've raised to your enemy, and see how far you've lowered yourself in doing that […] And you have lost your son too. […] Be human. Fix it.[87]

Lone was unrelenting, though: "until this thing is over, I don't have a son and I don't have a wife. I have a Great Office of State."[88]

Still, Lone was unable to straighten out the consequences and dangers that his policies brought to the siblings and his son. There were threats against him, his wife, and his daughter; people tried to attack him. While they stayed in a safe house, Eamonn had already arranged to meet Aneeka in the park in Karachi. Two men caught him and strapped him into an explosive belt. He warned Aneeka not to come close toward him, but she ran, crashing right into him. They were able to embrace for a second before they were blown up.

4. Conclusion

In essence, in her novel *Home Fire* Shamsie remakes Sophocles' tragedy in a modern-day context to engage with "the vital project – at once feminist, anti-imperialist, and anti-

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[84] Ibid., p. 106.
[85] Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, p. 245.
[86] Ibid., p. 252.
[87] Ibid., pp. 252-253.
[88] Ibid., p. 246.

Islamophobic – of wresting victimhood from the invader and reframing the war as a needlessly violent fiasco." [89] The novel directly addresses the questions of citizenship, belonging, nationality, and justice. It vividly depicts the complexities of national citizenship in terms of the conditions of inclusion/exclusion of the characters from the political realm and law of the state. As it has been suggested, "the novel's staging of conflicting concepts of citizenship – exclusive vs. inclusive, contract vs. right, conditional vs. unconditional, etc. – illustrates the complexity, even messiness of the contemporary debate."[90]

Aneeka's struggle to secure a burial for her brother as a British citizen points to a necessary discussion of the relationship between politicized biological life and sovereign power. In this regard, we found it particularly fitting to read the story through the lenses of Agamben's notion of the state of exception and the political and social criticism that is germane to it. Agamben's perspective thus made it possible for us to see Lone's act of revocation of Parvaiz' and Aneeka's citizenship as a most fitting example of the socio-political creation of *homo sacer* and bare life through a sovereign state of exception. And generally, the story told by Shamsie can be understood as presenting us with characters who find themselves in that zone of indistinction, the threshold between *zoē* and *bios*, which, for Agamben, is constituted by the sovereign in the political sphere by way of exclusion.

In this perspective, the characters of the siblings reappear to us as *homines sacri,* outlaws, desperately traying to survive on the threshold between *zoē* and *bios*. Aneeka and Parvaiz, in particular, most fittingly exemplify Agamben's sense of bare life and *homo sacer*. They remain trapped on the threshold in the zone of indistinction in which inside and outside (of the juridical order) are inevitably blurred.

Finally, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, from the very beginning, the siblings are more or less positioned outside the law due to the past of their father, and that they thus acquire the status of scapegoats.[91] The surveillance of the Pasha siblings, instituted because of the preceding involvement of their father with radical Islam, can be seen as an infringement of their citizenship rights since in this way they are presumptively differentiated as figures that threaten the British state. Therefore, they are also representative of *Muselmann* figures that are excluded from the political humanity and left with a blurred status on the threshold in the zone of indistinction.

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[89] Peter Krause, "Antigone in Pakistan: *Home Fire*, by Kamila Shamsie," p. 15.

[90] Katja Sarkowsky, "Expatriation, Belonging and the Politics of Burial: The Urgency of Citizenship in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire," in Caroline Koegler, Jesper Reddig, and Klaus Stierstorfer (Eds.), 29-44. *Citizenship, Law, and Literature* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), p. 42.

[91] The figure of scapegoat has been insightfully discussed in comparative fashion in both literature and myth. See, René Girard's *The Scapegoat*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 20-22.

Immunity, the Impersonal, and the Self

OUTSIDE ALL THE CAMPS: IMMUNITY AND THE IMPERSONAL IN COETZEE'S *LIFE AND TIMES OF MICHAEL K*

Catherine MacMillan

Abstract

This paper attempts to read J. M. Coetzee's Life and Times of Michael K through the lens of Esposito's theories of community/immunity and the impersonal. For Esposito, community implies a shared lack, void, gift or duty (munus); immunity is an exclusionary mechanism intended to protect from this exposure to the munus. While immunity is necessary, it can often become excessive, or autoimmunitary. In this context, the camps in the novel, notably Jakkalsdrif, are read in terms of (auto)immunity, often excessive, attempts to isolate those considered to pose a threat to the State in the context of a civil war. For Esposito, immunization is closely connected with the 'dispositif' of the person, which always excludes those designated as non-persons, who are hence deprived of rights. Here, for Esposito, the impersonal, in terms of justice, writing and animal life, may form the basis of a new type of community based on tolerance and diversity rather than exclusion. In this context, Michael K can arguably be read as an 'impersonal' hero.

Life and Times of Michael K, Nobel prizewinning author J. M. Coetzee's fourth novel, tells the story of the eponymous character's (mis)adventures in a semi-imaginary South Africa riven by civil war. The novel was written in 1983 in a South Africa which, as Atwell notes, was going through a "cycle of insurrection and repression threatening a bloody outcome." [1] More specifically, the White government's attempts to broaden the base of democracy without endangering the authority and interests of the White minority did not substantially affect the racial basis of rights, and thus failed to address the crisis the country was facing. [2]

In this context, the novel can be understood in terms of the "speculative futurity of Coetzee's fictional worlds," in that it resembles a fictional and philosophical thought

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[1] David Atwell, *J.M Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 88.
[2] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

experiment[3] regarding the consequences of the government's failure to deal with the crisis of the 1980s. The South Africa depicted in the novel, therefore, is one of accelerated militarism in response to sporadic yet increasing guerrilla violence and insurrection. Michael K, then, inhabits a world of civil war and state repression characterized by,

> nightly curfews; restrictions on movement between districts; labor, resettlement, rehabilitation, and internment camps ... squatting by the destitute and demolition of abandoned buildings by the state; armored patrols and protected civilian convoys; widespread lawlessness, including looting by the poor and corruption on the part of the rich.[4]

Michael K, a man with a hare-lip whose mind "was not quick"[5] can be described as a marginal character in several respects. As well as his physical deformity and his (supposed) mental slowness, he is also marginalized by his race – he is described as "coloured" – his working-class background, unemployment and vagrancy.[6] Michael's life is dominated by institutions, in the form of the camps in which he is interned, and by his resistance to those institutions, which arguably represent the South African apartheid regime of the time.[7] Rather than direct confrontation with the regime, however, Michael refuses to eat the camp food and to work and, ultimately, succeeds in escaping from the various attempts to confine him, seeking to live life on his own terms, to "cultivate his own garden" in harmony with nature. On this basis, this paper aims to develop Attwell's suggestion that *Life and Times of Michael K* attempts to project "a posthumanist, reconstructed ethics" which nevertheless rests upon "a recognition of the pervasive intrusiveness of totalitarian violence"[8] through a reading informed by the philosophy of Roberto Esposito, with a particular focus on his concepts of immunity, community, and the impersonal.

Firstly, the system of camps and restrictions depicted in the novel is read through the lens of Esposito's interrelated concepts of community and immunity. For Esposito, as discussed in more detail in the following section, community is not based on a shared identity; as its etymology suggests, it is instead based on the *munus,* a shared lack, void, or obligation. Immunity, in this respect, implies an exemption from the *munus.* In other words, immunization can be understood as an attempt to isolate and protect the 'proper', implying a discriminatory classification of 'us' versus 'them'. It is, thus, argued that the camps in the novel can be understood as immunitary mechanisms according to which the State, and the South African elite, seeks to protect itself from supposed 'undesirables' such as Michael. For Esposito, the "dispositif of the person" is key to the immunitary apparatus; although rights are granted to persons, personhood is never granted to all, so that some people are regarded as non (or perhaps

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[3] Richard A. Barney, "On (not) Giving Up: Animals, Biopolitics, and the Impersonal in J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace," *Textual Practice* 30, no.3 (2016), p. 523.

[4] David Atwell, *J.M Coetzee,* p. 91.

[5] John Maxwell Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 4.

[6] Jane Poyner, *J. M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 69.

[7] Ibid., p. 70.

[8] David Atwell, *J.M Coetzee*, p. 97.

incomplete) persons.[9] This is emphasized by the fact that the authorities frequently compare Michael and the other inmates to animals, such as 'monkeys' or even 'parasites', in an attempt to depict them as non-persons, as less-than-human.

In contrast to the immunitary "dispositif of the person," however, Esposito posits the concept of the impersonal, a form of life that excludes "proper names"[10] and is immanent and common to all. The impersonal, or the third person, thus represents a philosophy of life that favors "a logic that privileges multiplicity and contamination over identity and discrimination."[11] In contrast to rights, which belong only to 'persons', justice is connected with impersonal life in that it is "universal, and belongs to everyone and is for everyone."[12] Arguably, such immanent life can only be narrated in the third person as the third person disrupts the immunitary mechanism that "introduces the I into the simultaneously inclusive and exclusive circle of the 'we'."[13] Notably *Life and Times of Michael K* is narrated mainly in the third person; it is thus differentiated from the majority of Coetzee's works, in which the empowered, white middle-class protagonists narrate, in the first-person, the disturbing effects of their encounters with the (barbarian, black, outcast or animal) Other.[14] Instead, with the exception of its middle section which is narrated in the first person by an anonymous medical officer, *Life and Times of Michael K* is largely narrated in the third person from the perspective of Michael, "the other itself."[15]

For Esposito, the impersonal is also intimately connected to Deleuze's concept of "becoming animal," which refers to a form of being human that overcomes the "ontological difference that metaphysics wanted to establish between man and animal."[16] This helps to shed light on Michael's own connection with an immanent, impersonal life which, as discussed further in the final section of the paper, is evident most notably through his deep connection and affinity with animals and even plants. It is this impersonality that ultimately enables Michael, as the anonymous camp medical officer notes, to pass through the immunitary system of camps almost untouched, "like a stone."[17]

Esposito on Communitas and Immunitas

"Community, in communal, communitarian, [and] communicative" variants of contemporary political philosophy[18] is often understood as based on a common attribute, definition or

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[9] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person: Politics of Life and Philosophy of the Impersonal,* translated by Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 122.

[10] Ibid., p. 122.

[11] Ibid., p. 145.

[12] Tom Frost, "Community and The Third Person in Esposito and Agamben," *Journal of Italian Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (2021), pp. 9-12.

[13] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, p. 101.

[14] Daniele Monticelli, "From Dissensus to Inoperativity: The Strange Case of J. M. Coetzee's Michael K," *English Studies*, Vol. 97, no. 6 (2016), p. 619.

[15] Ibid., p. 619.

[16] Matias Saidel & Diego Hernan Rossello, "Deconstructing the Dispositif of the Person: Animality and the Politics of Life in the Philosophy of Roberto Esposito," in Felice Cimatti and Carlo Salzani (Eds.), *Animality in Contemporary Italian Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 132.

[17] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K,* p. 135.

[18] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 2.

predicate seen as "originating from and reflecting individual identity"; in this sense it is frequently understood as a wider subjectivity, something like a quality that is added to a subject's nature.[19] [20] Thus, members of the community are perceived as "owners of what is common to them all," such as "a good, a value, an essence."[21]

In contrast to this view, through an examination of the etymology of the term community, Esposito argues that it is based on a shared lack or debt, rather than a shared possession or identity. The Latin term *communis* signifies *cum* (with) *munus*. *Munus* refers to a debt or obligation, an "obligatory kind of gift, a gift which one cannot not give." In this sense, then, community can be understood as "a totality of persons united not by a shared property but by a shared lack, a debt or an obligation"[22]; it is "a void, a debt, a gift to the other that also reminds us of our constitutive alterity with respect to ourselves."[23] Rather than magnifying the individual identity of its members, therefore, community deprives them of it, so that community "isn't the subject's expansion or multiplication but its exposure to what interrupts the closing and turns it inside out: a dizziness, a syncope, a spasm in the continuity of the subject."[24]

Based on a common lack, then, community is inherently related with, indeed constituted by, violence and death, as suggested by mythological depictions of communities founded on battles or, notably, on fratricidal violence[25] based on a fatal mimetic desire,[26] so that "original man, who is dominated by the unlimited desire for everything and by the fear of being killed, can't help but destroy himself."[27] In this context, for Esposito community's "heart of darkness" is found in the fact that it is essentially limitless, with neither an inside nor an outside, and therefore nothing to protect its members from each other.[28]

In this regard, immunization, "the explicative key of the entire modern paradigm,"[29] can be broadly understood as a mechanism intended to protect from the violence of the *munus*. However, community and immunity are intimately linked, as the origin of both concepts in the word *munus* suggests. In contrast to community, however, immunity implies exemption from the *munus*, so that immunity can be understood as the "purely negative right of each individual to exclude all others from using what is proper to him or her."[30] On this basis, immunity for Esposito refers to any situation where there is a protective response in the face of a risk, particularly a risk of trespassing or the violation of borders.[31] Once the community is identified,

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[19] Ibid., p. 2.

[20] Tom Frost, "Community and The Third Person," p. 7.

[21] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas,* p. 2.

[22] Ibid., pp. 3-8.

[23] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[24] Ibid., p. 7.

[25] Cain's murder of Abel, Romulus' killing of Remus, or the double murder of Eteocles and Polynices at Thebes are cases in point.

[26] Roberto Esposito, *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,* translated by R.N. Welch (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 123-124.

[27] Ibid., p. 125.

[28] Ibid, pp. 125-126.

[29] Ibid., p. 12.

[30] Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 25.

[31] In this sense, the body's defences against infectious disease, barriers to immigration and antiviral computer programs can all be classified as immune responses to a threat to the (personal, political, or electronic) body's

then, with a specific people, territory or essence, so that it is marked with "patriotism and local and factional interest"[32] it becomes walled in within itself and separated from the outside, effectively immunized.

Immunity is, therefore, a necessary part of life, so that there is no community without an immune response. However, the immune response can become excessive; thus, finding the right measure of immunity or the correct balance between immunity and community is vital. In the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, for instance, Esposito notes that,

> all human and social bodies need a certain degree of immunization, but should be cautious of extremes. There is not one individual or social body that does not have an immune system...The immunitary system is necessary for survival, but when it crosses a certain threshold, it starts destroying the body it aims to defend.[33]

This latter point can be understood in the context of what Esposito refers to as a "global autoimmunity crisis," which, in his view, has overtaken the world since September 11, 2001.[34] Thus, Esposito asserts that immunization measures have increasingly often tended to be disproportional, even being deployed in the absence of an obvious threat.[35] Esposito compares this situation to autoimmune disease, the *horror autotoxicus*, where the immune system turns against the very body it is supposed to protect. For Esposito, Nazi Germany constitutes the prime example of a (biopolitical) autoimmunity crisis[36]; however, he argues that immunization measures in the contemporary world have again become excessive. [37] This excessive immunization leads, in turn, to a decline in tolerance, and the diffusion of individualism and alienation,[38] [39] so that "just as in the most serious autoimmune illness, so too in the planetary conflict presently underway: it is excessive defence that ruinously turns on the same body that continues to activate and strengthen it."[40]

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integrity that is always located on the border between inside and outside, self and other, or the individual and the commonwealth. The interconnectedness of these different registers is suggested by the lexical slippage between them: immigration, for instance, is often presented as a biological as well as a public order risk, while, as has been particularly evident since the outbreak of the current pandemic, epidemic diseases have political, and even military, implications (Esposito, *Immunitas*, pp. 1-3*).

[32] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas,* p. 16.

[33] Tim Christiaens & Stijn De Cauwer, "The Biopolitics of Immunity in Times of COVID-19: An Interview with Roberto Esposito," *Antipode Online,* June 16, 2020, https://antipodeonline.org/2020/06/16/interview-with-roberto-esposito/.

[34] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. xiii.

[35] Inge Mutsaers, *Immunological Discourse in Political Philosophy: Immunisation and its Discontents* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 102.

[36] Roberto Esposito, *Bios.*, pp. 116-117.

[37] For Esposito, the contemporary 'autoimmunitary crisis' is fueled in part by the 'protection industries', such as insurance and pharmaceutical companies, and also by globalization, in the face of which people turn to 'preventative immunisation' as a kind of compensation (Esposito, *Immunitas*, p. 102).

[38] Roberto Esposito, *Bios*, p. 148.

[39] Inge Mutsaers, *Immunological Discourse in Political Philosophy*, p. 102.

[40]Roberto Esposito, *Bios,* p. 148.

However, Esposito proposes a more hopeful way of thinking about immunity so that it can potentially form the basis of a politics of life rather than death[41]. While the immune system is traditionally described in military terms, as a 'war' between pathogens and immune cells, newer studies suggest that the immune system is also characterized by *tolerance,* so that "the body is understood as a functioning construct that is open to continual exchange with its surrounding environment."[42] From this point of view, as Esposito argues, "nothing remains" of the strict delimitation between self and other, or a strict opposition between immunity and community. Thus, this newer model of immunity suggests the genuine possibility of a community based on an intertwining of self and other which remains open to difference. [43] [44]

At the heart of this conception of community is the impersonal or the 'third person'. For Esposito, the idea of the third person overcomes what he terms the "*dispositif*" of the person, according to which the being designated as a "person" possesses certain rights and dignity.[45] However, based on an etymological and genealogical study of the concept of the person in Roman law and Catholicism, Esposito argues that the personalization of some cannot occur without the depersonalization of others, "without pushing someone over into the indefinite space that opens like a kind of trap door below the person."[46] In his view, this differentiation between persons and non-persons is in evidence even today, as not everyone (such as small children, the mentally ill, the very old, non-citizens) has the rights of a person,[47] so that the project of human rights has failed because of, rather than in spite of, the "affirmation of the ideology of the person."[48] In this way, the legal concept of personhood and the regime of human rights can be understood as an extension of a logic of immunity, in the sense of a logic of exemption from the duties and responsibilities of common life.[49]

In this context, Esposito aims to deconstruct the *dispositif* of the person through an appeal to what he terms the 'impersonal', or the 'third person'. For Esposito, the impersonal is not merely the opposite of the person, but rather a limit term, in that it "points out the limits and contradictions of the concept."[50] [51] In this regard, based on the work of thinkers including

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[41] Vanessa Lemm, "Introduction," in Roberto Esposito, *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,* trans. R.N. Welch (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 11.

[42] Roberto Esposito, *Bios*, p. 148.

[43] For Esposito, the best example of this more optimistic model of immunity as hospitality is perhaps pregnancy, in which "difference and conflict are not necessarily destructive. Indeed, just as the attack of the mother protects the child, the child's attacks can also save the mother from her self-injurious [i.e., autoimmune] tendencies." (Esposito, *Immunitas*, pp. 169-171).

[44] Vanessa Lemm, "Introduction," p. 12.

[45] In ancient Rome, for instance, the *paterfamilias,* or father of the family, was the only member of the family who was considered a full person, with everyone else, such as women, children, clients or slaves, being granted various degrees of (non)personality. (Roberto Esposito, *Impersonale: La persona che esclude,* Festivalfilosofia 2019, September 15, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIDzXK7qQBI.

[46] Roberto Esposito, "The Dispositif of the Person," *Law, Culture and The Humanities*, Vol. 8, no. 1(2012), p. 24.

[47] Roberto Esposito, *Impersonale.*

[48] Roberto Esposito, "The Dispositif of the Person," p. 14.

[49] Matheson Russell, "The Politics of the Third Person: Esposito's Third Person and Rancière's Disagreement," *Critical Horizons,* Vol. 15, no. 3 (2014), pp. 224-225.

[50] Roberto Esposito, "The Dispositif of the Person," p. 14.

[51] Roberto Esposito, *Impersonale.*

Simone Weil, Maurice Blanchot, and Gilles Deleuze among others, Esposito focuses on "the impersonality of justice, writing and animal life."[52] In the context of justice, for instance, Esposito refers to Weil, who questions the connection between personhood and rights, so that,

> What is sacred in humanity is not their *persona;* it is that which is not covered by their mask. Only this has a chance of reforging the relationship between humanity and rights that was interrupted by the immunitary machine of the person and of making possible … a 'common right' or a 'right in common'.[53]

Esposito also links the impersonal to the concept of the third person. Here, he cites linguist Emile Benveniste, who contrasts the "subjectively fraught dialectic" between first and second person[54] with the third person, situated "precisely at the point of intersection between no-one and anyone: either it is not a person at all or it is every person. In reality it is both at the same time."[55] Furthermore, via the work of Blanchot, Esposito then links the concept of the third person to the regime of writing, where its use leads to a de-centering of the narrative voice, which is "drowned out by the anonymous whir of events, ... the loss of identity by the subjects of the action with regard to themselves."[56]

The third semantic realm linked to the impersonal is that of life itself. For Deleuze, for instance, life takes the form of a "multiple, impersonal yet singular babble"[57] which "contradicts the hierarchical separation of humankind … into two superimposed, or subjugated substances – the rational and the animal."[58] In this regard, the impersonal can be understood as "something that, being of the person or in the person, stops the immune mechanism that introduces the 'I' into the simultaneously inclusive and exclusive circle of the 'we'."[59] Perhaps, then, Esposito suggests, the impersonal could be the basis of a new type of community, of a true 'being-in common', underscored by a more tolerant, inclusionary vision of immunity.

The Immunitary Regine: Life in the Camps

Based on the theoretical approach outlined above, *Life and Times of Michael K*, in its portrayal of a civil war-torn South Africa, can be read as depicting a society based on exposure to the void of the *munus*, on the one hand, and an immunitary state machine, on the other, in the form of an increasing network of camps, as well as other controls such as curfews and travel restrictions. This is reflected in Michael's own story, as he is exposed both to the destitution and dangers of life on the road and, periodically, to internment in labor and rehabilitation camps.

At the beginning of the novel, Michael and his ailing mother can perhaps be understood as a micro-community based on lack rather than love or identity. Despite their obvious genetic

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[52] Vanessa Lemm, "Introduction," p. 12.
[53] Roberto Esposito, "The Dispositif of the Person," pp. 15-16.
[54] Richard A. Barney, "On (not) Giving up: Animals, Biopolitics, and the Impersonal in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Textual Practice* 30, no. 3(2016), p. 514.
[55] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, p. 107.
[56] Ibid., pp. 119-120.
[57] Ibid., p. 121.
[58] Ibid., p. 121.
[59] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, p. 102.

relation, there is little evidence of love between mother and son; indeed, they feel disgust at each other's physical deformities. In this sense, then, the mini-community formed by mother and son can be better understood as based not upon a common identity but upon a common *munus,* in the sense of "a shared lack, a debt or an obligation."[60] Michael's mother is disgusted by his hare-lip from the moment of his birth:

> from the first Anna K did not like the mouth that would not close and the living pink flesh it bared to her. She shivered to think of what had been growing in her all these months … She took the child to work with her and continued to take it when it was no longer a baby. Because their smiles and whispers hurt her, she kept it away from other children.[61]

Despite her sense of disgust and embarrassment at her son's disfigurement, however, Anna K. continues to care for him until he was committed to Huis Norenius, a state institution where, "in the company of other variously afflicted and unfortunate children"[62] he received a basic education. Anna's sense of duty towards Michael in the face of physical disgust is reciprocated years later when, in a Cape Town devastated by civil war, he takes care of his now sick and elderly mother. However, when he has to share a room with Anna he finds the "gross swelling" of her arms and legs[63] off-putting:

> Michael K did not like the physical intimacy that the long evenings in the tiny room forced upon the two of them. He found the sight of his mother's swollen legs disturbing and turned away when he had to help her out of bed … But he did not shirk any aspect of what he saw as his duty … he had been brought into the world to look after his mother.[64]

Thus, until her death, his *munus* towards his mother defines Michael's identity: he cares for her out of a sense of obligation. As Esposito argues, "The munus opens up, transforms, and exchanges subjects: expropriates and diminishes them to the point that they are wholly lacking; and binds and indebts them to their contractual obligations."[65]

This sense of duty leads Michael to quit his job as a park-keeper in order to help the sick woman fulfill her wish to return to the countryside where she was born. The almost penniless pair, having given up waiting for a travel permit that may never come, thus set out on a long and harrowing journey, with Michael pushing his ailing mother in a makeshift rickshaw. They sleep rough, and on the road, Michael successfully fends off a "communitarian" attack, apparently based on the struggle for existence or "mimetic desire," when two robbers attempt to steal his suitcase at knifepoint.[66] Mother and son are, however, also subject to "immunitarian" interventions on the part of the state, who seek to prevent them continuing their journey in the absence of a permit.[67]

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[60] Ibid., p. 16.

[61] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 3.

[62] Ibid., p. 4

[63] Ibid., p. 5.

[64] Ibid., *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 7.

[65] Roberto Esposito, *Communitas,* p. 4.

[66] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 25.

[67] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

Anna K falls sick and dies in hospital on the way. Michael continues on his journey, where, again, he clashes with the state's immunitary apparatus. Caught without a permit, in a foreshadowing of his later internment, he is picked up and assigned to a labor gang working on the railways. After a day, however, he manages to escape by sneaking onto a train going in the opposite direction.[68] He eventually reaches the township of Prince Albert, where he finds an abandoned farm, owned by the Visagie family, which he thinks is the one where his mother was brought up. There, he attempts to survive by hunting, and begins to plant a small vegetable garden, and lives in relative peace until the grandson of the owners, a deserting soldier, returns to the farm. A "synecdoche for the history of South African colonialism,"[69] the Visagie grandson attempts to turn Michael into a manservant; faced with this threat to his liberty Michael decides to leave the farm for the mountains.[70] However, returning to the town to forage for food, he becomes prey to the growing (auto)immunitary apparatus of the state when he is picked up and taken to a labor camp, Jakkalsdrif.

The Jakkalsdrif camp has already been explored from biopolitical perspectives, notably via Foucault's account of disciplinary power and Agamben's concept of bare life. Head, for instance, argues that "The Jakkalsdrif labour camp is obviously Foucauldian, an anti-nomadic device to harness the utility of a homeless multiplicity,"[71] a reading which is supported by the association between Michael K's childhood experiences in Huis Norenius and the hospitals which appear in the novel.[72] Mills, however, offers an Agambenian reading of Michael's internment in Jakkalsdrif. She points out that in the camp he is essentially *abandoned to and by the law*,[73] rendering him a figure of "bare life," which, in Agamben's terms, is neither natural life nor political life but rather "the politicised form of natural life" which emerges through "the irreparable exposure of life to death in the sovereign ban."[74]

Building upon Mills' reading in particular, it is argued here that Jakkalsdrif can also be profitably understood in terms of Esposito's concept of (auto)immunity. Esposito does not fundamentally challenge Agamben's reading of the "sovereign exception as the aporia of Western politics[75]; indeed he views his own work as 'providing a different interpretive key that is capable of reading [Agamben] … this hermeneutic key, this different paradigm, is that of immunity."[76] From the perspective of Esposito's immunitary paradigm, then, Jakkalsdrif can also be understood as a consequence of the state's desire to protect, or immunize, itself from the (perceived) void of the *munus*. Later in the novel, Michael reflects on the exponential growth in the (auto)immunitary apparatus of the camps:

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[68] Ibid., p. 43-44.

[69] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law: Biopolitics, Law and Futurity in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*", *Griffith Law Review*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2006), p. 191.

[70] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, pp. 60-65.

[71] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 103.

[72] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law," p. 180.

[73] Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[74] Ibid., p. 184.

[75] Tom Frost, "Community and The Third Person in Esposito and Agamben," p. 3.

[76] Timothy Campbell, "'Bios', Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito," *Diacritics*, Vol. 36, no. 2 (2006), p. 50.

> Now they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and little heads, camps for people with no visible means of support, camps for people chased off the land, camps for people they find living in storm-water drains, camps for street-girls, camps for people who can't add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night.[77]

As Robert, a Jakkalsdrif inmate who acts as a "critical consciousness"[78] tells Michael, the purpose of the camps is "to stop people from disappearing into the mountains and then coming back to cut their fences and drive their stock away."[79] Based on Robert's interpretation, then, Jakkalsdrif can be understood as a symptom of an autoimmune crisis in that, in Esposito's terms, the immune reaction appears to be disproportional to the threat,[80] particularly as the majority of the camp's inmates are women, children or elderly.[81] In turn, the shopkeepers of Prince Albert, the nearest town, seek to 'immunize' themselves from the camp inmates by overcharging them in an attempt to keep them away:

> They don't want a camp so near their town. They never wanted it. They ran a big campaign against the camp at the beginning. We breed disease, they said. No hygiene, no morals … What they would really like … is for the camp to be miles away in the middle of the Koup out of sight.[82]

One day, a fire at the local police station leads to a police raid on the Jakkalsdrif camp. Although the police had spotted and warned three strange men on bicycles near the camp just before curfew,[83] there was apparently no proof that the arsonists were inmates of the camp. Despite the lack of evidence, the police raid is a violent one:

> They burst into the huts and beat the sleepers in their beds. A youth who dodged them and ran away was chased into a corner behind the latrines and kicked into insensibility; a small boy was knocked over by a dog and rescued screaming with fright, his head lacerated and bleeding.[84]

Following the incident, the police captain replaces the two Free Corps guards, whom he accuses of negligence, with his own men and imprisons them. He installs an even harsher immunitary regime in the camp: "No-one leaves the camp except on labour calls … Roll calls morning and evening, with everyone present to answer. We've been kind to you long enough."[85]

Indeed, as Michael later remembers, the police captain had described Jakkalsdrif as "a nest of parasites, hanging from the neat sunlit town, eating its substance, giving no nourishment back."[86] In the context of Coetzee's novel, then, the reference to parasites here "introduces a

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[77] J. M. Coetzee, Life *and Times of Michael K,* pp. 248-249.

[78] David Atwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, p. 93.

[79] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 80.

[80] Inge Mutsaers, *Immunological Discourse in Political Philosophy*, p. 102.

[81] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 80.

[82] Ibid., p. 82.

[83] Ibid., p. 93.

[84] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[85] Ibid., p. 92.

[86] Ibid., p. 116.

reflection on categories of people and desires that the apartheid state had deemed 'unnecessary.'"[87] The parasite, notably, can be viewed as the reverse of the *munus* and the communal duty to give, in that it always takes and never gives.[88] Perhaps ironically, as Pyyhtinen notes, the parasite is already always immune in that it exempts itself from the communal *munus.*[89] Serres, notably, posits a seemingly infinite chain of parasites, where, effectively, the parasite parasites the parasite[90]; a similar observation is reached by the supposedly half-witted Michael K, who notes that:

> it was no longer obvious which was host and which was parasite, camp or town ... Perhaps in truth whether the camp was declared a parasite on the town or the town a parasite on the camp depended on no more than on who made his voice heard loudest ... What if the hosts were far outnumbered by the parasites, the parasites of idleness and the other secret parasites in the army and the police force and the schools and factories and offices, the parasites of the heart? Could the parasites still then be called parasites? Parasites too had flesh and substance, parasites too could be preyed upon.[91]

In this context, Michael's reflection challenges the immunitary, even thanatopolitical, logic of the camps by suggesting that these so-called parasites "were always already integral to the 'host' lives of the South African white electorate obliquely critiqued herein."[92] As Serres notes, "Death to the parasite, some say, without seeing that a parasite is put to death only by a stronger parasite."[93]

From the immunitary perspective, however, the parasite is potentially contagious, a threat to be contained. By describing the inmates as parasites,[94] then, the captain seeks to justify their isolation from the town under his new regime as an attempt to protect the town from a harmful parasitic infection. This is echoed in the townspeoples' view of the camp as a source of disease.[95] For Esposito, the Nazi extermination camps were built on just such a biopolitical (or, rather, thanatopolitical) logic, which sought to "avoid at all costs … the contagion of superior beings by inferior beings" described as "bacilli, bacteria, viruses, parasites and microbes."[96]

As Esposito argues, the dispositif of the person relies on such a separation of human life into a "personal" life and an "animal" life, according to which "a human being is a person if, and only if, he or she is the absolute master of the animal that dwells inside,"[97] so that "the

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[87] Alicia Broggi, "What Does it Mean to Speak of ⸺? Rudolf Bultmann, Biography, and J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*," *The Review of English Studies, Vol.* 69, no. 289(2018), p. 354.

[88] Olli Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 11-12.

[89] Ibid., p. 77.

[90] Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

[91] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, pp. 60-65.

[92] Alicia Broggi, "What Does it Mean to Speak of ⸺?," p. 354.

[93] Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, p. 131.

[94] Interestingly, as Michel Serres notes, the parasite suggests a one-sided relationship to the gift – a parasite takes without giving – which is opposed to that of the common which, for Esposito, implies being subject to an obligatory kind of gift, a gift "which one cannot not give." (Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, p. 4).

[95] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 82.

[96] Roberto Esposito, *Terms of the Political*, p. 86.

[97] Roberto Esposito, *Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View.* Trans. Z. Hanafi. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p. 25.

animalization of man was the most devastating outcome of the dispositif of the person."[98] This can be noted, for instance, in Michael's experiences in the camps, when he, along with some of the other prisoners, is frequently compared to animals, most notably to monkeys, in an attempt to dehumanize him. A farmer for whom the Jakkalsdrif prisoners are working, for instance, regales Michael for not working efficiently enough by asking him "Where were you brought up, monkey?"[99] Similarly, when Michael is arrested as a supposed collaborator, the police assume he is guarding stores for the rebels, "otherwise why would they leave this monkey here?"[100]

In this sense, this simianization of Michael can perhaps be understood as an (immunitary) attempt to depersonalize him and, through denying his personhood, to deprive him of rights (or perhaps of the right to have rights). As Livingstone Smith and Panatiu point out,[101] simianization has been an especially widespread form of dehumanizing racial minorities. Such discourse, which contains a tension between the idea of simians as "primitive though innocuous creatures … trained monkeys" and as "dangerous, hyperpredatory apes has, notably, been particularly prevalent in European depictions of people of colour,"[102] [103] such as Michael.

Michael K: "Becoming Animal" and The Third Person?

Despite the harsh, immunitary regime imposed by the police captain, Michael manages to escape from the camp relatively easily, by simply climbing the fence. He returns to the abandoned farm, where he survives on a minimal amount of food, which leaves him malnourished, exhausted, and sick. Suspected by the police of dealings with a gang of insurgents, Michael is interned again in a rehabilitation camp, Kenilworth, where, due to his weakened, emaciated condition, he is under the care of the camp's nameless medical officer, the narrator of the second part of the novel.

Following his escape from Jakkalsdrif, as Mills points out, Michael begins to live increasingly like an animal, "nocturnal, hibernatory and silent"[104]: indeed, his proximity to animals is frequently emphasized throughout the novel.[105] Animals, as Barney, among others, notes, play an important role in much of Coetzee's work; in *Disgrace,* for instance, "an intermediary space between the personal and non-personal emerges in order to accommodate human and non-human animals alike."[106] Here, in contrast to the separation of the human and

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[98] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, pp. 149-150.

[99] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 87.

[100] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 123.

[101] David Livingstone Smith & Ioana Paniatu, *Aping the Human Essence Simianization as Dehumanization* (2015), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282359877_Aping_the_Human_Essence_Simianization_as_Dehumanization

[102] It should be stressed, however, that Europeans are far from being the only 'perpetrators' of simianization, and people of African descent are certainly not the only people to have been compared to apes and monkeys. As Livingstone Smith and Paniatu point out, groups including "Jewish, Irish, and Japanese people - have been simianized at one time or another, and Arab, Japanese, and Chinese people have, at one time or another, been perpetrators of simianization." (Livingstone Smith & Ioana Paniatu, *Aping the Human Essence*)

[103] Ibid.

[104] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law," p. 179.

[105] Ibid., p. 184.

[106] Richard Barney, "On (not) giving up," p. 509.

animal in evidence in the discourse of the immunitary regime of the camps, Michael's proximity to animals can arguably be understood in terms of Deleuze's concept of 'becoming-animal', which, as Esposito argues, points to a way of being human that "is not coextensive with the person or the thing, or with the perpetual transfer between one or the other that we have been fated to until now."[107]

The focus on the impersonal, in *Life and Times of Michael K,* is emphasized, indeed enabled, by Coetzee's form of narration. Barney, for instance, notes Coetzee's "career-long use of narrative strategies that displace the authority of the person as writer or character"[108]; while Coetzee's pursuit of an impersonal mode of writing became more explicit after 1990, his earlier works, arguably including *Life and Times of Michael K,* also "explore a critique of subject-centred reasoning."[109] Unlike most of Coetzee's novels, *Life and Times of Michael K* is largely narrated in the third person, with the exception of the middle section, narrated in the voice of the anonymous medical officer at Kenilworth. As Esposito explains, the third person escapes the dialectic of the first and second persons,[110] and opens up "the possibility of a non-personal person … of a non-person."[111] [112] In this context, with reference to Blanchot, Esposito argues that it is only writing which can shatter the "interlocutory relation" that "within the dialogic word links the first person to the second." In this regard, writing (in the third person) creates "an opening into the impersonal," which lifts the text "out of its own margins," making it "spin on itself."[113] Esposito also cites Deleuze in this regard, who argues that,

> Literature... exists only when it discovers beneath apparent persons the power of the impersonal – which is not a generality but a singularity at the highest point: a man, a woman, a beast, a stomach, a child … literature begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say 'I' (Blanchot's 'neuter').[114]

Free indirect discourse is particularly favored by Deleuze and Guattari as it "is not explained by the distinction between subjects; rather, it is the assemblage, as it freely appears in this discourse, that explains all the voices present within a single voice"[115]; it is like "the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice."[116]

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[107] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, pp. 150-151.

[108] Richard Barney, "On (not) giving up," p. 509.

[109] Ibid., p. 515.

[110] As Esposito argues, based on the work of Benveniste among others, in the classic scenario of the first/second person, the 'I' is always the one who defines the field of relevance, leading to an (interchangeable) relationship of self/other between the two interlocutors, so that the 'you' is conceivable only in relation to the 'I' (Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, pp. 105-106).

[111] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

[112] Importantly, as Barney points out, Coetzee himself was influenced by Benveniste in his own engagement with the ethics of the writer's linguistic choices in essays such as "The Rhetoric of the Passive in English" and "The Agentless Sentence as Rhetorical Device." ["On (not) giving up," pp. 514-151].

[113] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, pp. 119-120.

[114] Cited in ibid., pp. 145.

[115] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 80.

[116] Ibid., p. 84.

As suggested above, then, the use of free indirect discourse in *Life and Times of Michael K*, arguably enables the depiction of the theme of the impersonal through the lens of Deleuze's concept of 'becoming animal'. As Esposito notes, the concept of 'becoming-animal' [117] provides an important "constitutive and countering force" to, or an "unravelling" of, this traditional dichotomy of the person in contrast to the animal, or the thing. [118] Importantly, becoming-animal "is above all the becoming of a life that is individuated only by breaking the chains and the prohibitions, the barriers and the borders that humankind has constructed."[119] Becoming-animal must be understood in the broader context of Deleuze's conception of impersonal life, which Agamben describes as a "principle of virtual indetermination in which the vegetative and the animal, the inside and the outside and even the organic and the inorganic, in passing through one another, cannot be told apart."[120]

Thus, becoming-animal neither implies a banal imaginary structure, nor becoming a real animal. Instead, becomings-animal can be understood as "blocks of becoming" which associate "heterogenous beings."[121] As Deleuze and Guattari put forward,

> Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal any more than the animal "really" becomes something else.[122]

Thus, for Deleuze, as Esposito explains, "The animal – in the human, of the human – means above all multiplicity with what surrounds us and with what always dwells inside us"; this also means "plurivocity, metamorphosis, contamination." In this sense, becoming-animal refers to "the *living person* – not separate from or implanted into life, but coextensive with it."[123] In this context, life,

> refers neither to a rational subject nor to a bare material substrate. But above all, if understood in its impersonal, singular dimension, life is what does not allow – what contradicts at its roots – the hierarchical division between these two entities within the separating dispositif of the person.[124]

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[117] While Esposito focuses on "becomings-animal," Deleuze repeatedly returns to the lack of distinction between "becomings-animal" and "becomings-molecular" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where becoming does not signify "to imitate or identify with something or someone" but rather "the emitting of particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity or ... to emit particles that enter that zone of proximity." (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 273).

[118] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, pp. 149-150.

[119] Ibid., p. 182.

[120] Giorgio Agamben, "Absolute Immanence," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, edited and translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 233.

[121] Pascal Michon, "Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari and the *Rhuthmoi* of Individuation – Part 2," *Rhuthmos*, Vol. July 15, 2021, https://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article2628.

[122] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 238.

[123] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, p. 151.

[124] Ibid., p. 147.

Importantly, becoming-animal thus involves a critique of "any claim to hereditary, ethnic or racial purity."[125] Michael himself frequently compares himself to, or rather describes himself as, as an animal. However, in contrast to his simianization by the authorities, Michael's depictions of himself as animal cannot be understood in terms of an internalized sense of (racial) inferiority. Instead they are becomings-animal, in that, in these experiences of metamorphosis or multiplicity, he emphasizes his unity with all life. Picking wild berries, for instance, Michael, in his becoming-animal, has no problem discerning between poisonous and harmless fruit. Similarly, as a gardener, he also feels an affinity with animals which burrow in the earth: "I am more like an earthworm, he thought. Which is also a kind of gardener. Or a mole, also a gardener, that does not tell stories because it lives in silence."[126] Following his escape from the first camp, he plants pumpkins; he mainly subsists, however, on insects and roots, food that he "ekes out of the earth like an animal."[127]

Michael's affinity is not merely with animal life but also with plant life, and, indeed, with life itself. Thus, as Esposito notes, becoming-animal, "brings into relationship totally heterogenous terms – like a human being, an animal and a microorganism; but even a tree, a season and an atmosphere"; it is thus a life which individuates by breaking, rather than erecting, the "barriers and boundaries, that the human has etched within it."[128] This is emphasized, for instance, in the affective pull Michael feels towards his garden on the old farm:

> There was a cord of tenderness that stretched from him to the patch of earth besides the dam and must be cut. It seemed to him that one could cut a cord like that only so many times before it would not grow again.[129]

Similarly, his pumpkins and melons become his family, "his brothers and sisters,"[130] or his "children," which he must raise and care for,[131] which suggests "in attenuated form, the possibility of community,[132] of a communitarian life invested with passion and pleasure.[133]

However, Michael's attempts at gardening are not enough to prevent him from suffering severe malnutrition, in spite of the joy that he obtains from eating, and from being interned in Kenilworth. As mentioned above, the story, in this second part of the novel, is narrated by an unnamed medical officer who first takes Michael for a half-wit. The officer grows frustrated with Michael's seemingly inexplicable refusal to eat, while growing increasingly fascinated with him, perceiving how, despite his internment, he manages, in his impersonality, to elide the immunitary apparatus of classification and the camps. As he explains in a letter to Michael,

> I am the only one who sees you for the original soul you are. I am the only one who cares for you. I alone see you as neither a soft case for a soft camp nor a hard case for a hard camp but a human soul

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[125] Ibid., p. 150.
[126] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 102.
[127] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law", p. 187.
[128] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person*, p. 150.
[129] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 90.
[130] Ibid., p. 113.
[131] Ibid., p. 117.
[132] David Atwell, *J.M Coetzee,* p. 97.
[133] Daniele Monticelli, "From Dissensus to Inoperativity," p. 16.

above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history, a soul stirring in the wings within that stiff sarcophagus, murmuring behind that clownish mask.[134]

Notably, the medical officer, emphasizes K's lack of a personal identity and his affinity with the earth. Indeed, he sees Michael as a "prodigy" of obscurity,[135] a "rudimentary man" made of earth, someone with "no papers, no money, no family, no friends, no sense of who you are."[136] In this sense, Michael's life can be understood as "a life that coincides to the very last with its simple mode of being, with its being such as it is, a life that is precisely 'a life'."[137] Comparing Michael to a stone, the officer notes how unaffected he seems by the war and his experiences in the camps in spite of his obvious physical dereliction:

> He is like a stone, a pebble that, having laid around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand. A hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. He passes through these institutions and camps and hospitals and God knows what else like a stone. Through the intestines of the war. An unbearing, unborn creature.[138]

As the medical officer points out to K, "your story in the camp was merely an allegory … of how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence within a system without being a term in it."[139] Here, K arguably approaches what Deleuze and Guattari call *becoming-imperceptible,* the "immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula," so that "after a real rupture one succeeds in … being just like everybody else."[140] As Rosi Braidotti explains, becoming-imperceptible is "the point of fusion between the self and his/her habitat, the cosmos as a whole," of "merging with one's environment."[141]

Eventually, in spite of his physical condition, Michael also succeeds in escaping from Kenilworth. As the medical officer, who also comes to dream of escaping from the camp, notes almost enviously, Michael is protected by his very imperceptibility: "Perhaps we could make a start by discarding our uniforms and getting dirt under our fingernails … though I doubt we will ever look as nondescript as Michaels."[142]

Conclusion

As Esposito suggests, an impersonal yet singular life "cannot but resist whatever power, or knowledge, is arranged to divide it into two reciprocally subordinated zones."[143] Thus,

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[134] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 151.

[135] Ibid., p. 142.

[136] Ibid., *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 142.

[137] Roberto Esposito, "The Person and Human Life*,*" in *Theory after 'Theory*, Jane Elliott & Derek Attridge (Eds.) (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 218.

[138] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 135.

[139] Ibid., p. 228.

[140] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 308.

[141] Rosi Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming Imperceptible," in Constantin Boundas (Ed.), *Deleuze and Philosophy*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 159.

[142] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 164.

[143] Roberto Esposito, *The Person and Human Life*, p. 218.

Michael arguably resists the immunitary regime of the camps, emphasized by the comparison of the camp inmates to monkeys and parasites, through his connection with impersonal life, perhaps best depicted in the affinity he feels with plants and animals while gardening. As the medical officer writes to him,

> the garden for which you are presently heading is nowhere and everywhere except in the camps. It is another name for the only place where you belong, Michaels, where you do not feel homeless. It is off every map, no road leads to it that is merely a road, and only you know the way.[144]

Thus, Michael's resistance is achieved, notably, through his becoming animal, indeed his unity with animal, vegetable and even mineral life. In this way, he succeeds in breaking down the (internal) barriers between the human and the animal or thing characteristic of the immunitary regime, and, at least temporarily, manages to become imperceptible to the regime. Michael is clearly "not the saviour of his people," nor does he "overturn the law in a radical gesture of overcoming."[145] However, *contra* Nadine Gordimer's argument that blacks are represented as hopeless victims in the novel,[146] he can be understood, through his attempt to live an impersonal life outside the biopolitical, immunitary regime of the camps as a "modest figure of hope"[147] who can be understood as displaying "a radical way of engaging power."[148]

Having succeeded in escaping from the second camp, Michael reaches a familiar beach; there, in the public toilets, he encounters a group of three people, two men and a woman who are later joined by another woman. The group first approaches him with hostility, although, when they notice Michael's emaciation and his ragged overalls, their hostility soon turns to hospitality.[149] They invite him to eat and drink with them, and one of the women even grants him sexual favors. However, Michael interprets the hospitality of the group as charity, reminding him of the supposed 'charity' of the camps and, ultimately, his childhood in Huis Norenius.[150] Filled with horror at the prospect of being dependent on charity, then, Michael leaves the group and returns to his mother's dilapidated room.[151] The novel does not end, therefore, with Michael participating in a new community based on tolerance and impersonality as, perhaps, the reader might be led to expect when the group first takes him under its wing.

Despite the fact that Michael flees from the group on the beach, however, he does not completely discard the possibility of forming a new makeshift community, this time based on a model of immunity characterized by tolerance and openness to difference rather than exclusion. Thus, he imagines a stranger, perhaps "a little old man with a stoop and bottle in his pocket who muttered all the time into his beard,"[152] who would share his impersonal life, a life outside all the camps, with him. Armed with seeds, the pair would set out on their journey, and

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[144] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p. 194.
[145] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law," p. 189.
[146] Nadine Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening," *New York Review of Books,* 2 February 1984.
[147] Catherine Mills, "Life Beyond Law," p. 189.
[148] Daniele Monticelli, "From Dissensus to Inoperativity," p. 635.
[149] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, pp. 171-175.
[150] Ibid., pp. 181-182.
[151] Ibid., p. 183.
[152] Ibid., pp. 183-184.

Michael would dig for water with a teaspoon; "When he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way, he would say, one can live."[153]

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[153] Ibid., p. 184.

Translation with Notes

THE SONGS OF LALON FAKIR (PART II)

Lalon Fakir

Selection, translation from Bengali, and notes
by
Sayed Muddashir Hossain

How does the strange bird fly in and out of the cage![1] [2]
If I could catch the bird I would put it under the chains of my heart.
The cage has eight cells and nine doors with landed openings here and there.
Above it is the main hall with a mirror-chamber!
What is that other than my bad luck that the bird want to fly away from the cage!
O my Mind! You are enamored of the cage!
Little knowing that the cage is made of raw bamboo and may any day fall apart.
Lalon cries and he is afraid that very soon and suddenly the cage will be broken!
When an ill-wind blows
The bird will fly out of the cage collapsing the cage's tenuous support!
And then the bird has nowhere to stand on!
That thought possesses my mind and I feel a hectic fever all over my body.
Who owns the cage, and whatever is the bird?
For whom do I shed my tears ?
The bird lives in my yard and scams to veil my vision.
If I knew beforehand that nobody can tame a wild bird,
Then I would not have grown fond of the bird.
Now nothing has been left to Lalon except shedding tears.
The cage of raw bamboo will not endure long and the bird will fly away deaf to all crying!
When the bird will leave the cage is your constant worry,
And you forget all about your Teaching.
No one you call your own will go with you.
Suddenly will come the summons and the peremptory call must be answered.

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[1] All Lalon songs translated here are from Mobarak Hossain Khan (Ed.), *Lalan Samagro* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Rafiquzzaman Humayun, Geetanjali, 2007); cf. জনতা প্রকাশ, রফিকুজ্জা মান হুমায়ুন, ঢাকা ১১০০ ২০০৭ .

[2] This song was previously translated in part; now it is translated in full. Cf. "The Songs of Lalon," *Global Conversations: An International Journal in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. IV (01), p. 102.

Friends, relatives and your parents will say that you are dead and nobody will touch you!

So, don't burden your mind with false thoughts!

Lalon! You should seek in yourself and the fear of death will be no more.

Note: The philosophy that we are presented with here is called "Dehototto" in the Baul Tradition. (*Baul* is traditional Bangla bard; *Deho* means 'body', *Totto* – 'theory'). The main focus of this philosophy is on the connection of body and soul. The bird in this song is commonly taken to stand for the soul, whereas the cage – for the body. Readers may notice that sometimes Lalon addresses himself in third person, as if distancing from himself in a way similar to the usage of the non-personal pronouns, as in "One should not do that!" This points to the way the Bauls always tried to free themselves from the "Illusions" of life, which are associated with the 'Teaching' he refers to.

***

Who stays in my room,

In my whole life I have never seen it.[3]

I can only feel its movement,

But I cannot see it with my eyes,

In the marketplace of life it exists,

But when I try to touch it,

It's to no avail!

Everyone says that it is my soul,

I stay quiet and listen to it but I say nothing.

Is it made of water or fire?

Maybe earth or wind,

Nobody can tell me right!

Since I cannot solve the mystery of my own house,

I avoid talking about others.

Lalon says,

"Who is not-myself and who am I?"

The room is only locked because it is locked with your own thought!

And the best version of myself and the teaching live in that room.

One can only open the lock with thoughts,

And then one can see the play of life!

Then all the pains and sufferings are extinguished,

And it is beautiful!

Lalon says politely,

"How does thought looks like?

---

[3] Bengali has a gender neutral pronoun, which Lalon uses here and which can also refer to 'he' and 'she'.

Is it like a statue?
Or is there is a lamp in that room?
Whenever I try to comprehend it, it gets lost
Without friendship in your thought there will be no respect for the self,
Try to understand the relation to your own self,
When you can do it, then you will own it!"

Note: It may suffice to say that Lalon is not always easy to understand. This song speaks about one's soul or self, and how one can find it. He also discusses what the self actually is. And the analogy of room (or house) can be seen once again as the body, whereas the person who lives in it, as the soul or the self. Lalon here appears to be alerting us to the need of self-knowledge, very much like in the Delphic "Know thyself!"

***

Oh my mind! Reflect the question of what the self is!
If you can answer that then you will know how infinitely beautiful it is!
Without knowing the self all other practices are a lie.
The ultimate truth lies in the self!
The beauty of the self is wonderful
And if you have seen it don't describe it to anyone!
One should try to see and understand it by one's own self.
If you have the eyes for it you can see it.
Shiraj Shai told Lalon,
If you forget about it,
You will live in lie!
This fish that all the great sages try to catch with their work,
Is actually your own self and it has only taken the form of a fish and hiding itself in water.
It is an uncanny fish and everyone thinks and search for it all over in the seas,
But very few people can really understand how near it lives!
If you can contemplate which is your true sea,
Then you can just dive in it and it will be easy to catch this fish!
If you are right then the fish will come close to you by itself and you will be a great sage,
Siraj Shai says that all other people will drink water and have difficulties to find this fish!

Note: In this song, which also centers on the self, Lalon speaks about Siraj Shai, who was his teacher and introduced him into the ways of the Bauls.

***

When the fisherman will come and cast the net,
Neither the big carps nor the small fishes will be left.
You all are playing and dancing now
But when the fisherman comes,
He will empty the pond!
You think that the water is very deep,
And that's why you are so happy!
But when the call comes,
It will not ask for anyone's permission!
The material life has shaped the fish,
And that's why I have forgotten my teaching!
Lalon, please hear the plea of this man who has nothing!
And remember again the teaching you learned from Siraj Shai,
And you will not stray away from the right path!

Note: In this short song, in which again comes the name Siraj Shai, the teacher of Lalon, the fisherman can be seen as the death and the fish as all of us. Lalon here appears to suggest that we have succumbed too much to our materialistic life and thus forgotten about the death, whereas death is the ultimate truth we must face.

***

He who dedicates flowers at the pedestal of love,
Knows the beauty of that flower!
That flower is the main underlying element of the world,
But the words fail me when I try to describe it!
Yet everyone tries to seek this flower on the square of life!
At the end of the month blooms that flower.
Where is its stalk and where is its root!
When I try to know the origin of that flower,
All of my illusions fall apart!
If you remember your teaching,
You will find that flower,
The more Lalon thinks about this flower, the more he feels respect for his teacher!
I saw a magical tree!
Without a seed, a bizarre tree!
The flower of that tree is the moon!
There is no beginning or end of that tree,
The tree floats only on nothing,
And the tree bears fruit without flower!

When I see that I feel puzzled!
What should I tell more about the tree!
The flower is full of honey and the fruit is full of nectar that gives eternal life!
The aroma of that tree is enough to satiate your hunger!
If someone understand the meaning of this tree,
He is a person of real riches!
"I will take him as my teacher," says Lalon!

Note: The tree here can be seen as life, whereas the fruit or flower as synonymous for the meaning or the true meaning of life!

***

The moon is now beyond your reach and how do you expect to touch it!
There are thousands of moons out there,
If you try to see it your eyes will not be right for it!
You will be blinded by its beauty!
There is a tree of which the moon is a fruit!
The moon blinks sometimes,
If you try to see it,
Be careful because you will lose consciousness!
There is a city that is magical!
In the night the city is full dark and in the day there is light!
One who knows the news of the light can really see, says Lalon!
There is a thief who is stealing from the city,
If anyone knows how or when he comes, let me know!
Everyone is trying to catch the thief,
But he uses the way of the wind
So none has succeeded to catch him!
The city has twenty four districts,
Two times every day there are canon fires!
Everyone is afraid of the thief!
Think beyond mind and intelligence,
Lalon says if you can do that, you can catch the thief!
Catch the thief with the trap of wind,
He is not a small time thief that you would catch easy!
Under the earth too there is a thief,
He is also in the air!
He is everywhere!
Where is the house and where is the street!

Where is the marketplace!
Everything is in the wind!
If you want to catch the thief,
At first make your heart strong and pure!
If you can do it, says Lalon,
You can catch the thief!

Note: The theme of this song is arguably again the search of one's true self. The sketch below was made during an interview with Lalon by Jyotirindranath Tagore,[4] Rabindranath Tagore's elder brother.[5]

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[4]Source/Photographer, Indian National Museum (বাংলা: ভারতীয় জাতীয় জাদুঘর).

[5] For more information on the ties of Lalon with the Tagore family see "The Songs of Lalon," above cited, especially pp. 107-109.

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Lalon Fakir (1772 – 1890) is a Bengali poet-philosopher who had considerable following and influence on the culture of Indian subcontinent with his perspective on a number of socio-political issues.

Sayed Muddashir Hossain is a Bangladeshi blogger with a keen interest in literature and philosophy. He obtained his Bachelor degree from the North South University in Dakha and is currently working on his Master's at the University of Saarland in Germany.

Information for Authors

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3rd International Colloquium in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture

Global Cultural Encounters: Impacts and Inspirations

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Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

in conjunction with

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Philosophers, faculty and students from related disciplines (e.g. humanities, social sciences, literature, art, journalism), artists, writers, filmmakers, as well as representatives of any area of creative endeavor, with interests in cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogue, work, and research.

On the Idea of the Colloquium

What would be a global cultural encounter? One more obvious way to think of it is that it is an encounter of different cultural traditions from around the globe, which becomes particularly significant if it results in some productive impact. A less obvious way to think of it would be that it is an encounter within the same cultural tradition, which results in a cultural impact of global significance. To be sure, such impacts may vary in effects, of which inspirations are of particular interest, as they stimulate creativity, originality, and productivity in any form of culture. They thus enhance and are true signs of the conversation between the cultural traditions and between cultures in the broadest of senses.

We find numerous examples of both of these kinds of encounters almost everywhere in culture, including in philosophy, literature, and art.

Speaking about philosophy, Plato is said to have learned the story of the transmigration of the soul – one of his key doctrines – while traveling to Egypt. This notion, however, which has been also attributed to Pythagoras and to Orphic and Thracian belief systems, appears to be older in Hinduism and other worldviews in South Asia, thus raising questions about possible interactions between these cultures. For his part, Aristotle, in addition to his fundamental influence on Western philosophy and Christian theology, has left his tangible mark also on early Islamic theology. In a different vein, Nietzsche's reading of Hinduist laws of Manu (*Manusmriti*) has affirmed his view of spirituality as the highest natural rank in the ways of humanity. Whereas their reception of key Western thinkers enabled Japanese philosophers like Kitarō Nishida, Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji, and Watsuji Tetsurō to come up with new perspectives on both Western and Eastern intellectual and spiritual traditions. Examples of this kind of encounters abound in the rest of culture as well. Paul Gaugin's stay in Tahiti, Lafcadio Hearn's move to Japan, Charlie Chaplin's trip to Bali, Marguerite Duras' move from Indochina to France, or Amélie Nothomb's return to Japan, to list just a few, all inspired artistic and literary output that bears the marks of one culture left its stamp on another.

Of the second kind of encounters, in philosophy we most immediately find the one of Plato and Aristotle, which very much defined – even if in divergence – its problematic of interest for millennia to come. In fact, in the Western philosophy such encounters have become its cornerstones and can be traced in terms of influences, such as Aristotle on Aquinas; Hume on Kant; Hegel on Marx; Marx on the Frankfurt School; Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on Heidegger; Wittgenstein on neopositivists, Husserl on Heidegger and Derrida; Heidegger on Sartre, Levinas, Derrida, and Rorty; Nietzsche on Foucault; or Freud, Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida on literary criticism and feminist thought, among many others. They abound also in the rest of the culture, with influences such as Matisse on Picasso; Picasso and Braque's cubism on contemporary art; Bauhaus on architecture and visual arts; A. Warhol and R. Lichtenstein on pop art; Stravinsky on contemporary classic music; or V. Nijinsky, M. Graham, and M. Plisetskaya on contemporary dance, being only some of the examples.

In this sense, the topics of interest to the colloquium can be related but not limited to,

- Phenomenology, existential philosophy, post-structuralism

- Metaphilosophy, pragmatism, and communicative action

- Language, thinking, and technology

- Critical theory, literature, and art

- Ethics, religion, and spirituality

- Power, politics, and economics

- Race, gender, sexuality, identity

- Refugees, strangers, and outcasts

- Community building, inclusion, and integration

- Human person, health, and self-creation

- Globalization, multi-culturalism, and the meaning of nationality

- Trans- and cross-cultural horizons

- Environment, common concerns, and common solutions

- Radicalization, Populism, and Extremism

- Poverty, Gentrification, and Biopolitics

Dates

June 08-10, 2023

Venue

Capacete International Art Residency, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Capacete / xow.rumi

Registration Fee

€30

Visa application, transportation, accommodation and meals

Self-financed and should be arranged by the panelists themselves. Optional cultural program and conference dinner will be organized.

Abstract Submissions (Deadline April 15, 2023)

We invite **academic and art-project abstract-proposals** within 300 words at global.conversations.ph@gmail.com by **April 15, 2023** (with early submission encouraged). **Artists** who would like to participate in an art show could present one to three pieces of work. **Performing artists** are asked to limit their act to 45 min; **filmmakers** to 2 hours (discussion time will be allotted as an addition).

Online Registration

Selected participants are asked to register at https://forms.gle/huDXikLXbqAbu8if6

Publication

Conference organizers will consider the completed academic articles of the conference presentations for publication (after a review process) in the next issue of *Global Conversations: An International Journal in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture* (https://philogc.org/journal/), an online open-access academic journal inaugurated after the first conference of the Society for Philosophy as Global Conversation in March, 2018.