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Tales from a Golden Age

Dissensus and Exclusion in Europe's Moving Image

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Abstract

Tales from a Golden Age: Dissensus and Exclusion in Europe's Moving Image examines the interface between art practice and political practice in a range of examples drawn from contemporary Europe's visual culture. Drawing on the theoretical framework posited by Jacques Rancière, the thesis focuses on artistic interventions in the political landscape of contemporary Europe in order to argue that political effects can arise in the space of aesthetics. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and Eastern Bloc communism many political leaders and media pundits proclaimed the world was becoming a globalised, borderless, unified, inclusive, post-political and post-ideological place. Although many walls were removed in the post-1989 era, new ones emerged, both material and ideological, that exclude those who do not fit into and have no part in the shared common of the community. Rancière describes the *police order* as a system of borders, an implicit set of general laws that allocates particular roles in society – who is included and excluded, who can take part, and where and when they can speak in the community. According to Rancière, what he calls the 'distribution of the sensible' determines what is visible and audible at any given time; the act of dissensus then disrupts this order, modifying its coordinates by, for example, giving voice the inaudible. This thesis embraces dissensus as a non-normative concept and demonstrates a variety of its manifestations in aesthetic practices that seek to make visible and audible the exclusions that still haunt post-1989 Europe as a result of its repressed past. The notion dissensus thus provides the primary theoretical framing of the thesis; however, other key concepts are utilised to explore and understand how different artists, artworks and events exemplify this idea. For instance, Giorgio Agamben's conceptualisation of witnessing is mobilised in relation to the 2nd Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Slavoj Žižek's ideas regarding overidentification frame the discussion of Slovenian music group Laibach's critique of past and current dominant ideologies, and Jacques Derrida's interpretation of *adikia* (disjointure, dislocation, injustice) and *dike* (jointure, ordering, justice) are used to discuss German director Christoph Schlingensief's radical deradicalisation of a group of neo-Nazis through his staging of *Hamlet*, while the notion of bare life is used as a springboard to examine Polish artist Artur Żmijewski's *Game of Tag* which blurs the boundaries between staged performance and collective psychotherapy in order to work through repressed traumas. The works examined in this thesis critically engage with the moving image of Europe, but more importantly, through the practice of dissensus, they try to re-imagine it.

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Introduction

The police order is always at once a system of circulation and a system of borders. And the practice of dissensus is always a practice that both crosses boundaries and stops traffic. – Jacques Rancière.

Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or winning film, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007), tells the story of two young women who try to arrange an illegal abortion during the final years of the Nicolae Ceaușescu regime in Romania. It ends with an intertitle informing the viewer that the original inspiration for the film was based around the concept “Memories from the Golden Age,” which appears as the film’s subtitle. In this context the Golden Age refers, according to propaganda from the time, to the period of Ceaușescu’s rule in Romania. The film is sparse and minimalist, utilising long takes and a grey colour palate in its effort to provide “an astute balance of ostalgia and anti-communist memorial.”¹ Ostalgia, the anglicized version of the German neologism *Ostalgie*, combines the word *Ost*, meaning east, with *Nostalgie*, meaning nostalgia, thus naming a condition of nostalgia for the pre-1989 East. The subtitle for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* is both sardonic and satirical in tone, and seeks to mock the self-aggrandising language of the Ceaușescu administration. The so-called Golden Age in Romania ended with a revolution that overthrew the Communist government and resulted in the execution of Ceaușescu and his wife and Deputy Prime Minister, Elena Ceaușescu, on 25 December 1989.²

The first part of my thesis title directly references the subtitle of Mungiu’s film. However, my focus is a different ‘golden age’ than that alluded in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*. The ‘golden age’ I wish to evoke in my title is the post-1989 and post-Berlin Wall era. This ‘golden age’ has been characterised by utopian and evangelistic language reproduced and recycled by many Western politicians, scholars and media pundits to suggest we live in a

¹ Constantin Parvulescu, “The Cold World Behind the Window: 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days and Romanian Cinema’s Return to Real-Existing Communism,” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 51 (2009), accessed February 3, 2014, <http://www.ejmpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/4months/text.html>.

globalised, borderless, unified, free, and inclusive world at ‘the end of history,’ which is among other things post-political and post-ideological. However, I argue that this claim itself is ideological and the promise of this inclusive world has an obscene underside, one of exclusion and borders. I take the fall of the Berlin Wall as a marker, an event that signifies a paradigmatic shift in ways of thinking and talking about the how the world is socially and politically organised. Many would assert that the process of globalisation has been taking place for many centuries; Peter Sloterdijk, for instance, argues that the current ‘electronic’ and ‘telematic’ globalisation is actually the “final stage of a process that began in the epoch of Greek philosophical cosmology.”³ However, globalisation in this context is discussed in relation to the paradigmatic shift that occurred post-1989. Thus, the ‘golden age’ here refers to the era in which there is an often managed perception⁴ of a unified, inclusive, multicultural, globalized world created by a move towards liberal democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

What I wish to map out in the early parts of this thesis is how the system of circulation and system of borders referred to in my epigraph functions at a time in which the *modus operandi* is the myth of a borderless unified world, which essentially establishes its very own disclaimer: a system of borders. Although many walls have been dismantled and removed since 1989, new ones – both physical and ideological – separate, divide, and exclude those who fall outside or do not fit into the shared commonality of a given community. French philosopher Jacques Rancière uses the term *police order* to denote “a symbolic constitution of the social” and a general law governing the “dividing-up of the world [...] and of people” that

² David Kideckel, “The Undead: Nicolae Ceaușescu and Paternalist Politics in Romanian Society and Culture,” in *Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority*, ed. John Borneman (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 123-124.

³ Peter Sloterdijk, “Forward to the Theory of Spheres,” in *Cosmograms*, eds. Melik O’Hanian and Jean-Christophe Royoux (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005): 223.

⁴ Perception management was a term coined by the US military during the Reagan era. It suggests a method of manipulating the flow of information around specific political events in order to control public perception of the said event.

“on one hand, [...] separates and excludes, and on the other, [...] allows participation.”⁵ The *police order* is a particular mode of what Rancière calls the distribution of the sensible, which refers to this partition and allocation of roles, distinguishing who is included and who excluded from particular places in the community, who is considered to share a commonality and who is not. It legitimises certain ways of seeing, doing, and speaking and is a system that dictates who can speak *for* themselves, who has the right to do so, and who cannot or does not have this right, i.e. who is marginalised.⁶ This set of processes leads to what for Rancière is a critical view of consensus. Consensus, in this context, operates in relation to the *police order*; although consensus suggests that it is entirely acceptable for different ideas, values and interests to circulate, “nevertheless there is one unique reality to which everything must be related, a reality that is experienceable as sense datum and which has only one possible signification.”⁷ For example, the notion that economic globalisation is widely accepted by many governments as the “clear-cut and irrefutable” path to global development closes off alternative points of view.⁸ Thus, the *police order* and the logic of consensus are aligned with depoliticalisation and exclusion. Against this, Rancière offers his theory of dissensus, which endeavours to conceptualise how these systems can be resisted and disrupted.⁹

Rancière characterises both politics and aesthetics as modes of dissensus, and it is this connection that is central to my thesis. In the chapters that follow, I attempt to illustrate how the system of borders and mechanisms of exclusion (both implicit and explicit) are challenged

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. and ed. Steven Corcoran (London; New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.

⁶ It was on this point that Rancière breaks significantly with his former teacher Louis Althusser; a detailed explanation of their growing theoretical differences appears in book from 1974 book *Althusser's Lesson*. Jacques Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson*, trans. Emiliano Battista (London; New York: Continuum, 2011). Slavoj Žižek suggests Rancière’s main contention with Althusser was his supposed elitism and “his insistence on the gap forever separating the universe of scientific cognition from that of ideological (mis)recognition in which the common masses are immersed.” Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 127.

⁷ Rancière, *Dissensus: On Aesthetics and Politics*, 144.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 38. Rancière contends that (an example of) dissensus “is the demonstration (*manifestation*) of a gap in the sensible itself. Political demonstration makes visible that which has no reason to be seen; it places one world in another – for instance, the world where the factory is a public space in that where it is considered private, the world where workers speak, and speak about the community, in that where their voices are mere cries of expressing pain.”

through dissensual aesthetic practice, via artistic intervention in the contemporary political landscape. This intervention can be political, but is not necessarily so, because it can involve a redistribution of the sensible that evokes new ways of seeing, doing, thinking and speaking, or reallocates what is (in)visible and (in)audible in the public sphere. Artistic intervention has the potential to affect public consciousness and provoke a shift in public thinking. In an interview for *Artforum* Rancière argues that artistic action can be political and produce a reversal of perspectives “by modifying the visible, the ways of perceiving it and expressing it.”¹⁰ Furthermore, he suggests,

The effect of this modification is consequent on its articulation with other modifications in the fabric of the sensible. That’s what “aesthetics” means: a work of art is defined as such by belonging to a certain regime of identification, a certain distribution of the visible, the sayable, and the possible. Politics, meanwhile has an aesthetic dimension: It is a common landscape of the given possible, a changing landscape and not a series of acts that are the consequence of “forms of consciousness” acquired elsewhere. “Aesthetics” designates this interface.¹¹

Aesthetics in this regard refers to the meeting place between art practices and political practices; it is a space of the sensible in which the common distinctions and boundaries between art and politics are broken down. This is why Rancière’s discussion of an “aesthetic regime” of the arts, which has become dominant over the last two centuries, questions the very divisions between art and other activities.¹² In various books, articles and interviews Rancière builds on ideas about aesthetics, politics and dissensus in a highly open-ended way. He is continually adding to definitions, providing further clarifications, giving alternative examples, and widening the meanings with the inclusion of interlinking concepts. What he does not supply is a normative model of how dissensus works which can be uniformly applied to different situations, artworks, or ruptures of the sensible order. His conceptualisation of dissensus does however offer a theoretical tool to tease out the connection between art and politics and open up new pathways for breaking down the boundaries established by consensus. The artists, actions and artworks examined in the thesis are explored through the

¹⁰ Jacques Rancière, "Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum*, March 2007: 259.

¹¹ Ibid.

general conceptual rubric of dissensus, but each uses different methods to redistribute the sensible and each challenges exclusion and division in its own particular ways. Therefore, although dissensus is the conceptual through-line, so to speak, each chapter and each artist or art event has its own internal theoretical framework that fits into an overall project of dissensus.

The connection between aesthetics and politics has been and often still is considered a problematic if not dangerous relationship. In a review of *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* Nicholas Nace suggests that Rancière's recent writing could be described as a 'return' to the aesthetics of politics.¹³ As evidenced by the questions asked of Rancière in the interviews that make up the book, the ideas of Walter Benjamin, notably his negative view on the aestheticisation of politics, loom large in theoretical discussions of the interrelationship. In his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin briefly described what he perceived as fascism's aestheticisation of politics.¹⁴ For Benjamin, the mechanical reproduction of art caused a 'withering' of the mystic aura of the original work of art. However, he maintained that through ritual and self-affirming narratives of mythic origin, fascism, specifically Nazism, appropriated the aura that had gone missing in art and located it within the political realm, arguing that this "is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic."¹⁵ According to Benjamin, the Italian Futurist movement, which would later become closely linked to the Italian fascist party, had a similar process in mind, yet from a wholly different perspective. Indeed, their manifesto, written by Filippo

¹² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006), 22-23.

¹³ Nicholas D. Nace, "The Work of Politics in the Age of Aesthetic Distribution: Review of Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*." *Other Voices* 4, no. 1 (2010), accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.othervoices.org/4.1/nnace/index.php>.

¹⁴ Ibid. The difference between the two theorists' ideas about politics and aesthetics are often considered important for critics of Rancière work. Nace points out that: "Benjamin is the only philosopher from whom Jacques Rancière's interlocutors in the series of interviews that comprise *The Politics of Aesthetics* ask him to distinguish his views (were this a longer, less introductory volume, they might well have asked how his concept of *régime* differs from Foucault's *episteme*, or how his *mésentente* differs from Lyotard's *diffrérend*, or how his *spectacle* differs from Debord's—we get the sense that no two are the same, though we're never entirely sure why)."

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 242.

Marinetti, stated that they rebelled against “the branding of war as antiaesthetic” and asserted “war is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body.”¹⁶

Benjamin, writing in the 1930s, claimed the aestheticisation of politics is inextricably linked to fascist ritual and argued that “[a]ll efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: War.”¹⁷ Against this backdrop, and with the knowledge that Benjamin took his own life in 1940 to avoid capture by Nazi troops, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Benjamin’s notion of the aestheticisation of politics holds so much weight and is viewed as almost prophetic. Indeed, Andrew Benjamin claims, “Central to any discussion of the work of art in the contemporary period, and this will be the case whether those discussions are situated within philosophy, literary criticism, art history, or cultural studies, is Walter Benjamin’s text [*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*].”¹⁸

Rancière, like Benjamin, contends that we can theorise the aesthetic *within* the political; however, he argues that this has nothing to do with a perverse commandeering of art or politics in the name of one or the other. Rather, aesthetics is always-already within politics: “aesthetics is at the core of politics.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, there is further relationship that is important here. A prevalent theme that runs through the works I examine in this thesis is the return of repressed history and the resurfacing of trauma relating to historical fascism in Europe. Many of the artists discussed reinterpret and remediate the fascist aestheticisation of politics which Benjamin critiques and redeploy it to challenge contemporary systems of exclusion. As such, the tension between past and present, as well as the interface between arts and politics, is continually being explored in their work and this thesis. Rancière argues that the “aesthetic regime of the arts is first of all a new regime for relating to the past … [because] the temporality specific to the aesthetic regime [...] is a co-presence of heterogeneous

¹⁶ Filippo Emilio Marinetti, quoted in Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 240.

¹⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 241.

¹⁸ Andrew Benjamin, “Introduction,” in *Walter Benjamin and Art*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 1. The essay is translated as “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” in this volume.

¹⁹ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 13.

temporalities.”²⁰ It precisely this co-presence of past and present, and of art and politics as theorised by Rancière that is central to the work analysed here.

Rancière, following Hannah Arendt, has described politics as an issue of appearances, a “matter of constituting a common stage or acting out common scenes rather than governing common interests.”²¹ This acting out relates to the idea of visibility, of making ‘an appearance’ so speak, in the public realm.²² However, a major strand of Rancière’s writing on politics is a disagreement with Arendt on the role of those with ‘no part’ in this staging, or in this sphere of appearance. In the chapter “The Social Question” from her 1963 work *On Revolution* Arendt uses a phrase by John Adams, a prominent figure in the American Revolution and second president of the United States, that the misfortune of the poor, in relation to politics, is that they are not seen: they are “excluded from the light of the public realm.”²³ Arendt suggests that this thought could only have come to someone who had engaged in political life and had experience of “the light of the public realm”; therefore, it is not an assessment by the poor of their own situation because they are unaware of their invisibility. However, for Rancière this is precisely where political dissensus lies: in the claim to visibility of the invisible, to inclusion of the excluded through their entry into the public space of appearance, “when those who ‘cannot’ do something [to] show that in fact they can.”²⁴

The all-encompassing, homogenising and hegemonising impact of globalisation as an economic and political concept provides theoretical support for neoliberal democracy and global capitalism. However, other or alternative ways of thinking about our current social reality have been pushed to the periphery. It is as if the borders created and perpetuated by a

²⁰ Ibid., 25-26.

²¹ Jacques Rancière, “Politics and Aesthetics an Interview,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2003): 202.

²² Ibid. This is linked back to the division in Greek philosophy between the social and the political and “between men of leisure and men of necessity, the latter being men whose needs exclude them from the domain of appearance and, hence, from politics.”

²³ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 63.

²⁴ Rancière, “Politics and Aesthetics an Interview,” 202.

system that purports itself to be borderless have been internalised as always-already apparent. This is precisely why the practice of dissensus is important, as it opens up the field of possibility by disrupting what is ostensibly self-evident. Broadly speaking, in the context of this project, dissensus involves disrupting the consensual narrative of globalisation that states we live in a borderless, unified, inclusive world, but which in actuality functions according to a system of borders and modes of exclusion. It seems now with the examples of the Arab Spring, the mass protests in Athens and the Occupy movement, which quickly spread from New York to hundreds of cities around the world, that there is a desire and drive to challenge a global financial and political system that offers unity but is founded on inequality. Dissensus demonstrates those who do not count as speaking beings taking part and speaking, thus redistributing what is visible and audible in the public realm. Art can be crucial as a form of dissensus to provoke or facilitate disruption in order to open debate and bring heterogeneous voices into the public sphere, into public space and discourse.

The artworks and art events that I explore here, ones that I propose do dissensual work, come from and are developed in relation to Europe and its peripheries, Europe and its other. There is a continued interplay in the works examined between the inside looking out and the outside looking in, between the included and excluded, the centre and the margin. Indeed, the dissensual work undertaken by the various artists discussed here takes a particular form because it is a response to a specific set of cultural contexts. Dissensus, in this project, is a rupture of a European sensible order and therefore takes shape directly in response to political conditions in Europe, whereas the practice of dissensus would take form differently in other parts of world. Rancière argues that “[d]issensus is a modification of the coordinates of the sensible, a spectacle or tonality that replaces another”²⁵ and moments of dissensus staged by these artworks differ depending on the consensual logic they are trying to disrupt. As we will see, although there is significant overlap in the cultural, historical and political conditions

²⁵ Rancière, “Art of the Possible,” 259.

engaged with here and many of the works respond to shared historical traumas which shape and continue to impact our current political landscape, each artist and art event formulates a highly particularised staging of dissensus.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of borders throughout the Eastern Bloc brought with it a rhetoric of unity, inclusion and openness, and a promise of the free-flow of people and ideas between formally separate places. However, with this apparent openness and unity, symbolised by the expansion of the European Union, came new tensions and divisions. Considering the multiplicity of worlds (and borders) within the one world of Europe and its systems of exclusion is all the more important at a time when these systems have ostensibly become fluid and malleable. This involves the work of making those who occupy the invisible and inaudible spaces of worlds seen and heard on the stage of aesthetics. I use the phrase ‘Europe’s moving image’ in the title of this thesis to indicate several key elements in the relationship between art and the shifting political climate of Europe. The most obvious relevance of ‘moving’ is the fact that Europe and by extension the European Union is changing; it is expanding, more countries are being added, currencies in those countries are being replaced, new legislation is continually being written, etcetera. These changes fall within the overall framework of globalisation and liberal democratic ideology. Secondly, with the designation ‘moving image’ I am hoping to evoke the notion of visual culture, as defined by Nicholas Mirzoeff:

Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By visual technology, I mean any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet.²⁶

In this regard, I am referring to the visual culture created by the artists I investigate and how their work is developed in reference to Europe. Thirdly, I wish to link the idea of the moving image back to dissensus; specifically, the moving images created by the works and events discussed here produce a redistribution of the sensible, disrupting the logic of consensus and

helping to reshape the current visual culture and imaginary. The image thus defined, moreover, is moving between past and present because all of the works discussed evoke a return of repressed history, articulating “a co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities.”²⁶

The return of the repressed is clearly a psychoanalytic concept and much of the discussions around trauma utilised in this project are also significantly influenced by psychoanalysis, a field not explicitly dealt with in Rancière’s conceptualisation of dissensus. However, I would argue, his formulations around the interconnection between aesthetics and politics do, at times, implicitly incorporate psychoanalytic ideas.²⁷ Furthermore, Rancière is not attempting to institutionalise his (anti)philosophy and stipulates that he doesn’t “speak for philosophers [...and doesn’t] speak for members of a particular body or discipline,”²⁸ but rather tries to shatter boundaries between specialisations. In attempting to open up space to stage moments of dissensus, he creates a platform for discussion between heterogeneous voices. Dissensus as a practice requires a certain degree of heterogeneity and disagreement, and therefore supplementing it with other theoretical material that does not necessarily neatly fit into Rancière’s initial formulations can help expand his notion of dissensus.

In my first chapter, “What are They Building in There?: Some Theoretical Foundations,” I unpack some of the ideologies of our ostensibly post-ideological times in order to set the groundwork for an examination of artworks and events that critique these said ideologies and the means by which they justify and perpetuate exclusion. Drawing on the work of Slavoj Žižek, I examine how neoliberal ideology is developed in ideas about ‘the end of history,’ expounded by Francis Fukuyama among others, and the rhetoric of the Third Way that go hand in hand with many discourses of contemporary globalisation. I contrast the hegemonic notion of globalisation with the idea of mondialisation (worldwide-ization or world-forming)

²⁶ Nicholas Mirzoeff, “What is Visual Culture?” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited, with introductions by Nicholas Mirzoeff (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 3.

²⁷ This connection is perhaps most carefully and explicitly dealt with in Jacques Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, trans. Debra Keates and James Swenson (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

²⁸ Rancière, “Art of the Possible,” 257.

in order to help conceptualize *an other*, dissensual, notion of globalisation or altermondialisation. This I undertake primarily through a discussion of some key texts by Jacques Derrida from the early 1990s after his work underwent its so-called “political turn.”²⁹ To help frame this concept of an altermondialisation I draw on the idea of haunting, notably, Derrida’s idea of the spectre of Marx. This notion proposes that contemporary political thinking must be haunted by the philosophy of responsibility and the spirit of radical critique that imbued the thinking of Marx in order to rethink and problematise the homogenising effect of today’s globalisation discourse. The notion of haunting also helps me to elaborate on the return of history in the form of repressed traumas of the past that return, reconfigured, to haunt the present. This is a feature and theme that all the works and events I analyse deal with in some way. Here I primarily draw on the work of Derrida, Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben before linking this to a detailed discussion of dissensus and the distribution of the sensible.

The second chapter attempts to map out a particular version of the distribution of the sensible through an analysis of Europe’s excluded Roma community as seen from the ‘outside’ in Emir Kusturica’s film *Time of the Gypsies*. Like many of Kusturica’s films, it vacillates between exaltation and sadness and is, at times, both frenetically paced and meandering. However, the reason I chose to focus on *Time of the Gypsies* is because it is an exemplary, although by no mean normative, model of how the distribution of the sensible might work in relation to an artwork. The film is of necessity a collection of moving images; however, the image of Roma it reproduces is frozen and fixed. Indeed, there is an ambivalence to the ‘Gypsy’ stereotype Kusturica produces which increases the visibility of the social disaffection of Roma while simultaneously reproducing stereotypes that create a static ‘knowledge’ about them which forecloses dissensus. I link Žižek’s, Maria Todorova’s, and Marko Živković’s notion of Balkanism with Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism and Homi Bhabha’s idea of the stereotype to illustrate how artistic practice has assisted in the creation of this ‘knowledge’

²⁹ Derrida, however, denies claims of a political or ethical turn in his work, suggesting there were always political elements in his deconstructionist philosophy. See Paul Patton, “Derrida, Politics and Democracy to Come,”

about Roma in the Balkan region. I further demonstrate, by drawing on Dina Iordanova and Mattijs Van de Port, that *Time of the Gypsies* is part of a wider ideological trend of projective identification with ‘Gypsies,’ in which Balkan directors attempt to define themselves and their own feelings of marginality and exclusion through the representation of Roma.

The chapter on *Time of the Gypsies* provides analysis of non-Roma representation of Roma, while the third chapter, “Witness to the Devouring and Other Instances of Roma Exclusion,” focuses on ‘counter-images’ through self-presentation. Rancière contends that when those who have no part, who do not count as speaking beings in the shared common of the community, take part and speak, then this disruption gives rise to politics or dissensus. Roma have long not counted as speaking beings, at the Nuremberg trials for instance, and have been excluded from the ‘shared common’ of many nations across the world. The 2nd Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, *Call the Witness*, attempts to engage in the process of dissensus by bearing witness to Roma desubjectification and exclusion. The space, the pavilion itself, is imagined as part courtroom, part conference room and performance area, part broadcaster, and of course part exhibition space. There seems to be consensus around and a desire for Roma exclusion and invisibility, and the Venice Biennale pavilion sought to address ways artists are attempting to make the invisible visible and the inaudible audible, not least by serving as witness to the attempted eradication of ‘Gypsies’ under Nazism. The primary theoretical focus of this chapter is Agamben’s conceptualisation, by way of Primo Levi, of testimony and witnessing from his book *Remnants of Auschwitz*. I endeavour to illustrate how Agamben’s notion of speaking in the name of inaudibility is a dissensual act.

The fourth chapter, “Laibach is Laibach: Overidentification as Dissensus in Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK),” examines the interlinked Slovenian art collectives Laibach and NSK, who have attempted to intervene in the political landscape of contemporary Europe throughout their lifespan (1980-present). Using strategies of overidentification and retroguardism, their work

embodies strategies of dissensus. NSK produces works in diverse fields, including music, avant-garde theatre, fine arts, film and video, and design. They began as a kind of ‘return of the repressed’ and many of their works borrow symbols and signs from the past in order to reappropriate and recontextualise them. What this process, which NSK call retrogardism, endeavours to do is retroactively modify the way the past is narrated to reconfigure the way the present is understood. As a movement NSK developed a way of operating in which they adopt and use the language of the dominant ideological system under which are working, be it communism or neo-liberal capitalism. This strategy, described as overidentification by Slavoj Žižek, involves taking the stated norms of the system more seriously than the “system that proclaims them itself” in order to bring to light “the obscene hidden supplement”³⁰ of the ruling ideology. This chapter focuses on the dissensual effects of Laibach’s and NSK’s attempts to produce a feeling of uneasiness in the audience to challenge them to think about where they stand in relation to the ruling ideology. The main function of Laibach’s work is the disruption of systems of consensus by overidentifying with dominant ideological systems, incorporating conflicting ideological perspectives, and unsettling the narratives of these systems and the myths they create. They continually attempt to challenge different distributions of the sensible by occupying them, as it were, from within.

Like Laibach, German director Christoph Schlingensief’s work is also intentionally haunted by spectres of totalitarianism, in this case fascism. In 2001, in Zürich Switzerland, Schlingensief staged a version of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In this version’s famous mousetrap scene, in which Hamlet wants to force his uncle to confess to fratricide, all the players of the *mise en abîme* are portrayed by a group of neo-Nazis endeavouring to separate themselves from the right-wing scene. In a dramatic break from Shakespeare’s text the group go on to share their own personal experiences with the audience. The production attempted to comment on and create debate about the ‘rotteness’ of the State, not just Switzerland, amid the rise in

³⁰ Slavoj Žižek, “Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?” M’ARS Volume 3-4 (1993), accessed December 01, 2013. <http://stlj.livejournal.com/21389.html?thread=85133>.

approval ratings and growing influence of far-right parties in the surrounding countries. I posit that Schlingensief's project is a form of radical deradicalisation (i.e., a radical method of deradicalising neo-Nazis). This chapter, "The Hamlet Spectre," analyses Schlingensief's *Hamlet* by utilising the concepts of *adikia* (disjointure, dislocation, injustice) and *dike* (jointure, ordering, justice), which go back to the oldest extant Greek text: the Anaximander fragment. Drawing on Martin Heidegger's and Jacques Derrida's reinterpretations of *adikia* and *dike* I endeavour to illustrate how Schlingensief's work attempts to intervene in the disjointure caused by the contemporary politics of fear.

Chapter 6, "Be Careful with that Trauma, Christoph: Schlingensief's Dissensual Staging of 'the Unrepresentable,'" focuses more overtly on discourses surrounding trauma and art, especially around the notion of unrepresentability. The idea of unrepresentability in this context connotes that art lacks the appropriate language and form to represent the exceptional nature of the traumatic event, the horror that the event evokes in the subject. The issue of unrepresentability provides the conceptual axis for this chapter's exploration of the remediation of historical trauma in contemporary aesthetic practice. I examine two actions/public performances by Christoph Schlingensief, *Chance 2000* (1998) and *Bitte Liebt Österreich* (Please Love Austria (2000), and focus on how his reproduction of that which is considered unrepresentable, namely Nazi concentration camps, is utilised to represent those who are 'unrepresented', excluded and rendered invisible within dominant public discourse (e.g. asylum-seekers, refugees). I examine both the formal aspects of his performances – his use of live performers, reproduced media images, juxtaposition of and overidentification with opposing texts and slogans – and his involvement of the spectator in the thematic components of these works, particularly the parallels he draws between the political language of contemporary exclusion and that of the repressed fascist past.

The final chapter in the body of my thesis, "Scenes of Dissensus: Artur Żmijewski and Curation as an Artistic Mode of Production," focuses on the Polish artist Artur Żmijewski's

curation of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art: *Forget Fear* (2012). It argues that the Biennale itself is a piece of art and that curation is an extension of Źmijewski's artistic mode of production, namely, staged encounters of dissent and dissensus. *Forget Fear* was conceived as an overtly political event and artists were required to state their political inclinations. The manifestos, one-off events, and discourse surrounding the biennale were as much a part of the art as the art objects themselves. Źmijewski's writing about his art practice is part of the art practice itself, just as his curation of the biennale was an actualising and perhaps intensifying of ideas developed in his earlier projects.

I conclude this thesis with an analysis of an art collective that took shape and came to prominence during the writing and research of this project: the group Pussy Riot. If the chapter on Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies*, which begins the analytic work of the thesis, is illustrative of a consensual mode of the distribution of the sensible, then the case of Pussy Riot is an exemplary, though once again not normative, form of dissensus and redistribution. I contend that Pussy Riot are situated at the interface between art practice and political practice in the space of dissensus and aesthetics. They both capture and affect the public imagination and help shift the imaginary. Dissensus "occurs when people begin to speak on their own behalf, and in speaking on their own behalf, assume the right to occupy public space, a public space whose co-ordinates immediately shift to take account of these new voices."³¹ The members of Pussy Riot occupied very public spaces, such as metro stations, department stores, Red Square, and of course Moscow's Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Through a collection of heterogeneous forms and methods, including punk music, masks linked to an anonymous superhero-like aesthetic, social media and art activism, as well as modernised types of holy foolery, they sought to speak on their own behalf on issues such as women's rights, LBGT rights and political corruption. As popular as they are controversial, the work of

³¹ Robert Porter, "Distribution of the Sensible," *Variant* 30 (2007), 17.

Pussy Riot encourages and provokes discussion and debate in the public realm, and most clearly disturbs the consensus of the *police order*.

What are They Building in There?: Some Theoretical Foundations

Is not the true message of the notion of the Third Way [...] simply that *there is no second way*, no actual alternative to global capitalism, so that, in a kind of mocking pseudo-Hegelian negation of negation, this much-praised ‘Third Way’ bring us back to the *first and only way*.

– Slavoj Žižek

The “first and only way” referred to by Žižek in the epigraph comes under different monikers: globalisation, globalism, liberal democracy, the free market – indeed, a host of terms equivalent to a ‘humanised’ version of global capitalism. In its most optimistic rendition, as Francis Fukuyama would have it, the ‘triumph’ of global capitalism and (neo)liberal democracy has resulted in the ‘end of history,’ which could also be read as the ‘end of alternatives.’ The idea that the end of Eastern Bloc communism brought with it an end of ideology and a unifying globalism has been espoused by many Western leaders, political commenters, scholars, and media pundits. However, the notion that we no longer live in an ideological world, that our economic and political systems must be as they are, and that there is no other way or alternative is itself ideological. What I demonstrate in this chapter is that this ideology promulgates a form of universalism without unity, a borderless world defined by a system of borders. Indeed, the humanitarian initiatives and interventions often associated with the idea of the Third Way effectively make the lack of unity and exclusion implicit in this system digestible and acceptable. This chapter maps out the central themes associated with the notion of the end of history, globalisation discourse and the Third Way before focusing more directly on the post-1989 European context at the core of this thesis. I utilise Derrida’s notions of mondialisation and altermondialisation to provide a dissensual way of approaching globalisation, as well as his ideas of spectrality and haunting to help think through the return of the historical repressed in Europe. In order to conceptualise the contemporary manifestations of this return I draw on both Badiou and Agamben. Finally, Rancière’s notions of the distribution of the sensible, *the police*, consensus and dissensus bring together the disparate ideas addressed in this chapter, in a heterogeneous form, to provide a framework for

thinking about current systems of exclusion and how artistic intervention in these systems is political.

End of History, Third Way, Human Rights

With the collapse of communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc came the popularisation of the concept of an ‘end of history’ within social and political theory. However, the concept itself was frequently utilised to expound on quite different positions. For example, Jean Baudrillard argued that the spread of globalisation had brought about an ‘end of history’ in the sense of a breakdown of the fixed idea of historical progress and thus an end to a normative understanding of history. He contends that this was not the result of the victory of one ideology over another in the aftermath of the Cold War, but rather a collapse in utopian thinking on both the Left and Right. Baudrillard’s analysis is particularly pessimistic as he asserts that ‘the ends’ envisioned by both liberal Western democracies and socialist regimes were themselves facades that had finally broken down. Indeed, the end of history becomes the dustbin of history:

The end of history is, alas, also the end of the dustbins of history. There are no longer any dustbins for disposing of old ideologies, old regimes, old values. Where are we going to throw Marxism, which actually invented the dustbins of history? (Yet there is some justice here since the very people who invented them have fallen in.) Conclusion: if there are no more dustbins of history, this is because History itself has become a dustbin. It has become its own dustbin, just as the planet itself is becoming its own dustbin.¹

On the other hand, Francis Fukuyama contends that a normative ‘end of history’ is something to be celebrated. In 1992, in his famous work of ‘structural postmodernism,’² *The End of History and the Last Man*, he announced that the process of the dialectical struggle between capitalism and communism had resulted, in an inversion of Marx’s predicted communist utopia, in the triumph of neoliberal ideology and the ‘end of history.’ Fukuyama argues:

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 263.

² For a discussion on Fukuyama in relation to structural postmodernism see Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 51-54.

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.³

Fukuyama's argument has been widely criticised by many scholars, perhaps most savagely by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx*, who suggests Fukuyama's end-of-history thesis is a populist attempt to 'neo-evangelise' political and economic liberalism and a complete misreading of Hegel and Kojève.⁴ In 1995, in light of such criticism, Fukuyama played down the celebratory tone somewhat:

[L]iberal democracy and free markets constitute the best regime, or more precisely the best of the available alternative ways of organizing human societies [...]. It most fully (though not completely) satisfies the most basic human longings, and therefore can be expected to be more universal and more durable than other regimes or other principles of political organization.⁵

Although the tone is different, the basic assumption remains the same: that a parliamentary democracy with free market economy is 'the only game in town.'⁶ According to this premise, there is now no alternative to liberalism and, although societies may be structured quite differently, they must all endeavour to (or are forced to)⁷ work within the parameters of advanced capitalism.⁸

Instead of using terms like 'the end of' or 'death of' Anthony Giddens opts for phrases such as the "declining relevance of 'the Old Left'"⁹ to explain the 'need' for 'renovating' social democracy in the post-Cold War period and promoting his idea of the Third Way. From the late 1990s, Giddens called for the 'modernisation' of social democrats, suggesting they must recognise that the world is undergoing a process of advanced globalisation, of 'opening up,' in

³ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", in *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 107. This quote is from the essay "The End of History?" which was originally published in 1989 in *The National Interest* and then expanded into the full-length book *The End of History and the Last Man*.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 70-79.

⁵ Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later," *History and Theory*, 34, No. 2, Theme Issue 34: World Historians and Their Critics (1995), 29.

⁶ For a discussion on the 'only game in town' thesis, see for example, Iain Ferguson, "Neoliberalism, the Third Way and Social Work: the UK Experience," *Social Work & Society* 2, no. 1 (2004): 1-9, accessed May 29, 2011, <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/1362>

⁷ Indeed, organisations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) require countries receiving their aid to liberalise their economy and adopt free market solutions.

⁸ For an argument on how we can apparently bring about an 'end of poverty' under such a system see Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

which local or regional economies (among other things) are integrated into a wider, ‘globalised’, economic system. In his chapter “Taking Globalization Seriously” he quotes former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, flag bearer of the Third Way as a progressive form of politics, to emphasise the importance of integrating national interests into a global system:

[W]e are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights if we still want to be secure.¹⁰

Evidently, actively participating in globalisation and the liberalisation of the ‘Old Left’ (and the welfare state for that matter)¹¹ becomes an essential component of Third Way ideology. One gets the sense from Third Way rhetoric that although globalisation and free market capitalism may adversely affect some, they are now essential to the functioning of our world; again, liberal democracy is presented as the ‘only game in town.’ What is particularly problematic with Third Way ideology is that it promotes neoliberal capitalism but disguises this in declarations of caring about human rights, democracy, poverty, political violence, and environmental destruction. Indeed, we can see that the protection of human rights is explicitly foregrounded in Tony Blair’s statement. Slavoj Žižek argues that the foregrounding of human rights is a way of masking the detrimental effects of neoliberalism and suggests that “the Third Way is simply global capitalism with a human face.”¹² He further argues that the liberal subject can care about and be ‘outraged’ by these injustices precisely because he/she feels secure in the fact that nothing can be done about them. Liberal subjects profess to be against the effects (human trafficking, for instance) of something that they ideologically perpetuate (a globalised free market economy) by assuming that it is just the reality of our world. Effectively, it becomes something we simply ‘know’; in a way, the ‘end of history’ thesis has been internalised within the subject.

⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics* (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), 5.

¹⁰ Tony Blair, “Doctrine of the International Community,” speech at the Hilton Hotel, Chicago (22 April 1999), quoted in Anothy Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics*. (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), 123-24.

¹¹ Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics*, 103-13.

¹² Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, why is the Christian legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London; New York: Verso, 2000), 63.

A series of digital games developed over the last eight years or so provides an interesting example of how human rights and humanitarianism function in the ideology of a Third Way type of governance. Games such as *Free Rice*¹³ and *Deliver the Nets*¹⁴ present themselves as humanitarian and philanthropic video games, in which the player can help ‘solve hunger’ or ‘prevent malaria’ in the Third World. *Deliver the Nets* is a game in which the player races to deliver as many mosquito nets as possible to an African village before the sun sets. The player, who is riding a motorbike through a ‘generic’ African village, throws as many nets as possible to motionless villagers who wait helplessly to be saved by this resourceful motorcyclist. At the end of the game, one is given the option of “really” saving a disenfranchised ‘helpless’ villager by donating \$10 to Nothing But Nets to buy a real mosquito net. Nothing But Nets is a reference to scoring a goal in basketball, which is not surprising given the project’s partners: ESPN, NBA Care, Sports Illustrated, among others. What the game seems to perpetuate is the condescending idea that all those in the Third World are helpless and must be saved by Western powers, an idea that could be understood as a version of White Man’s Burden. It also effectively ‘justifies’ the large amounts of wealth amassed by these organisations, as philanthropy makes them appear caring and ethical to the consumer by ‘giving back to the community.’ In a sense they follow the motto: repairing with the left hand what you destroyed with the right.¹⁵

Free Rice is an educational game designed by the UN and Harvard University to help “eradicate hunger” in the Third World, in which the player must identify, through multi-choice questions, the meaning of a word, the location of a place on the map, or the answer to a mathematical equation. The website proudly states that “for each answer you get right, we

¹³ “Home Page,” *Free Rice 2.0*, accessed January 15, 2012, <http://freerice.com/>.

¹⁴ “Deliver the Nets Game,” *Nothing But Nets*, accessed January 15, 2012.
<http://www.nothingbutnets.net/its-easy-to-help/game.html>.

¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “First as Tragedy, Then as Farce,” *The RSA*, accessed February 23, 2014,
<http://www.thersa.org/events/rsanimate/animate/rsanimate-first-as-tragedy,-then-as-farce>.

donate 10 grains of rice through the World Food Programme to help end hunger.”¹⁶ Thus, the idea promoted by *Free Rice* is that you can learn, you can have fun, and you can help the Third World all at the same time and all from the comfort of your living room. These games function, for the player at least, to assuage guilt and buy redemption for being a consumer. Because the subjects are aware they are participating in a system of violence, this form of charity and humanitarianism allows them to fulfill part of a series of ethical duties to remove the guilt of this knowledge. Indeed, one could see it as a form of cultural capitalism.¹⁷ Žižek uses the example of particular types of fair-trade coffee or bottled water from corporations such as Starbucks to further illustrate this point. Discussing a specific campaign, he notes that when you buy these particular products “a portion of the profits go to the Guatemalan community suffering under low wages from the same corporation. This gives the illusion of fighting subjective violence, but in fact perpetuates structural (systemic) violence.”¹⁸ He further argues, “a corrupt system needs a Mother Teresa in the same way that a work environment needs a place for people to complain about the boss – or else, there would be revolt.”¹⁹ Žižek endeavours to make clear that his argument does not discount or dismiss acts of charity or philanthropy. Indeed, he suggests that in some circumstances they are the best option available, but he warns against the illusion that they will necessarily bring about structural change. What is deceptive about Third Way ideology and its foregrounding of human rights and aid is that it is part of a well-constructed façade, not to mention a form of cynical ideology, which masks the fact that the Third Way is a standard bearer for global capitalism. Žižek’s idea of cynical ideology is that “cynicism is no longer the classic Marxian ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’; it is ‘they know very well what they are doing, yet

¹⁶ “Home Page,” *Free Rice 2.0*.

¹⁷ Žižek, “First as Tragedy, Then as Farce.”

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

they are doing it.”²⁰ Indeed, Third Way ideology knows very well how to construct the illusion of change by adopting a particular language of globalism and humanitarianism.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that human rights, especially in the way they are framed and used by leaders such as Tony Blair, have become the new and overruling tool of empire.²¹ Indeed, the abuse of human rights has become ‘the shorthand’ reasoning to justify many Western invasions and interventions into other countries. For Žižek “what the ‘human rights of Third World suffering victims’ effectively means today [...] is the right of Western powers themselves to intervene politically, economically, culturally and militarily in the Third World countries of their choice, in the name of defending human rights.”²² This by no means suggests that *all* interventions in places where people are, for instance, being tortured or oppressed are tools of empire, but rather attempts to problematise the notion that the post-1989 era represents a triumph of human rights over tyranny.²³ Law professor Costas Douzinas goes so far as to suggest that “[w]hen the apologists of pragmatism pronounce the end of ideology, of history or utopia, they do not mark the triumph of human rights; on the contrary, they bring human rights to an end. The end of human rights comes about when they lose their utopian end.”²⁴ Douzinas also argues that one of the maxims of human rights propagated by many contemporary Western democracies is the negation of the right of the citizen to resist the (real or imagined) oppression of the state.²⁵ Along with the modern maxim that ‘all men are born and remain free and equal in rights’ from the French Declaration, one of its key tenets was ‘the right to resist oppression.’ In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) the statement about equal rights from the French Declaration was kept, yet the right to resistance was no

²⁰ Slavoj Žižek, “Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology,” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 8.

²¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 393-414.

²² Slavoj Žižek, “Against Human Rights,” *New Left Review* 34, July-August (2005): 128.

²³ For an extensive discussion of this see Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights: Critical Legal Thought at the Turn of the Century* (Hart Publishing: Oxford, 2000) & Costas Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Routledge-Cavendish: Abingdon, 2007).

²⁴ Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, 380.

²⁵ Costas Douzinas, “On Communism and Rights,” in *The Idea of Communism*, eds. Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 13-14.

longer present. The way human rights are framed in this liberal democratic discourse (particularly in the 1990s) is that they are intrinsic to liberal democracy; therefore, resistance to this form of governance is resistance to human rights. Liberal capitalist democracy is again ‘the only game in town.’ Of course, after 9/11 the terms and structure of this human rights argument changed and acts such as torture, which had been a prime example of a breach of human rights, became one of the ‘lesser evils’,²⁶ in a ‘state of exception.’²⁷

New Walls, New Borders

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and opening of borders in the former Soviet Union (and Eastern Bloc), it became increasingly popular to suggest that national borders were becoming malleable and ‘fluid’²⁸ so that a ‘free flow’ of ideas, information and commerce could ‘progressively’ make the world into a more ‘unified’ place. Alain Badiou is particularly critical of this celebration of the apparent malleability of borders (national, international and systemic) proposed in much postmodern and globalisation theory. He argues that what is unified in the world is the “unity of objects and monetary signs” that allows for the circulation of products and capital, and not a unity of living bodies, of the people who actually inhabit several ‘worlds.’²⁹ This idea of multiple ‘worlds’ can be illustrated by looking at the ‘the problem of immigration’ debated at length in the media and at the forefront of policy discussion in many Western states. Badiou asserts that if we were actually living in a unified world or one world then foreigners who live and work in countries such as France or the UK would be warmly welcomed as those coming from the same world. However, the resistance to immigration, or the ‘lack of integration’ touted as hugely problematic by many politicians and by much of the press, continually restates the idea that “these people come from a different

²⁶ Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

²⁷Indeed, as Žižek provocatively quips: ‘Human rights are ok if they are ‘rethought’ to include torture and a permanent state of emergency. Democracy is ok if it is cleansed of its populist excesses and limited to those mature enough to practice it.’ Žižek, “Against Human Rights,” 120.

²⁸ See for example Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press; Blackwell, 2000).

²⁹ See the chapter “Only One World (53-70) in Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy* (London; New York: Verso, 2008).

world.”³⁰ Indeed, to say there is only one world, which Badiou insists is an essential ‘principal of action’ and an emancipatory ‘political imperative,’³¹ means “all those who live in it must exist as I do,”³² with their multiple sets of differences and not forced to be like ‘me’, so to speak. What we have, however, is a globalised world in which the proliferation of separate worlds is the order of the day. Indeed, Badiou states:

The fall of the Berlin Wall was supposed to signal the advent of the single world of freedom and democracy. Twenty years later, it is clear that the world’s wall has simply shifted: instead of separating East and West it now divides the rich capitalist North from the poor and devastated South. New walls are being constructed all over the world: between Palestinians and Israelis, between Mexico and the United States, between Africa and the Spanish enclaves, between the pleasures of wealth and the desires of the poor [. . .] The ‘problem of immigration’ is, in reality, the fact that the conditions faced by workers from other countries provide living proof that—in human terms—the ‘unified world’ of globalization is a sham.³³

What he highlights here is that under the auspices of increased democratisation, unification and inclusion ‘new walls’ have been created and multiple forms and systems of exclusion are still practiced, yet often disavowed.

The idea of unity, unification and the disintegration of borders underpins much post-1989 official discourse of the European Union. The tenet of political and economic unification of disparate nations is a core principle of the EU, and a principle that is formalised through a standardised system of laws which ensure the free movement of people, goods and capital.³⁴ Indeed, the official EU website calls its short history of the 1990s “a Europe without frontiers,”³⁵ an idea that is illustrated by the removal of internal border controls among Schengen area countries. Étienne Balibar maintains that, although the collapse of Soviet socialism and the popularisation of the idea of ‘the global’ have caused us to rethink the concept of ‘the border’ in contemporary society, “less than ever” do we live in a world without

³⁰ Ibid., 57.

³¹ Ibid., 68.

³² Ibid., 63.

³³ Alain Badiou, “The Communist Hypothesis,” *New Left Review* 49, no. January–February (2008): 38. This essay is a condensed version of *The Meaning of Sarkozy*.

³⁴ “Internal Market,” *European Commission*, accessed August 5, 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/index_en.htm.

³⁵ “Europe without Frontiers,” *Europa*, accessed August 5, 2011, http://europa.eu/abc/history/1990-1999/index_en.htm.

borders.³⁶ Indeed, the end of antagonisms between the Soviet and capitalist blocs may have created a vacillation of borders but it has by no means removed them. He argues:

[a] world that is now broadly unified from the point of view of economic exchange and communication needs borders more than ever to segregate, at least in tendency, wealth and poverty in distinct territorial zones [...]. The poor, at least, need to be systematically triaged and regulated at points of entry to the wealthiest territories. Borders have thus become essential institutions in the constitution of social conditions on a global scale where the passport or identity card functions as a systematic criterion.³⁷

What Balibar provocatively suggests is that the liberalisation of global markets has not brought about unity and inclusion but rather created a new exclusionary system he calls a *global apartheid*, which replaces the old colonial and postcolonial apartheds.³⁸

Globalisation, Mondialisation, Altermondialisation

The foregrounding of the concept of ‘the world’ (*le monde*) over that of ‘the globe’ is part of a strand of contemporary French critical theory which endeavours to challenge globalisation discourse by offering an alternative term, mondialisation (worldwide-ization³⁹ or world-forming⁴⁰). As we will see, mondialisation and globalisation are by no means the same; in fact they have quite different connotations. Etymologically, the word “globe” comes from the Latin *globus*, meaning ‘a self-contained, spherical object.’⁴¹ Indeed, as Urs Stäheli argues, “[r]ecent political and theoretical discourses on the global and globalisation are fascinated with this logic of completeness. . . . The narratives put forward understand the global as a teleological process, awaiting its fulfillment in the imaginary totality of an all-encompassing globality.”⁴² The word ‘global’ suggests a thing that is self-contained, inclusive and complete,

³⁶ Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, translated by Christine Jones, James Swenson and Chris Turner (London; New York: Verso, 2002), 92.

³⁷ Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. by James Swenson. (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 113.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ This is Michael Nass’ “somewhat awkward translation” of Derrida’s use of the term mondialisation. Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 86.

⁴⁰ See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, Trans. by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 31-56 for a discussion on the differences between “world-forming” *mondialisation* and “world-becoming” *mondanisation*.

⁴¹ Victor Li, “Elliptical Interruptions Or, Why Derrida Prefers Mondialisation to Globalization,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 7, No. 2 (2007): 142.

⁴² Urs Stäheli, “The Outside of the Global,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 2 (2003): 1–22.

and has roots in geometry and geography rather than an association with people being-in-the-world that authors such as Badiou, Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy find so problematic.

Derrida argues that the almost worldwide appropriation of the Anglo-American term globalisation also reveals a kind “homo-hegemonization,” which has two significant components. In this context ‘hegemonisation’ refers firstly to “linguistic-cultural hegemony (... Anglo-American hegemony), which increasingly asserts itself or imposes itself on all modes of techno-scientific exchange,”⁴³ and secondly it refers to the inequalities and imbalances of power inherent in the system itself. The first part of the term “homo” in this respect points to the fact that a key aspect of globalisation is the idea that it is homogenising. As Balibar asserts: “However conflictual or antagonistic, globalization tends to represent itself as a homogeneous process that combines *given agencies* (initially economic forces, but also increasingly ideological ones) into a single system of interactions.”⁴⁴ Therefore, what the term homo-hegemonisation suggests is that “the apparent homogenization [of globalisation] often hides old and new inequalities and hegemonies.”⁴⁵ The concept of mondialisation is articulated by Derrida as a way to interrupt the apparent completeness, homogeneity, and supposed neutrality of what is called globalisation and thus help provide a dissensual reading of it.

The concept of the global and globalisation also lacks the political, social, and philosophical history present in the word ‘world.’ As Michael Naas, translator of many of Derrida’s works, points out: “Kant, for example, speaks of the world, not the globe, as a regulative idea of understanding, while Heidegger speaks of the world as what opens up our experience and makes possible any horizon of understanding, including the one that would allow us to

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971-2001 / Jacques Derrida*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 373.

⁴⁴ Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, xii.

⁴⁵ Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews*, 373.

understand the world as a globe.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Derrida argues that it is imperative to demonstrate the Abrahamic (although predominantly Christian) filiations in the concept of the world, as these are the traditions that actually underwrite what is called globalisation in Anglo-American discourse. What he proposes is a deconstructive genealogy, which involves the difficult challenge of doing two things simultaneously without giving up either one. On the one hand, this would involve examining the genealogical elements on which the notions of the world are based, for example the suppositions of the ‘ethico-politico-juridical’ concepts of international law, ‘the rights of man’ or national sovereignty. This, Derrida asserts, brings the concept “back to its European, Abrahamic, and predominantly Christian, indeed Roman, filiation (with the effects of hegemony implicit and explicit that this inherently involves).”⁴⁷ On the other hand, it would also require a sustained critique of the mechanism and discourses that de-territorialise, dehistoricise and neutralise this Eurocentric and hegemonic filiation.⁴⁸

Thus for Derrida, the task of this deconstructive genealogy is to:

[A]ccount for what in this heritage of the concept of the world and in the process of globalization makes possible and necessary [...] an actual universalization, which frees itself of its own roots of historical, geographical, national state limitations at the same moment that, out of faithfulness [...] it implements the best memory of this heritage and fights against the effects of inequality and hegemony, of homo-hegemonization that this same tradition did and can still produce. For it is also from the depths of this heritage that certain themes themselves arise, themes that today, particularly through the mutations of international law and its new concepts [...] have the potential to universalize and thus to split, or if one prefers, to expropriate the Euro-Christian heritage.⁴⁹

We can see that the concept of mondialisation disrupts the universal inevitability of the Anglo-American discourse of globalisation that is unmarked by the history of the French term. It creates somewhat of a disturbance in the all-compassing ‘only game in town’ conceptualisations of contemporary globality. However, what the term mondialisation also implies is this worldwide-isation is also a simultaneous Europeanisation and a contestation of Eurocentrism. In a sense Derrida is asking Europe to understand its role, both positive and negative, in the history of the concept of mondialisation, but also, through the deconstructive genealogy, to exceed the critical heritage without destroying it. There is an openness to the

⁴⁶ Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 86.

⁴⁷ Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews*, 375.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

concept that differentiates it from what is called globalisation and hence there is a built-in, so to speak, “alter” in the idea of mondialisation. Indeed, this is what Derrida seeks, an altermondialisation or *an other* worldwide movement that is not simply conceived as a global marketplace. For as Michael Nass points out, in Latin *alter* means “not just another, an “alternative,” but “other.”⁵⁰ Derrida argues that it is the ‘duty’ of those who live under the name of “Europe,” what it represents, to critically move towards this “alter.”⁵¹

Hauntings

In *Specters of Marx* Derrida maintains that this *altermondialisation* must be developed to challenge what he describes as the ten plagues of the “new world order.” These plagues include underemployment, the ‘dissemination’ of nuclear weapons, contradictions in the concept of the free market, the conflict between protectionism and free trade, and the hypocrisy of international law, all of which are exercised against weaker nations.⁵² It is worth noting here, that as Balibar has pointed out, the “messianic” language Derrida employs to describe ‘the 10 plagues’ of the global capitalist system is most likely an ironic stab at the “neoliberal prophecies of the end of history.”⁵³ Fukuyama, argues that “the good news has come” and we are moving toward “the gates of the Promised Land of liberal democracy.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Derrida asserts that Fukuyama’s end of history thesis is part of a branch of discourse that sets about maintaining Western hegemony by disseminating its “New Gospel” of liberal democracy. He suggests, “This end of History thesis is essentially a Christian eschatology.”⁵⁵

He goes further and insists:

⁴⁹ Ibid., 376.

⁵⁰ Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, 86.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 76. Derrida further states: “Hence the *duty* to respond to the call of European memory, to recall what has been promised under the name Europe, to re-identify Europe – this *duty* is without common measure with all that is generally understood by the name *duty*, though it could be shown that all other duties perhaps presuppose it in silence.”

⁵² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 101-105.

⁵³ Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?*, 107.

⁵⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York; Toronto: Free Press; Maxwell Macmillan Canada; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992), xv.

⁵⁵ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 76.

For it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelize in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realized itself as the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of humanity. Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the ‘end of ideologies’ and the end of the great emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women and children been subjugated, starved or exterminated on the earth.⁵⁶

It is for these reasons that Derrida suggests we must conjure up the spectre of Marx. For Derrida this does not necessarily mean communism, although his title is a clear reference to the first line of *The Communist Manifesto*: “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism.” Rather, he aims to inherit from Marx the philosophy of responsibility and the spirit of his radical critique.⁵⁷ A notion of altermondialisation must then also be haunted by the spectre of Marx.

In *The Meaning of Sarkozy* Badiou wishes to raise the spectre of May 1968 and reassert the communist hypothesis to combat what he calls ‘transcendental Pétainism,’ so called after the leader of the Vichy regime who collaborated with Nazi Germany during the occupation of France. Badiou challenges the tendencies in liberal democratic discourse, exemplified by the work of Fukuyama, to declare the ‘end of’ or ‘the death of’ history. In part, Badiou’s critique of these tendencies is elucidated through a reworking of Freud’s notion of ‘the uncanny’ and the ‘return of the repressed,’ discussed in relation to a contemporary collective context. Freud suggested that the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, the ‘unhomely’) “is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed.”⁵⁸ Indeed, it is the ‘return of the repressed’ that manifests a potent illustration of the uncanny. In *The Meaning of Sarkozy* Badiou focuses on contemporary French politics, specifically the 2007 presidential elections, and identifies five formal

⁵⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 60-63.

⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 148.

characteristics⁵⁹ from the Pétain era that return, reconfigured, in the language and types of policy propagated throughout Nicholas Sarkozy's campaign in 2007. Badiou calls this 'transcendental Pétainism' and argues that "the mass subjectivity that brought Sarkozy to power, and sustains his actions, finds its unconscious national-historical roots in Pétainism."⁶⁰ A characteristic of Pétainism is to link the 'moral debasement' of society with 'harmful' events understood as moments of rupture. Indeed, Sarkozy insists that the spectre of the student protests of May '68, and the moral decline they apparently caused within French society, should be 'buried' in order for the nation to adequately 'regenerate.'⁶¹ Badiou gives a 'Sarkozian prosopopoeia': "We refuse to be haunted by anything at all. It is not enough that empirical communism has disappeared. We want all possible forms of it banished. Even the hypothesis of communism – generic of our defeat – must become unmentionable."⁶² What this illustrates is, on the one hand, a return of the disowned past (Pétain), and on the other, an attempt to officially repress May '68, to which Badiou responds with a call for a fight against its official repression. Although Badiou's discussion is culturally and historically specific to France, his conceptualisation of the return of history can be read in more general terms: as a positioning of the uncanny within a collective historico-political framework. Indeed, the declaration of 'an end' or 'a death' of history becomes a method for repressing and disowning unresolved historical mechanisms that, through this repression, will become manifest in a reconfigured form.

⁵⁹ Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London; New York: Verso, 2008), 85. Badiou summarises the five formal characteristics as follows: "First of all, the disorientation created by an explicit reversal of the real content of state action: talk of revolution when there is black reaction, of regeneration when there is capitulation, of a new freedom when there is complete servility. Second, the anti-political theme of moral crisis, which blames the people and gives the state a free hand to organize new forms of repression. Third, the theme of a harmful event as the origin and symbol of moral decline, an event that is always a striking episode in the political advance of the working class and people – the Revolution under Robespierre, the Commune, the Popular Front, May '68. Fourth, the paradigmatic function and value of the model of correction, of the most striking forms of extreme reaction to the foreigner. Fifth, the numerous variants relating the superiority of our civilization both to foreign populations – African for example – and to internal 'minorities' such as young Arabs."

⁶⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁶¹ Ibid., 36-41.

⁶² Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis," 35.

One of the most disruptive ‘returns of history’ is the resurfacing of unresolved historic trauma. For scholars such as Vijay Mishra and Cathy Caruth the idea of history and idea of trauma are invariably linked. They would argue that history, in the way it is understood through culture, compulsively repeats itself and that in this repetition history is bearing witness to past trauma. (We will see this concept reoccurring in the work of Artur Żmijewski, as emphasised by the title of a book about his lexicon: *If It Happened Only Once It's as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*⁶³). Mishra asserts that the principle of compulsive repetition “is at once *unheimlich*, melancholic (as an incomplete mourning), and the engine of history.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, he argues that:

Trauma repeats itself compulsively and has a historical presence without historical teleology. History cannot be written without trauma (both at the level of the individual and of the group), but trauma cannot be part of historical form because trauma disrupts the linear flow of historical narrative with its, history’s, basis in an originary moment.⁶⁵

Both Caruth and Mishra draw much of this conceptualisation of the history-trauma dynamic from their analysis of Freud’s seminal text *Moses and Monotheism*,⁶⁶ “where Jewish history is a history that repeats, in writing, the murder of the father (Moses) but which is also an ‘event’ in the general history of humankind [...] the imperative of the ‘dying god’ narrative in culture.”⁶⁷ This why Caruth claims that both history and trauma are not simply owned by an individual, because “history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas.”⁶⁸ Thus, the transmission of trauma, an idea that is itself rather contentious, has a spectral quality; it haunts new generations. Caruth describes the experience of trauma as an intrusive and unwanted return of mental images caused by the experience of an overwhelming event. She asserts that it is “a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours

⁶³ Artur Żmijewski, *If It Happened Only Once It's as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005).

⁶⁴ Vijay Mishra, *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, Trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939).

⁶⁷ Mishra, *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, 113.

⁶⁸ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 24.

stemming from the event ... [thus,] to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event.”⁶⁹ The very language used to try and describe the experience of trauma, the idea of possession for example, I would argue, draws clear associations with the idea of being haunted.

One of the major spectres of recent history that haunts contemporary political life is that of the Nazi concentration camps and the state of ‘bare life’ to which the inhabitants were reduced. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben suggests that if we examine the juridico-political structure which allowed what happened at the camps to take place, “[t]his will lead us to regard the camp not as a historical fact and an anomaly belonging to the past (even if still verifiable) but in some way the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living.”⁷⁰ The concentration camps were perhaps the most extreme and traumatic example of the implementation of the juridical law of the state of exception. The state of exception refers to the situation in which governments, or as Agamben would say, sovereign powers use the discourse of ‘exceptionalism,’ meaning that certain events and circumstances are deemed to be constitutively ‘outside the norm,’ in order to ‘legitimise’ ‘exceptional’ responses. Indeed, Hitler exploited such a discourse in 1933 with his Emergency Decree (*Notverordnung*), which effectively legitimised the over-reaching power of the National Socialists. Agamben argues that the state-sanctioned exclusion practiced at Guantánamo Bay illustrates this discourse of exceptionalism, the contemporary manifestation of the ancient Roman idea of the *homo sacer*. It legitimises the state of ‘bare life’, a “zone of irreducible indistinction” in which the individual is excluded from the rights afforded to citizens by state law. For instance, the threat of terrorism is considered by many states as ‘exceptional’ and therefore the internment of ‘terror suspects’, reduced to a state of ‘bare life,’ is constituted as legitimate.⁷¹ By 2005, when

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4-5.

⁷⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 166.

⁷¹ See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) his follow up to *Homo Sacer*, which deals with some of the specific issues relating to the ‘war on terror.’

writing more specifically about ‘the War on Terror’, Agamben controversially claimed that “the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics.”⁷²

Using the ancient Greek concepts of *zoē* and *bios* Agamben shows how the idea of the *homo sacer* establishes a form of ‘inclusive exclusion’ (bare life) within the *polis*. The Greeks used two terms for ‘life’: *zoē*, “which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings,” and, *bios*, which “indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group,”⁷³ from which political life is originated. For Agamben the term *zoē* suggests a life status of being included in the world of other living being whilst simultaneously being excluded from the right to self-determination or equality with other living beings: i.e. a life stripped bare. The *homo sacer*, the one reduced to a state of ‘bare life,’ is “included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed).”⁷⁴ As Žižek suggests of the prisoners at the Guantánamo Bay detention centre, they are the ones missed by the bombs; they “accidentally survived” the bombing, and are thus the exception, which “puts the prisoner almost literally into the position of *living dead*.”⁷⁵ Agamben asserts that “[t]he camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule.”⁷⁶ We can see how the detention centres throughout the world (as exemplified by the one in Guantánamo Bay), are justified by the sovereign powers by the fact that we live in ‘exceptional’ times, in times of terrorism, which therefore legitimises ‘inclusive exclusion’ and reduces the detainees to a state of ‘bare life’. In 1989 Margaret Thatcher stated:

[t]o beat off your enemy in a war, you have to suspend some of your civil liberties for a time. Yes, some of those measures do restrict freedom. But those who choose to live by the bomb and the gun, and those who support them, can’t in all circumstance be accorded exactly the same rights as everyone else. We do

⁷² Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2.

⁷³ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁵ Slavoj Žižek, "The Clash of Civilisations at the End of History," accessed June 1, 2011, <http://www.childrenofmen.net/slavoj.html>.

⁷⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 168-69.

sometimes have to sacrifice a little of the freedom we cherish in order to defend ourselves from those whose aim is to destroy that freedom altogether.⁷⁷

This demonstrates the logic of the state of exception as espoused by someone who deployed it in relation to the IRA. Such a logic has become almost commonplace since 9/11 and the state of exception is no longer seems exceptional.

Dissensus: Aesthetics/Politics

Like Agamben, Rancière also theorises contemporary modes of exclusionary practice, but focuses more insistently on how systematic forms of exclusion diffusely underpin what is called, or at least what is promoted as, inclusive consensus-driven democracy. Importantly, he foregrounds the role art (in all its numerous forms) can play in challenging these exclusionary systems. Rancière speaks of the rhetoric of democracy and freedom that has been propagated by many states, and theorised by many social and political scientists in the post-1989 period, as actually something closer to what he terms ‘post-democracy.’ This he defines as “the paradoxical identification of democracy with a consensual practice that suppresses political subjectivization [subjectification.]”⁷⁸ There are several interlinked concepts that feature strongly in Rancière’s political theory, notably dissensus, consensus, subjectification, politics and the *police*. The concept of the *police* suggests a system of implicit general laws (and historically formed discourses) that define and allocate certain roles within society (who can *legitimately* do or say a particular thing and when).⁷⁹ Rancière argues that consensus with the logic of the *police* and its systems of distribution not only supports participation and inclusion within a ‘community,’ but also legitimates the separation and exclusion of those who fall outside the presupposition of the ‘shared common’ of the community. Rancière contends that politics, in its basic sense, “occurs when there is a place and a way for two heterogenous

⁷⁷ Quoted in Dan Fisher, “Critics See Nation Switching Roles With Soviets: Own Rights Eroding, Britons Say,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 April 1989. I wish to thank my friend Campbell Birch for pointing me to this quote.

⁷⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006), 90. Rancière’s term, *la subjectivation*, is translated as both subjectivization and subjectification. For the sake of consistency I use subjectification which appears to be more commonly used.

⁷⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28.

processes to meet,”⁸⁰ on the basis of which consensus comes to represent a disappearance of politics. He argues that a “political subject is not a group of interests or ideas: It is the operator of a particular mode of subjectification and litigation through which politics has its existence.”⁸¹ It is the process of subjectification, when those who have ‘no part’ (who do not count as speaking beings) in the ‘shared common’ of the community take part and speak in this community, which disrupts the police order and gives rise to politics. Thus, the core or essence of politics (or politics proper) for Rancière is a process of dissensus.

In *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Rancière argues that consensus belongs to the logic of *the police*, a term used in a considerably broader sense than with that of the ‘petty’ police force (*la baise police*), but that nevertheless retains some the linguistic baggage and thus evokes the association with law (in its numerous manifestations). It is also worth noting here the root of the police-politics dialectic in the history of political thought. In *Politics and the Other Scene* Balibar points out the precarious relationship between citizenship and community in the origins of political thought: “The Greeks had only one word to express these two aspects: *politeia*, whence we derive our ‘politics’ as well as our ‘police.’”⁸² For Rancière,

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems of legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution of legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*.⁸³

Central to Rancière’s conceptualisation of the interrelationship of politics and his concept of the police order is the idea of ‘the distribution of the sensible.’⁸⁴ Rancière states that the distribution of the sensible is

the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously disclose the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁸¹ Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory and Event* 5, no. 3 (2001), accessed May 10, 2011, http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.3ranciere.html.

⁸² Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, x.

⁸³ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, 28.

⁸⁴ Rancière’s concept of *le Partage du sensible*, is translated as both the distribution of the sensible and partition of the sensible. In many of the newer translations, particularly his recent writing on aesthetics, the word ‘distribution’ is used. Therefore, I will use the phrase ‘distribution of the sensible’ unless quoting from an older translation such as *Dis-agreement*.

shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part of this distribution.⁸⁵

It is the implicit system of distribution and management, of passing on and receiving, upon which the general laws of the ‘shared common’ of the community are based; it is a parcelling out of forms of participation. Rancière utilises the double meaning of the phrase *avoir-part* to suggest that participation established through the distribution of the sensible involves both partaking and partitioning.⁸⁶ The *police* distribution of the sensible is a system that legitimises particular modes of being, doing, making, seeing, speaking, and acting, and is itself based on the presupposition that there is a border between what is visible and invisible, what is audible and inaudible within the public realm.

Rancière asserts that aesthetics (in its broad sense) is a form of the distribution of the sensible, as it consists of numerous (art) practices that are concerned with the production and distribution of that which can be perceived by the senses (the sensible). Indeed, artistic practices such as film, photography, painting, theatre, writing, etc, which make up the aesthetic regime of art,⁸⁷ are themselves forms of ‘doing and making’ that relate to the production of sense experience. Accordingly, these artistic practices can reaffirm the presuppositions that underlie the police order, yet on the other hand they can also intervene and rupture a particular consensual system of partitioning, causing an effective *redistribution* of the sensible. Aesthetics, for Rancière, is political as it is “a system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself as sense experience. Aesthetics is a delimitation of spaces and times of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience.”⁸⁸ Indeed, “artistic intervention can be political by modifying the visible, the ways of perceiving it and expressing it, experiencing

⁸⁵ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

⁸⁶ See “Thesis 1” from Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics.”

⁸⁷ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 22. Rancière suggests that there are three main, overlapping regimes of art: the ethical regime (Platonic), the poetic or representative regime (Aristotelian), and the aesthetic regime (dominant over the past two centuries). I discuss the aesthetic regime in the Chapter 6, “Be Careful with that Trauma, Christoph Schlingensief’s Dissensual Staging of ‘the unrepresentable.’”

it.”⁸⁹ These practices can potentially create a “shift in public consciousness concerning how we see, what is seen, who can legitimately say this is what is seen, felt ...”⁹⁰ Likewise, politics (which for Rancière is by nature dissensual) is in principle aesthetic, as it brings about a reconfiguration of what is perceived as visible and audible in the ‘shared common’ of the community. Thus, aesthetics can be political and politics can be aesthetic, and both, ideally, work to produce a rupture in the police order.

Rancière suggests that dissensus involves the reversal of perspectives, but there is not simply one method of accomplishing this reversal or indeed a single perspective to be reversed. The reversal that is of interest to me here is the popular understanding of the inclusion-exclusion dynamic under liberal democracy. In his book *Seeds of Time*, Frederic Jameson argues: “It seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the break down of late capitalism: perhaps due to some weakness in our imagination.”⁹¹ After the financial crisis of 2008 this idea gained new currency, particularly through Žižek’s *First as Tragedy, then as Farce* (2009) and *Living in the End Times* (2010), as governments attempted to restore faith in the system that created the collapse by propping it up with huge bailouts. In one of the more optimistic passages of *Living in the End Times* Žižek suggests that “if we change reality only in order to realize our dreams, without changing these dreams themselves, then sooner or later we will regress to the former reality.”⁹² This is where the works I examine seek to intervene, perhaps not in the dreams, but certainly in the imagination and perspective of how reality is constructed; ultimately, I argue with Žižek that imagination has real effects. An example that is important to this project is how the Roma population of Europe is imagined in visual culture, an imagination that in turn supports the way they are treated in reality. The discourses about Roma have been historically legitimated through a

⁸⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁹ Jacques Rancière, Fulvia Carnevale, and John Kelsey, “Art of the Possible,” 259.

⁹⁰ Robert Porter, “Distribution of the Sensible,” *Variant* 30 (2007), 17.

⁹¹ Frederic Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xii.

⁹² Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 79.

particular distribution of the sensible, a way they are imagined in political life and aesthetic practice, that continually reinforces Roma exclusion from the shared common of the community. Indeed, it is this imagination that feeds the hateful anti-Roma sentiment of many politicians and media commentators across Europe. The works I examine in the following chapters, starting with the Roma, attempt to re-imagine and disrupt an exclusionary political system that presents itself as the *only* viable political system.

The Distribution of the Gypsy Sensible: Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies*

The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for – originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, – all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such.
– Friedrich Nietzsche.

Gypsies are the only group about which anything can be said without challenge or demurral.
– Edward Said.

When we consider the imbrication of the politics and aesthetics of exclusion in contemporary Europe's visual landscape and culture, I contend that Roma are the most adversely affected. The Roma population of Europe have been imagined in a wide variety of aesthetic practices and this imagination influences how they are treated in reality.¹ The otherness of Roma, their apparent criminality and 'timeless' mysticity, is 'anxiously repeated'² and reinforced in European aesthetic practices. It is an otherness expressed through a representational oscillation between demonisation and romanticisation, an otherness which becomes fixed and arrested because it is continually reproduced. Among the most prevalent of these discourses of otherness is the 'knowledge' that Roma are 'primitive' and 'animal-like,' poor but happy, strongly connected with occultism and the dark arts, and as inherently criminal as they are overtly sexual. These discourses are used to justify their discrimination and persecution as part of a long artistic tradition in Europe according to which certain stereotypes about Roma, and roles and places for them, are continually produced and reproduced to create discourses not dissimilar to Orientalism. The discourses about Roma (often negative ones) have been historically legitimised through a particular distribution of the sensible, a way they are imagined in aesthetic practice that continually reinforces Roma exclusion from the shared

¹ French sociologist Jean-Pierre Liégeois reiterates the link between image and reality in his 1980 study of Roma: "Legislation, for its effects, contributes to feed and reinforce those aspects of the image, which are indispensable to itself. Legislation makes the gypsy live in instability and then it says he is unstable, it makes him live in uncertainty and out of balance and then it says he is unbalanced. The law feeds itself with the image. The image helps to rationalise it. The image is, then, re-strengthened by it." Jean-Pierre Liégeois quoted in Natassa Costi, "The Spectre that Haunts Italy: The Systematic Criminalisation of the Roma and the Fears of the *Heartland*," *Romani Studies* 5, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2010): 123.

² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classic, 2004). This is a phrase used by Homi Bhabha that I will come back to later in the chapter.

common of the community. Indeed, it is this imagination that feeds the hateful anti-Roma sentiment of many politicians and media commentators across Europe.

As we have seen from our discussion of the distribution of the sensible, Rancière's concept refers to a system which produces self-evident facts of perception. It is a system that both includes and excludes persons in and from the shared common of the community, and legitimises who has the right to speak and when. Artworks, fictions and films help perpetuate and reproduce the discourse of legitimisation for the apportionment of these roles and places in the community. I want to demonstrate how 'Gypsies' are imagined within a particular distribution of the sensible, specifically contemporary Balkan visual culture, and how this representation creates a knowledge that maintains and authorises their exclusion from the shared common of the community. Although there are consistent clichés and stereotypes about Roma, there are of course regional variations and what is of interest here is the way the stereotype functions and is mobilised in Balkan fictional representation, particularly cinema.

Scholars such as Slavoj Žižek, Maria Todorova, and Marko Živković have described the Balkans as being situated at the lower end of internal European hierarchies and have conceptualised the Balkans' relationship to the West as Balkanism, which has clear theoretical ties to Said's idea of Orientalism but obviously a more distinct geographical locatedness. There is a self-perceived status of the Balkanite as a marginal and liminal figure within a European context, and the representation of this sense of marginality, as Dina Iordanova has pointed out, has often been projected onto an even more excluded group: Roma. I will demonstrate how Emir Kusturica's acclaimed film *Time of the Gypsies* is part of a wider ideological trend of projective identification with 'Gypsies,' in which Balkan directors attempt to define themselves and their own feelings of marginality through the representation of Roma. The film demonstrates an ideological strategy of projective identification and a discursive ambivalence regarding the 'Gypsy' stereotype as it makes visible the social disaffection of Roma while simultaneously recycling cinematic tropes that compel the 'Gypsy'

image to remain static and fixated. It is this fixity, this frozen image, which is distributed in the same form again and again that effectively creates a set of implicit laws about what can be said, thought and visualised in relation to Roma. These implicit laws simultaneously function to foreclose the political subjectification of Roma and disarm dissensus. I am not suggesting that Kusturica (or any other Balkan filmmaker) is intentionally trying to negate dissensus but do argue that this is part of the ambivalence of his film.

There are several key reasons for the focus on *Time of the Gypsies*. Not only is the film an amalgam or synthesis of most of the popular beliefs about Roma, but it was both a popular and critical success that proved influential for the way Gypsies continue to be imagined in popular culture. Thus, while the following chapter will examine ‘counter-images’ articulated through Roma self-presentation, this chapter focuses on non-Roma representation of Roma. It will explore how the idea of the Gypsy features in the Balkan imaginary, more particularly the former Yugoslav and specifically Serb imaginary, and how this relationship sits in reference to Balkanite exclusion from Europe. The stereotypes reproduced in this system of distribution are not necessarily negative in and of themselves – for instance, Roma are said to be free-spirited and non-conventional – but, like most stereotypes, they are less about their objects (Roma) than about those producing the tropes (Balkanites), which in turn says much about their fantasies.

Although the ‘Roma diaspora’ is dispersed from the Middle East to the US, most of the world’s Roma population has historically lived, and indeed still lives, in Europe, particularly in the Balkans. 1989 is also an important starting point for the recognition of Roma as an *ethnically* excluded group. Indeed, the word Roma (instead of the pejorative term Gypsy) only began to appear in official reports (of refugees and minorities in Europe, for example) after the collapse of Eastern Bloc communism.³ Paloma Gay y Blasco notes that for some time,

³ Elena Marushikova and Vesselin Popov, "Historical and Ethnographic Background: Gypsies, Roma, Sinti," in *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Will Guy (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 45-47.

“‘Gypsy’ has been rejected by many as an exoticising and derogatory term that reflects the world-views and oppressive practices of the dominant population. In its place has arisen ‘Roma’, which is meant to reflect the rich heritage and cultural dignity and distinctiveness of an oppressed but also resisting people.”⁴ The exonym Gypsies originated as a pejorative term for a people regarded as Egyptian in origin and, although this notion has been widely dismissed by historians, the term Gypsy has remained in popular usage.⁵ In the changing ideological framework of post-Cold War Europe, ‘Roma’ became the accepted and standardised term used in official state policy and documentation.⁶ Gay y Blasco further suggests,

‘Roma’ also aims to denote the shared Indian origins, common history and identity of political interests of what could nonetheless also be seen as constellation of highly diverse European populations. [...] And yet ‘Gypsy’, or its local translations such as ‘Gitano’ or ‘Tsigane’, remains a preferred mode of self-ascription for many individuals and communities across Europe, either because ‘Roma’ is too new an introduction or because its connotations of ethnic uniformity make some uncomfortable.⁷

Following other scholars, such as Nikolina Dobreva,⁸ I will use the term ‘Roma’ to refer the ethnic group and ‘Gypsy’ to indicate their representation or the way they are constructed and imagined within the distribution of the sensible.

It is commonly accepted that Roma migrated westward from northern India through Anatolia into the Balkan region between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, and then began moving throughout the rest of Europe in the following centuries. Although it is argued that the origins of the Romani language (which is not spoken by many Roma) and culture are Indian, they have been historically influenced and shaped by Greek and Slavic traditions.⁹ This migration is represented in Tony Gatlif’s film *Latcho Drom* (1993), literally meaning safe journey, in

⁴ Paloma Gay y Blasco, “Picturing ‘Gypsies’: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Roma Representation,” *Third Text* 22, no. 3 (2008), 297.

⁵ Ken Lee, “Belated Travelling Theory, Contemporary Wild Praxis: A Romani Perspective on the Practical Politics of the Open End,” in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images ‘Gypsies’/Romanies in European Countries*, ed. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 34.

⁶ Marushiaikova and Popov, “Historical and Ethnographic Background: Gypsies, Roma, Sinti,” 45-47.

⁷ Gay y Blasco, “Picturing ‘Gypsies,’” 297.

⁸ Nikolina Dobreva, “Constructing the ‘Celluloid Gypsy’: Tony Gatlif and Emir Kusturica’s ‘Gypsy Films’ in the Context of New Europe,” *Romani Studies* 17, no. 2 (2007): 141.

⁹ Ian Hancock, “Forward,” in *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Will Guy (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001): viii.

which different musical sequences from India, Romania, Slovakia, France and Spain among others ‘stand in’ for the chronology of this migration. The Roma population in Europe is also highly contested, as official census rates position the population at about 1.5 million, whereas Roma leaders and various human rights groups estimate it at about 6.3 million, with the highest percentage residing in Romania, Bulgaria and former-Yugoslavia.¹⁰ One reason for the difference in figures is due to the high levels of persecution and discrimination suffered by Roma, which means many Roma are not willing to openly identify themselves as such.¹¹

Although Roma are not or were not colonial subjects in a traditional sense, the systematic discrimination and subjugation they have suffered, and still suffer, suggest their similarity with the colonised. Ken Lee succinctly explains this position:

[W]hile Romanies have never been colonized through dispossession of land in the same way as indigenous peoples, in many other respects they can be considered as colonial subjects – victims of imposed discursive (mis)representations and structural inequalities, marginalized, patronized, exploited, stripped of language, culture, dignity.¹²

Indeed, the often unacknowledged ‘slavery of Gypsies’ was a common practice sanctioned by law in much of the Balkans until the mid-nineteenth century.¹³ In the Ottoman Empire people were classified as faithful or gentile, which meant they could be treated differently and taxed differently under state law. However, Roma were an exception and were classified by ethnicity.¹⁴ The classification of Roma as an ethnic group rather than a people who were afforded minority status continued in many Balkan states after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which meant many structural inequalities stayed in place.¹⁵ From 1936, the Nazi government in Germany began transportation of Roma to Dachau and it was made illegal for Roma to marry outside their race. Ian Hancock asserts that between 1933 and 1945 approximately 1.5 million, or over 50 percent of the world’s Roma population, were killed as a result of Nazism;

¹⁰ Marushiaikova and Popov, "Historical and Ethnographic Background: Gypsies, Roma, Sinti," 34.

¹¹ Ibid, 34-35.

¹² Ken Lee, "Belated Travelling Theory, Contemporary Wild Praxis: A Romani Perspective on the Practical Politics of the Open End," 32-33.

¹³ Marushiaikova and Popov, "Historical and Ethnographic Background: Gypsies, Roma, Sinti," 43-44. Particularly in what is now contemporary Romania.

¹⁴ Ibid, 42.

¹⁵ Ibid.

however, not one Roma was called to testify at the Nuremberg Trials, and no reparations were paid to victims of war crimes.¹⁶ In the former Yugoslavia the most systematic persecution of Roma occurred in Croatia, where about 28,000 died at the extermination camp at Jasenovac.¹⁷

The discourses about Roma used to justify their discrimination and persecution are part of a long aesthetic tradition in Europe where certain stereotypes about them are continually produced and reproduced to create representational ideology not dissimilar to Orientalism. For Said, Orientalism is a set of discursive practices developed through academic scholarship, travel writing, journalism, literature, popular fiction, and artworks, in which ‘the Orient’ was created, constituted and imagined by the colonial West. It is an “integral part of European *material* civilization and culture [...] expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary. [...] It is a] style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) the ‘the Occident.’”¹⁸ A primary function of Orientalist discourse is to legitimise Western control over ‘the Orient’ by emphasising its otherness, and constructing it as mysterious and exotic but also violent, simplistic and irrational, as opposed to the apparently scientific and rational Occident.¹⁹ Said describes Orientalism as a kind of “corporate institution” for managing the Orient by describing it, teaching it, administrating it, and authorising perceptions about it.²⁰ The perceived authority of Orientalist discourse helps maintain and perpetuate the Otherness and ‘inferiority’ of the Orient as well as the dominance and ‘superiority’ of the West, which in Said’s analysis refers mainly to Britain and France (from the late eighteen century onward) and more recently the United States (from the mid-twentieth century onward). However, this authority is by no means as natural or mysterious as it may appear. Said asserts that “[Orientalist authority] is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is

¹⁶ Ian Hancock, “Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands: A Chronology to the Holocaust and Beyond” *Nationalities Papers* 19, no. 3 (1991): 401-06.

¹⁷ Donald Kenrick, “Former Yugoslavia: A Patchwork of Destinies,” in *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Will Guy (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 405.

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 2.

¹⁹ Ibid, 2-6.

instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgements it forms, transmits, reproduces.”²¹ In a sentiment similar to Nietzsche’s statement from *The Gay Science* quoted in the epigraph, Said notes that what started as appearance has become an authorised essence through continued dissemination and reproduction.²² However, Orientalism is not merely a representation (or misrepresentation); it is “a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts [...].”²³ The distribution of aesthetic texts that speak about, speak for, and authorise views on Roma both feed into the kind of geopolitical awareness about them highlighted by Said and reinforce the ‘always already’ existing knowledge about them.

In *The Location of Culture* Homi K. Bhabha expands upon and develops many of the ideas conceptualised by Said in *Orientalism*. Of particular interest and use here is his elaboration of the (colonial) stereotype, which he proposes is both ambivalent and fixed. Bhabha asserts that because relationships between the coloniser and colonised are not self-evident, it has not always been so and thus need not necessarily be so without justification (one will notice a similarity with Said’s discussion on authority). For instance, a frequent validation was that colonial peoples were inferior or primitive and hence colonialism was part of a ‘civilising

²⁰ Ibid, 3.

²¹ Ibid, 19-20.

²² Ibid, 6. Said asserts: “Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied – indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.”

²³ Ibid, 12. Said continues, “it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a series of ‘interests’ which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world.”

mission.’ What Bhabha perceives as central to the ambivalence of this colonial discourse is what he maintains was revealed yet not expanded upon by Said, notably the psychoanalytic language used to express *latent* and *manifest* Orientalism.²⁴ He maintains that colonialism is justified by a notion of difference between coloniser and colonised, yet the colonial power has an *unconscious knowledge* that this apparent difference is continually undercut by an actual sameness. Like Freud’s concept of the fetish, the stereotype is “a ‘play’ or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity [...] and the anxiety associated with lack and difference.”²⁵ It works on a process of disavowal and is an ambivalent “form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it.”²⁶ The stereotype functions like the ‘scene of fetishism,’ as it works through a ‘reactivation and repetition’ of a particular fantasy.²⁷ Furthermore, due to the stereotype’s ambivalence, in order to function as a practical tool and to legitimise colonialism it must (like the fetish) be constantly repeated and reproduced. It is because of this repetition that the stereotype becomes arrested and fixed.

Colonial discourse, according to Bhabha, is reliant on a process of fixity in order to effectively construct a sense of otherness that is ideologically coherent. The fixity of the stereotype creates a knowledge about its subject: they are always ‘in place’ and ‘already known.’²⁸ This is why, Bhabha argues, within the frame of colonial discourse we do not need ‘proof’ to assume, declare or advise on the “essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African.”²⁹ It is the continued distribution of this knowledge, the ‘anxious repetition’ of it, often through aesthetic practice, which helps deny the subject of the stereotype power, because they remain unchangeable. Like Said, Bhabha suggests that the key problem of the stereotype and the representations of colonial subjects is not necessarily their incorrectness or falsity. Although of course he is not denying that falsity, misinformation and

²⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 102-03.

²⁵ Ibid, 106-07.

²⁶ Ibid, 107. Bhabha contends that this process is both brilliantly and succinctly captured in the title of Frantz Fanon’s book of 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks*, an author who Bhabha cites as one of his most important influences.

²⁷ Ibid.

misrepresentation are involved in the construction of the colonial stereotype, this is not its most damaging or problematic aspect. Rather, Bhabha asserts,

The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations.³⁰

Similarly, there is an ideological ‘fixity’ of the ‘Gypsy’ stereotype, an arrested image which is ambivalent in nature, since it both demonises and exoticises Roma, and in so doing continues to legitimise their subjugation and disenfranchisement.

In his article “The History and Making of European Romani Stereotypes” Colin Clark identifies five main archetypal clichés about ‘Gypsies’ which have persisted since the fourteenth century, but which were strongly reinvigorated by the ideas of the noble savage that featured regularly in Romantic poetry from the eighteenth century.³¹ The first theme Clark highlights is what he terms ‘blackness equals savagery equals Other,’ which is related to numerous descriptions of Roma as being ‘dark and tawny’ and the equation of blackness with being ‘primitive’ and ‘animal-like.’³² This stereotype is not only a romanticised view that falls in line with the noble savage, who represents a primal essence and hence a lost primitive ideal, but also a sense of degeneracy and animality. The second theme is the idea of ‘nobility and leadership,’ which implies a kind of aristocracy within Roma culture represented by the ‘King of the Gypsies’ whose subjects are ‘poor but happy.’³³ Thirdly, there is ‘occultism and the dark arts’ associated with Gypsies’ apparent supernatural powers: “fortune-telling, casting spells, magical healing powers and rituals are essential characteristics of this stereotype, which, again, persists in modern representations.”³⁴ The fourth and often most damaging

²⁸ Ibid, 95.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 107.

³¹ There are regional differences between stereotypes and a more ‘Balkan specific’ discussion will follow in due course.

³² Colin Clark, "Severity Has Often Enraged But Never Subdued a Gipsy": The History and Making of European Romani Stereotypes," in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 230-31.

³³ Ibid, 231-32.

³⁴ Ibid, 232.

theme is ‘crime equals Gypsy,’ which is linked to the stereotype of the ‘dirty thieving Gypsy,’ who is a vagrant and a threat to ‘civilised society.’³⁵ Finally, the fifth theme of ‘overt sexuality,’ is usually associated with women: “they are charismatically attractive, uninhibited and tantalizing.”³⁶ This is also a common representational mode in Orientalist discourse as the sexualisation of the ‘Other’ limits its subjectification and thus prevents the Other from entering a space of equal power with the discursive source of the stereotype.

Emir Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies* not only reproduces many of the archetypal clichés examined by Clarke, but it also is central in grounding them in the landscape of Balkan popular culture, due in part to the film’s popularity and critical acclaim. It earned Kusturica the “Best Director” award at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for (and won) numerous other prestigious European awards. In her article “Gypsy Music and Deejays” Ioana Szeman argues that Kusturica’s films have a significant influence on the perpetuation of Gypsy stereotypes not only in Balkan cinema from the 1990s onwards but also on the way Roma bands touring Western Europe (e.g. Fanfare Ciocărlia) and ‘Gypsy’ music festivals market themselves. She asserts that “[n]on-Romani works featuring Roma, such as Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies* and *Black Cat, White Cat*, have created a whole field of signifiers that continue to be quoted, recycled, and perpetuated, to the extent that Roma use and quote them themselves.”³⁷

Time of the Gypsies focuses on the story of Perhan, a Roma teenager who has telekinetic powers and lives with his charm-healer grandmother Haditža and crippled younger sister Danira. Perhan is in love with Azra, whom he wants to marry. The arrival of Ahmed, a mafia boss nicknamed ‘the Sheikh’, to the village further complicates Perhan’s plans to be with Azra. When Haditža helps cure Ahmed’s ailing young son, the Sheikh agrees to take Danira to a hospital in Ljubljana and pay for her medical costs. Perhan accompanies his sister on the

³⁵ Ibid, 233-34.

³⁶ Ibid, 234.

trip, intending to stay with her in hospital; however, Ahmed convinces him to come to Italy and work for him in order to send money home to his grandmother. The work involves organising a child-begging syndicate in Milan where a large share of each child's daily takings would go to Ahmed.³⁸ After Ahmed has a stroke, his two brothers desert him, and take most of the children and his revenue. He then persuades Perhan to go back to Bosnia to collect more 'potential' beggars; otherwise he will not be able to continue paying Danira's hospital bills. Perhan uses this opportunity to visit his village, where he discovers Azra is pregnant. Back in Milan, Azra dies during childbirth and Ahmed takes the child and leaves for Rome. Perhan then discovers that Ahmed had been double-crossing him, not maintaining Danira in hospital in Ljubljana, but rather forcing her to work as a beggar in Italy. Perhan seeks revenge on Ahmed, killing him via means of telekinesis at his wedding. In retaliation, Ahmed's bride-to-be shoots Perhan, and the film ends with a funeral scene that includes Danira and Perhan's young son back in the small village.

The film begins like *Amarcord* (Federico Fellini, 1973), with a local 'fool' directly addressing the audience. The 'fool' tells the spectator:

They want to ruin my life, prick my brain with injections. I'm not keen on that. They order me to eat powders, to swallow light bulbs. They've bound my soul and led it like a bear. I am not Bozana the she-bear. They want to my wings. What will my spirit do without wings? My spirit needs to fly. She cries, she sings or laughs, whenever she wants. When God came down to earth, he couldn't deal with the Gypsies, and took next flight back. Not my fault.

The man, with a shaven head, looks sickly, and although he appears intermittently throughout the film he remains nameless and almost 'outside' of the film. His general appearance and the 'injections' and torture he speaks of suggest that he stands in for the Roma of the concentration camps, both for those who died and those who survived and remain 'outside' legal parameters to receive compensation for the crimes committed against them. He also represents the Holy Fool, a recurring figure within the Eastern Orthodox literary and cinema

³⁷ Ioana Szeman, "'Gypsy Music' And Deejays: Orientalism, Balkanism, and Romani Musicians," *The Drama Review* 53, no. 3 (2009): 103.

traditions. Traditionally, the Holy Fool “teaches people by means of images of sin and he tells them truth disguised behind a fool’s appearance and behaviour.”³⁹ Considering this convention, and the fact that he is the only character to break the fourth wall and directly address the audience, the context indicates that although he may speak in riddles, he speaks the truth. Interestingly, this is one of the only occasions in the film that Kusturica implicates those outside the Roma community in the persecution or exploitation of Roma.

Time of the Gypsies references a wide range of films from different countries and movements;⁴⁰ however, it is the ‘Gypsy film,’ popular in the Yugoslav cinematic tradition, that is the pivotal reference point to the explication of Kusturica’s use of ‘Gypsy’ stereotypes. Films such as *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1967), *Who Sings Over There?* (Slobodan Šijan, 1980) and *Guardian Angel* (Goran Paskaljević, 1987), which were successful at the box-office in former Yugoslavia and had critical success internationally,⁴¹ were hugely influential on *Time of the Gypsies*.⁴² For example, the motif of the wandering geese with which the film’s characters interact was recycled from *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. The original Serbian title is *Skupljači perja*, which means “The Feather Gatherers” and clearly foregrounds the image of geese as important to the characters in the film. In both films this visually arresting, almost magical imagery of geese wandering through the village, their white feathers in stark contrast to the dark, almost ubiquitous mud, functions as a means of exoticising the unusual or nonconventional life-styles of Roma.⁴³ Through the reproduction of exoticised imagery of Roma as wild, intense and unpredictable denizens of a culture fundamentally unchanged by modernity, the film continues to maintain a sense of fixity and

³⁸ The Sheikh, with help from his two brothers, provides the children (dressed as amputees or cripples) protection from other criminal groups and successful areas of the city to beg and to increase their revenue; thus replicating the begging system portrayed in Bertolt Brecht’s *Three-Penny Opera*.

³⁹ Dana Heller and Elena Volkova, “The Holy Fool in Russian and American Culture: A Dialogue,” *American Studies International* 49, no. 1&2 (2003): 154.

⁴⁰ Dina Iordanova, *Emir Kusturica, World Directors* (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), 68. Iordanova suggest that Kusturica’s films involve numerous cinematic makeovers.

⁴¹ *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* was nominated for several major awards including the ‘Best Foreign Film’ Oscar.

⁴² Marko Živković, “Jelly, Slush, and Red Mists: Poetics of Amorphous Substances in Serbian Jeremiads of the 1990s,” *Anthropology and Humanism* 25, no. 2 (2000): 169.

⁴³ Živković (2000) discusses the symbol of mud in the Serbian imaginary in some detail.

the notion that Roma are ‘always already known.’ Effectively, what the stereotypes of ‘Gypsies’ mobilised in these films do, albeit sympathetically, is to locate Roma ‘outside of time’ and ‘outside of history.’⁴⁴

The magical realist style⁴⁵ used by Kusturica to create *Time of the Gypsies* is in itself a formal method by which he illustrates his exoticised perception of Romani culture and mythology. Perhan’s telekinetic abilities and his capacity to communicate with his pet turkey demonstrate clear links to the magical realist tradition, but also directly relate to the common stereotypes about Roma possessing dark and occult powers. It is evident from the press kit for the film that the romanticisation of certain aspects of Roma life through magical or fantastical elements was fundamental to its conception. Kusturica is quoted as saying that he did not want *Time of the Gypsies* to be “just a realistic movie … if you’re going to make a picture based on Gypsy life, you have to change your form.”⁴⁶ He also goes on to say that Roma are “the only ones inclined to associate the most important moments of their lives with the collective unconscious … [and this was why] their experiences should be expressed through their dreams and imagination.”⁴⁷

The river celebration of Saint George’s Day (Ederlezi) in *Time of the Gypsies* is a prominent example of this link that further fetishises ritualistic aspects of Roma culture.⁴⁸ The scene is clearly signposted as a dream sequence by the fact that it begins as Perhan closes his eyes to sleep. It occurs after a neighbour prevents him from committing suicide, which he attempts because he has been denied permission to marry Azra. A non-diegetic choral rendering of the

⁴⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 18-21.

⁴⁵ Luis Leal, interview with author, in Mario T. García, *Luis Leal: An Auto/Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). Luis Leal suggests: “each writer gives expression to a reality he observes in the people. To me, magical realism is an attitude on the part of the characters in the novel toward the world” (126-27). Leal argues that magical realism is not a form that is wholly phantasmagoric, in which ‘new worlds’ or ‘alternate realities’ are created, as evidenced for instance in many science fiction films. Rather, magical elements are incorporated into an otherwise ‘reliable’ narrative because the scope of realism, as a mode of social critique, is too limited (89-90).

⁴⁶ Emir Kusturica quoted in Ian Hancock, “Dom Za Vesanje, O Vaxt a Rromengo: Time of the Gypsies ” *The Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 56.

⁴⁷ Emir Kusturica quoted in Iordanova, *Emir Kusturica*, 69.

⁴⁸ Ederlezi is the Romani name for a spring festival that falls on the 6th of May. Known as the Feast of St George or Đurđevdan in Serbo-Croatian, it is a religious holiday in the Western-Balkans, for Orthodox Christians and Muslims alike. See Hancock, “Dom Za Vesanje, O Vaxt a Rromengo: Time of the Gypsies ” 53-54.

traditional folk song *Ederlezi*, arranged by Goran Bregović, slowly builds to almost operatic crescendo and provides an eerie and highly emotive musical accompaniment to the entire scene. The song is performed in a *sevdah* style, a form which connotes a “strange state of extreme exaltation and, at the same time, deep sadness”⁴⁹ and is heard here with melancholic female vocal arrangements and a moderate tempo, which is maintained by a large brass section. The music begins as Perhan closes his eyes; the camera then pans horizontally as we see him gliding/flying above a river in which hundreds of the villagers are celebrating.⁵⁰ Perhan gradually moves out of frame as the camera slowly cranes vertically downward whilst concurrently zooming out to provide a wide-angled, deep-field, long shot that establishes a scene of a festival on the river that is densely populated with people holding candles, small flaming effigies floating on the water, an elaborately decorated raft, and birds as well as other animals. The sense that we are following Perhan’s dream-like view of the celebration is emphasised by the cinematography, as the camera cranes in slow semi-circular movements only slightly above those celebrating until it reaches Azra. The scene remains highly dream-like as we follow Perhan and Azra as they lie together in a small boat, floating on the river oblivious to the surrounding celebrations. The scene ends with intercut images of the crying grandmother’s face, and Azra slowing wading through water, moving away from Perhan and the camera. As the music fades out, Kusturica cuts to visceral images of village life: birds fighting and men gambling. The fantasmic quality of the sequence is thus clearly demarcated; however, the fact that Azra becomes pregnant in the real diegetic world of the film as a result of the sexual communion in the dream is an important narrative as well as aesthetic element of Kusturica’s magical realism. It is a “narrative technique that blurs the distinction between fantasy and reality. It is characterized by an equal acceptance of the ordinary and the

⁴⁹ Gocić, *Notes from the Underground: The Cinema of Emir Kusturica*, 85.

⁵⁰ Iordanova, *Emir Kusturica*, 68. The scene can be included in what Dina Iordanova calls Kusturica’s ‘cinematic make-overs,’ in which he re-makes scenes from other films and places them in his very specific cultural context to effectively ‘universalise’ highly localised material and references. The pagan river celebration from Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Andrei Rublev* (1965) is the primary referent here, as Kusturica not only attempts to recreate Tarkovsky’s elaborate *mise-en-scène*, but also endeavours to duplicate his complex horizontal and vertical camera movements.

extraordinary.”⁵¹ Indeed, this scene illustrates how Kusturica has incorporated the stereotype of the ‘mystical Gypsy’ into the actual formal framework of his film and seems to assume there is a kind of natural or inherent allegiance between Roma and the idea of ‘otherworldliness.’

A prevalent trope adapted and reproduced by Kusturica in *Time of the Gypsies* is the stereotypical dichotomy between ‘noble savage,’ or the poor but happy ‘Gypsy’, and the corrupted criminal ‘Gypsy.’ This is particularly evident when we consider the depiction of Perhan’s life early in the film: he wants to play his accordion, care for his animals and spend time with Azra. His grandmother Haditža frequently reiterates what she views as core values: to be generous, kind and respectful, but also enjoy life and make use of one’s ‘god-given’ gifts, in Perhan’s case music, healing and telekinesis. The hardship of village life is emphasised through the realistic *mise-en-scène*; the film was shot on location on the outskirts of the Macedonian capital of Skopje, in the vicinity of Europe’s largest Romani settlement, Šutka.⁵² Although the dwellings in the town appear ‘primitive’ and dilapidated, the inhabitants show enjoyment of what they have and partake in numerous communal festivities. This is starkly contrasted with Perhan’s time in Milan, where enjoyment is solely related to money and profit, and every member of Ahmed’s gang is involved in some sort of criminal activity. With respect to Perhan’s changing appearance and ethical code Elena Gabor candidly notes, “In Italy, as his dignity and ideals go down, his appearance goes up. Toward the end, he looks like a young mafia boss.”⁵³ Caterina Pasqualino also highlights the dualism between impoverished and wealthy, dignified and corrupted that is constructed in the film:

Without realising it, Kusturica recycles the view that Roma are positive characters only while they live in poverty back in the ghetto and can enjoy the gregarious, spontaneous and festive way of life they are known for. However, as soon as they fall away from the ‘original’ Eden and engage in a more urban

⁵¹ Naomi Lindstrom, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 88.

⁵² Iordanova, *Emir Kusturica*, 61-62.

⁵³ Elena Gabor, “Gypsy Stereotypes and Ideology Levels in Two European Feature Films,” *Intercultural Communication Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 288.

existence, they grow dishonest. The usual moralistic attitude lurks behind Kusturica's poetic images: better a genuine, impoverished Gypsy than one who is wealthy but corrupt.⁵⁴

Kusturica seems to be reproducing the rural-urban divide characteristic of the noble savage mythology from Romantic literature. The rural or primitive is constructed as 'truer' and more 'authentic,' just as in this case "poverty lends the Gypsies their insouciance and nobility,"⁵⁵ while, on the other hand, the city signifies contamination and corruption. Through this type of mythologising Kusturica perpetuates a discourse that attributes authenticity to poverty; like the colonial discourse examined by Bhabha or the Orientalism analysed by Said, it is a form of knowledge that denies its object agency and the power of subjectification. It is precisely such knowledge that allows journalists, scholars, etc., to be openly racist about Roma without fear of 'challenge or demurral.' For instance, in an article on *Time of the Gypsies* film scholar Andrew Horton uses the stereotype of 'Gypsy' criminality to allude to Kusturica's own 'quoting' of both Hollywood and European art cinema: "Kusturica, like a gypsy, has stolen from everyone, including from his native Bosnian and Yugoslav tradition for folk surrealism and magic realism."⁵⁶ As Bhabha might suggest, the stereotype mobilised by Horton allows him to assume a particular knowledge, 'Gypsy criminality,' which he can expect his readers to understand and accept not as an example of racism but as something that is always-already known.

The 'Gypsy film' was important within the cinematic tradition of former Yugoslavia and is still a popular film type in the now-separate states, particularly Serbia. Some of the most highly regarded and popular films of the Yugoslav era were 'Gypsy films'. Dina Iordanova points out that Roma protagonists and Gypsy subplots were ubiquitous in cinemas from the region. Shortly after World War II there were numerous popular Yugoslav films featuring overly romantic Gypsy heroines, including *Impure Blood* (Radoš Novaković, 1948), *A Gypsy* (Vojislav Nanović, 1953) and *Hanka* (Slavko Vorkapić, 1955), and the trope of the 'Gypsy

⁵⁴ Caterina Pasqualino, "The Gypsies, Poor but Happy: A Cinematic Myth," *Third Text* 22, no. 3 (2008): 342.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 340.

film' became a mainstay of Yugoslav cinema.⁵⁷ Iordanova notes that the 1980 'Gypsy film' *Who Sings Over There* is "considered by many Yugoslavs the quintessential metaphor of national fate."⁵⁸ The film is a road movie set in April 1941 and follows a busload of travellers making their way to Belgrade on the same day the Nazis invade and bomb the city. The bus travellers constitute a cross section of Yugoslav society, including two Roma musicians. The two are wrongly accused of a theft and are beaten because of it. However, during their attack the bus is hit by a German bomb and all but the two Roma are killed. It is considered an assertion of the strength and survival of the 'marginal and oppressed' and is regarded as "a prophetic vision of Yugoslavia – country busy fighting imaginary internal demons while vulnerable to destruction from outside."⁵⁹ In December 1991 elements of *Who Sings Over There*'s final scenes, in which the Roma protagonists perform a melancholic song amidst the destruction of war, were incorporated into Serb war propaganda. This was in response to commercials coming out of Croatia and was used, as Mattijs van de Port argues, to symbolise the 'sad fate of the Serbian nation' and its fight against fascism.⁶⁰

However it was during the 1990s, when the Yugoslav state was violently disintegrating, that the proliferation of Gypsy-themed cinema reached its zenith in the Balkans.⁶¹ *Time of the Gypsies* has a pivotal place in the history of the Balkan 'Gypsy film.' It successfully incorporated numerous visual motifs and themes from both Yugoslav and European art cinema, met with significant critical success internationally and was very strong at the domestic box office. Serbian anthropologist Marko Živković suggests that Bregović's version of *Ederlezi* played at numerous key points throughout the film even became a kind of

⁵⁶ Andrew Horton, "Cinematic Makeovers and Cultural Border Crossings: Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* and Coppola's *Godfather and Godfather 2*," in *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes*, ed. Andrew Horton and Stuart McDougal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 181.

⁵⁷ Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), 213.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 222.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Mattijs Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 144.

⁶¹ Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, 214-16.

unofficial Serbian national anthem during the 1990s.⁶² In hindsight, one could view *Time of the Gypsies* as a culmination of the Yugoslav ‘Gypsy film.’ Indeed, Goran Gocić asserts that the film “might be the first work of fiction since *Carmen* to synthesise all the popular beliefs about Gypsies into a unique, all-embracing, eternal – and practically archetypal – narrative.”⁶³ Furthermore, because of its success *Time of the Gypsies* became the standard-bearer and main point of stylistic reference for directors making ‘Gypsy films’ in the 1990s.⁶⁴ What this renewed interest in the ‘Gypsy film’ and the often exoticised non-Roma representations of Roma in former Yugoslav cinema illustrate is the representational and ideological strategy described as projective identification. The term, which has roots in psychoanalytic discourse, suggests seeing oneself in the Other, or more specifically in cinematic terms, defining oneself by representing the Other.⁶⁵ What we see occurring in the Balkan ‘Gypsy film’ is a sense of double marginality and fixity in the sense that Balkanite filmmakers have often used Roma to reflect upon their own status as outsiders, and their own marginality within a European context. This understanding (or knowledge) of the Balkans in relation to (Western) Europe is referred to in various places as Nesting Orientalism⁶⁶ or Balkanism.⁶⁷

This self-perception of Balkan marginality in Europe relates to the fact that the region is geographically part of Europe, but culturally and ideologically considered liminal. Building on Orientalist discourse, Maria Todorova calls this construction Balkanism, which primarily differs from Said’s notion in that “there is the historical and geographic concreteness of the

⁶² Živković, "Jelly, Slush, and Red Mists: Poetics of Amorphous Substances in Serbian Jeremiads of the 1990s," 180. "When the Yugoslav basketball team won the European championship in Athens in 1995 after years of being banned from international competition, a huge crowd spontaneously gathered in the center of Belgrade to celebrate (rivaling in number some of the largest antiregime demonstrations, as wryly noted by opposition commentators). Djurdjevdan [Serbian title for *Ederlezi*] was then played precisely as an emblem of national identity—as a popular and unofficial Serbian anthem."

⁶³ Gocić, *Notes from the Underground: The Cinema of Emir Kusturica*, 98.

⁶⁴ Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, 218-19.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 214-15.

⁶⁶ Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917-31.

⁶⁷ See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Updated Edition. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) or Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 225, September-October (1997): 37-40.

Balkans as opposed to the intangible nature of the Orient.”⁶⁸ She argues that, although there are elements of romanticisation in Balkanism, it primary refers to a representational discourse that has negative connotations. For Todorova, ‘Balkanization’ “not only had come to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units but also had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian.”⁶⁹ These types of narratives about the Balkans and its inhabitants grew out of early descriptions of the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and were perpetuated in Western European and American popular scholarship and media from that point onwards. This paradigm was dramatically reinvigorated and redeployed in many news reports about the conflict in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.⁷⁰ Žižek also links Balkanism with Orientalism and suggests that in Western liberal multiculturalist discourse “the Balkans [are conceived] as the timeless space onto which the West projects its phantasmatic content.”⁷¹ For Žižek Kusturica’s 1995 Palm d’Or-winning film *Underground* cynically reproduces Balkanism and the clichés about the region, and sells them back to the Western market that developed the discourse in the first place.⁷² The sense of timelessness, incomprehensibility and being ‘outside of history’ that Žižek describes as markers of Balkanism in *Underground* are also key motifs attributed to Roma in *Time of the Gypsies*. These same characteristics are redeployed by Kusturica again in *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998), a film made after the controversy around *Underground*, from which Kusturica attempted to distance himself.⁷³ *Black Cat, White Cat* is highly farcical with multiple subplots and attempts to show the exuberant, freewheeling and passionate nature of Balkan people through the romanticised depiction of the ‘non-conventional’ life-styles of Roma.

⁶⁸ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 3-8.

⁷¹ Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism,” 38.

⁷² Ibid, 38. Žižek argues: “[what *Underground*] offer[s] to the Western liberal gaze is precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war—the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anaemic Western life.”

⁷³ *Underground* was initially widely embraced by Western critics (it gave Kusturica his second Palm d’Or) but drew heavy criticism from many Balkan writers who suggested the film was effectively Serb propaganda. Sean Homer provides a good critical overview of these responses to the film but himself argues for “reading *Underground* as a film *about* propaganda though rather than *as* propaganda.” Sean Homer, “Retrieving Emir

Živković argues that the utilisation of the ‘Gypsy’ trope in the Serbian cinema is a way for Serbs to examine their own predicament within a larger European context. He asserts,

Gypsies are exemplary pariahs, outcasts, the very bottom of internal hierarchies throughout Europe. If the Balkans are perceived as a pariah and at the bottom of European hierarchies, one can expect to see the demon of metonymic misrepresentation declare Balkanites to be the Gypsies of Europe.⁷⁴

To be sure, a cinematic strategy employed by Balkan directors to express their own feeling of marginalisation caused by the negative influence of ‘Balkanist’ discourse is to engage in a process of projective identification with Roma. Although projective identification can be understood, in part, as an unconscious process in the Freudian sense, it has also been acknowledged as a manifestly political representational strategy. Macedonian director Stole Popov suggests his film *Gypsy Magic* (1997) was a metaphor for the strife of his country during the break-up of Yugoslavia. He states, “Gypsies served merely as a picturesque backdrop for a more universal story of the rejected and the maladjusted.”⁷⁵ As *Time of the Gypsies* illustrates, the form of projective identification that seeks to exoticise the rituals and non-conventional life-styles of Roma was also a successful method for marketing the perceived Balkanite ‘Otherness’ back to Western Europe. In a general comment on Kusturica’s body of work Živković implies that the director engages in a form of projective identification that not only represents Balkan marginality, but also suggests a type of self-exoticisation for the sake of Western, specifically French audiences. He writes,

A periphery would then metonymically present itself to the metropolis in terms of what is most denigrated in the overarching hierarchy while trying to reverse its value. And the metropolis is eager to see what is projected into the periphery reflected back to it. Why would a Paris urbanite be interested in mundane problems of a Belgrade urbanite? Barbarity, violence and Gypsy exotica are much sexier. For the periphery, that can result in various material and immaterial benefits, from increased tourism to Golden Palms at the Cannes Film Festival.⁷⁶

Kusturica’s *Underground* as a Critique of Ethnic Nationalism,” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary*, No. 51, Spring (2009), accessed September 2, 2013, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/Kusterica/text.html>.

⁷⁴ Živković, “Jelly, Slush, and Red Mists: Poetics of Amorphous Substances in Serbian Jeremiads of the 1990s,” 170.

⁷⁵ Stole Popov, interview with author, in Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, 220.

⁷⁶ Marko Živković, “Tender-hearted Criminals and the Reverse Pygmalion: Narratives of the Balkan Male in Recent Serbian Films,” Paper read at *American Anthropological Association Meetings*, December 2-6, 1998, at Philadelphia, quoted in Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), 217.

This portrayal of the self through the romanticised Other (the Gypsy) allows the ‘Belgrade urbanite’ to show ‘what they are really like,’ but are not allowed to be. Indeed, Dutch anthropologist Mattijs Van de Port argues that this process of projective identification, the ‘really like’ that ‘the Gypsy’ personifies for the Serb, can be likened to what Julia Kristeva calls ‘the disturbingly strange’⁷⁷: “the ‘otherness’ of our ‘ourness’, which we do not know how to handle.”⁷⁸ Van de Port is suggesting that the representation of ‘the Gypsy’ in cinema, as in many other forms of aesthetic practice and tellingly in everyday conversation, allows Serbs to say this is ‘how we really are but who we cannot be’ because of societal constraints and social norms.⁷⁹ Roma offer Serbs a means through which to celebrate irrationality and wildness, a position outside civilisation and society that offers access to the taboo through a fantasy of freewheeling essence.⁸⁰

Van de Port asserts that part of the reason for the popularity of *Time of the Gypsies* in former Yugoslavia, particularly Serbia, was Kusturica’s ability to posit elements of familiarity or normality in the ‘strange Gypsy world’ he created. In a scene early in the film there is a quick succession of ‘exotic’ images that establishes the Gypsy neighbourhood before the camera pauses on a normal scene of a young boy buying bread from a bakery. For Van de Port the effect of the pause is clear: “normality is just around the corner, don’t think we’re far from home.”⁸¹ In another interior scene a popular, scientific educational show, *In Search of the Secrets of Life*, is playing while the inhabitants talk amongst themselves, a show that would

⁷⁷ Mattijs Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 153-54.

⁷⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 201.

⁷⁹ Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town*, 154. Van de Port highlights how many Serb children are punished for being ‘like Gypsies’ but like within the punishment is the idea of an ‘internalised Gypsy’ in Serbs. “‘Don’t do that, or you’re a Gypsy.’ ‘Don’t do this, or you’re a Gypsy.’ ‘Besides the explicit prohibition, Serb children also receive an implicit message: something they did, something they produced was just like a Gypsy. Although this message is immediately followed by the instruction to banish the internalized Gypsy, bound and tied, to the deepest recesses of the unconscious, nevertheless the lack of control or the remark blurted out without thinking is something that Serbs and Gypsies have in common.’”

⁸⁰ See Marko Živković, *Serbian Dreambook: National Imaginary in the Time of Milošević* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 68-69 and Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town*, 156-63.

not be out of place in a middle-class Serb household at the time.⁸² There is something uncanny at play as the film moves between bringing familiarity to a strange world and strangeness to a familiar one, as Kristeva notes.

We have seen that using stereotypical images of Roma can be a method of marketing one's own feeling of marginality; however, there is more that Roma seem to offer to the Balkan filmmaker. Igor Krstic suggests the "case of Yugoslavia raises the question of whether a society and its culture can become captured as an individual can by the burden of too much history."⁸³ There is a sense that the region is overburdened with history and that Roma present a vicarious means to shake it off. Even though Roma clearly have a history that is filled with persecution and mistreatment, for many former Yugoslav directors they represent an idea of timelessness, of being outside of history. Van de Port asserts that during the escalation of the conflict in former Yugoslavia "the imaginary world spun around the Gypsy figure offer[ed] a haven for the unspeakable wartime experience"⁸⁴ of many Serbs. Indeed, the fantasy of timelessness that the West tends to project onto the Balkans is thus projected in turn onto Roma. At a time of extreme political division Roma are not perceived as being marked by political status in and of themselves – an idea and position that renders them speechless, without voice, in the shared common of the community. However, it is this exclusion from history that the included group, the Serbs for instance, want to 'borrow,' to grab onto the timelessness that Gypsies represent. The 'timelessness' embodied in the Gypsy stereotype that Kusturica and other former Yugoslav directors have latched onto functions to reproduce and solidify the fixity of Roma in the Serb imaginary. This fixity creates a knowledge about Roma

⁸¹ Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town*, 148.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Igor Krstic, "Re-thinking Serbia: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Modern Serbian History and Identity through Popular Culture," *Other Voices* 2, no. 2 (2002), accessed September 30, 2013, <http://www.othervoices.org/2.2/krstic/>.

⁸⁴ Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town*, 134.

as ‘always-already’ outside of history and outside of politics and legitimises their continued exclusion from the shared common of the community.

Witness to the Devouring and Other Instances of Roma Exclusion

The value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors authority. The “true” witnesses, the “complete witnesses,” are those who did bear witness and could not bear witness.... Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness. – Giorgio Agamben

In October 2013, a seven-year-old blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl was taken from a Roma family in south Dublin by police (gardai). Gardai acted on a ‘tip-off’ from a member of the public because the girl looked dissimilar from her parents and siblings. A headline from *The Guardian* on October 22nd read: “Blonde girl, 7, removed from Roma family in Ireland,” and was accompanied by the two-line subheading, “Tipoff leads to removal of seven-year-old girl in Dublin following case in Greece where four-year-old Maria was allegedly abducted.”¹ Maria, dubbed as the ‘blonde angel’ by numerous media outlets, had apparently been kidnapped, weeks earlier, by a Roma couple in Greece. There were claims from media outlets throughout Europe that she was potentially on the Interpol missing persons list; however, no matches have been found. Though it was revealed that she was not the biological daughter of the couple, it also turned out that she was born to (Bulgarian) Roma parents; this dramatically lessened the interest of the story for many journalists, as the girl is Roma, which somehow, according to the logic of many stories, makes her less of an angel. When the story of the Irish girl broke, there was little interest in what the parents of the girl had to say but rather a strong focus on linking it to the story of the ‘blonde angel’ and stereotypes of child abduction and crime related to Roma. The family’s voices were inaudible to the wider public because they were given no right to speak. The family were effectively put on trial in the media without being given the opportunity to defend themselves. Vague statements from apparent experts were used to construct their guilt: “gardai made contact with a hospital consultant in and asked if it was possible for Romas [sic] to give birth to blonde children, considering their natural

¹ Henry McDonald, “Blonde Girl, 7, Removed from Roma Family in Ireland,” *The Guardian*, October 22, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/22/irish-police-remove-blonde-child-roma-family>.

dark complexions. The consultant said that this would be extremely unusual.”² However, DNA evidence soon proved that the blonde girl was in fact living with her biological parents, which promptly raised the issue of racial profiling by gardai.

Dissensus occurs when those who have no part, who do not count as speaking beings in the shared common of the community, take part and speak. Roma have long not counted as speaking beings and been excluded from the ‘shared common’ of many nations across the world, as the Greek and Irish examples attest. Like the Jews, under the Third Reich Roma were targeted for extermination and selected because of their race.³ The Roma Holocaust, or Porrajmos, which means the Great Devouring in English, claimed at least one third of Europe’s Roma population between 1933 and 1945.⁴ However, not a single Roma was called to bear witness to these crimes at the Nuremberg Trials and no reparations were paid to victims or survivors.⁵ The 2nd Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, *Call the Witness*, attempted to engage in the process of dissensus by bearing witness to Roma desubjectification and exclusion. As Rancière has argued, subjectification⁶ comes about when those who have no right speak do so and it is this process of subjectification that proves the catalyst for dissensus. In bearing witness to desubjectification, the testimony resubjectifies and attempts to pull back into focus that which has become invisible and inaudible, i.e. Roma struggle, through and because of continued exclusion, not only in contemporary everyday life but also from many history books and popular consciousness. As we have seen, Rancière asserts that the *police* distribution of the sensible involves both partaking and partitioning and legitimises particular modes of being, doing, seeing, speaking, and acting; it separates those who take part from those who do not, splits the community off into different positions and is founded on the presupposed aesthetic division between what is audible and inaudible, visible

² Mick McCaffrey, “World Exclusive: Blonde-haired, Blue-eyed Girl (7) Taken from Roma Family in Dublin,” *Sunday World*, October 22, 2013, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.sundayworld.com/top-stories/news/blonde-haired-blue-eyed-girl-7-taken-from-roma-family-in-dublin>.

³ Ian Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 394.

⁴ Estimates vary widely and this will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

and invisible in the public realm.⁷ Dissensus “consists in interrupting the distribution of the sensible by supplementing it with those who have no part in the perceptual coordinates of the community, thereby modifying the very aesthetico-political field of possibility.”⁸ Aesthetics are a version of the distribution of sensible because they are concerned with the distribution of what can be perceived by the senses (the sensible) through forms of ‘doing and making’ that connect to the fabrication of sense experience. Artistic intervention can thus be political by modifying the visible and the audible, and can potentially influence the shaping and/or shifting of public consciousness concerning “how we see, what is seen, who can legitimately say this is what is seen.”⁹ There seems to be a consensual desire for Roma exclusion, invisibility and inaudibility and this chapter seeks to address ways artists at the 2nd Roma pavilion at the Venice Biennale are attempting to make the invisible visible and the inaudible audible, take part and speak, through the idea of art and witnessing.

In his detailed analysis of testimony, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben argues that the ‘author-creator’ is a central concept to witnessing and the connection between the ‘artist-author-creator’ and witness is brought to the fore in the *Call the Witness* pavilion. Agamben asserts that our modern understanding of the word author is reasonably new and derives from *auctor* in Latin. *Auctor* designates an ‘authority’, someone who intervenes on behalf of another person who is incapable of or not allowed to act (a minor, for example). It also has the meaning of vendor, “someone who advises or persuades” (usually in relation to the transfer of property) and further, that of the witness.¹⁰ *Auctor* signifies “the witness insofar as his [her] testimony always presupposes something [...] that preexists him [her] and whose reality and

⁵ Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” 392.

⁶ Sometimes translated as subjectivization.

⁷ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 13.

⁸ Gabriel Rockhill, “Translator’s Introduction: Jacques Rancière’s Politics of Perception,” in *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006), 3.

⁹ Robert Porter, “Distribution of the Sensible,” 17.

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 148.

force must be validated or certified.”¹¹ In the case of the pavilion this is the discrimination of the Roma. Testimony helps complete something that couldn’t otherwise be completed due to a lack or insufficiency; it is an act of “setting into being” and is the act of an author.¹² Agamben argues that this idea of ‘setting into being’ implies creation, and creation, in this context taken from ‘the ancients,’ is an act that always requires something, or more specifically, someone else: “Every creator is a co-creator and every author is a co-author.”¹³ Thus, built into the very logic of testimony is the idea of authorship and creation, of someone who speaks, who is audible, but who speaks in the name of inaudibility.

The Pavilion

The 2nd Roma Pavilion featured as a Collateral Event at Venice, which seems like unintentionally fitting wording considering Roma subordination within a European context. Because the Biennale is primarily organised around national pavilions and Roma are a nation-less people the funding for and coordination of the pavilion involves the cooperation a variety of people and agencies from different countries. This also meant that instead of having one artist representing their nation like many other pavilions *Call the Witness* involved testimonies from over 20 artists and presenters. The space, the pavilion itself, is imagined as part-courtroom (as the title *Call the Witness* evokes), part-conference room and performance area, part-broadcaster, and of course part-exhibition space. Artistic director Maria Hlavajova notes that the pavilion

found its inspiration in the judicial practice of Kris-Romani—a traditional Roma court as well as a forum for conflict resolution and the mediation of disputes [...] – the project calls on Roma artists to bear witness, through works of art, to their communities’ struggles as they are caught in the paradox of being at once assigned to the edges of mainstream society and at the center of this society’s discriminatory order of control.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., 149-50. Agamben also outlines two other key terms that express the idea of testimony and witnessing in Latin: “*testis* designates the witness as he intervenes as a third in a suit between two subjects, and [...] *superstes* indicates the one who has fully lived through an experience and can therefore relate it to others” (149). As we will see, the idea of *superstes* informs a large part of his discussing of Primo Levi’s writing.

¹² Ibid., 150.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Maria Hlavajova, “Introduction,” *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.callthewitness.net/Introduction>.

In the preview days in early June 2011 a variety of artists, activists, academics, and even a financer and philanthropist, Roma and non-Roma, gave testimonies. These were video-recorded and made part of the exhibition available online on the Biennale website and in the Roma Media Archive, which was directly linked to the event. British artist and curator Paul Ryan ‘registered the proceedings’ by sketching each of the testimonies, like a court artist, thus extending the courtroom metaphor which is at the centre of how *Call the Witness* was conceptualised.¹⁵ The actual form of individual testimonies also varied in style and intention. Many artists used the platform to introduce themselves and a piece of work and primarily allow that art object and/or installation to bear witness. For instance, Marika Schmiedt and Milutin Jovanović presented documentaries, Alfred Ullrich photographs and Kiba Lumberg a comic book, while Nihad Nino Pušija displayed a series of photographs as postcards in leporello format which were available for attendees to take away with them. Artist, writer and musician Boris Ondreička gave a 30-minute midnight reading from his text *Black Birds & Blackbirds* and thus focused on his performance as testimony. Daniel Baker and Paul Ryan’s *Mirror Mirror* “is an artwork that discusses Roma art [and is] [b]ased on models of ‘reflection’ between these two artists—one Roma and one non-Roma— [...and] is presented in the form of a lecture-performance.”¹⁶ On the other hand, Robert Kushen, the Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest, suggested that he could not bear witness for the Roma as it would be “presumptuous for a Jewish boy from New Jersey to try to do so” and claimed that “my experience for the rights of Roma is derivative by definition” but wanted to “take advantage” of this and make his testimony derivative.¹⁷ Salman Rushdie

¹⁵ Originally this role was to be taken by Ferdinand Koci but he was unable to make it due to a family emergency.

¹⁶ Daniel Baker and Paul Ryan, “Daniel Baker and Paul Ryan Testimony: Mirror Mirror,” *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.callthewitness.net/Testimonies/MirrorMirror>.

¹⁷ Robert Kushen and Maria Hlavajova, “Robert Kushen Testimony: Sticks and Stones and Words that Hurt: Roma Rights in Quotation.” *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.callthewitness.net/Testimonies/SticksAndStonesAndWordsThatHurt>.

His speech thus combines a diversity of quotes from ordinary Roma to politicians, ranging from advocacy to slander, in an attempt to disclose through speech, “the politics upon which the world as we know it stands.” Kushen quotes material from, among other, “official reports and court cases; blog postings by ranting racists (often in response to Kushen’s editorials, which regularly appear in key international media); others come from

spoke about the importance of travelling and migration to his own work, providing a ‘testimony of solidarity,’ while Emeritus Professor of Romani Studies Thomas Acton’s 45-minute lecture considers the question: “what is the story of the recent emergence of contemporary Roma visual art?” *Call the Witness* is thus a crossover between art and political activism and the variety of forms that testimony and witnessing take in this context points to the multiple ways in which knowledge is produced and distributed. Therefore, although it appears within an art setting, the Venice Biennale, it is not a aestheticisation of politics in its classic sense, but rather a refocusing of modes of (in)visibility and (in)audibility which are central to both politics and aesthetics.

Witnessing

As the title indicates, the idea of witnessing or bearing witness is fundamental to the genesis of the 2nd Roma Pavilion at Venice. It is not uncommon for curators and organisers of events such as Biennales to place a call to artists to ask them to make submissions and have their work considered for exhibition (see my chapter on Artur Żmijewski’s curation of the 7th Berlin Biennale). In this case a call to witnesses was disseminated under the premise that artists would provide testimonies about the struggle and exclusion, both past and present, of Roma. The theorist and curator Suzana Milevska provided the initial idea and title for the pavilion and has broadly located the notion of an artist or artwork bearing witness to an event within an Agambenian theoretical framework. Therefore, it is important to analyse and utilise some of Agamben’s ideas of witnessing before discussing the pavilion and some key works from it in more detail.

In *Remnants of Auschwitz* Agamben presents “a kind of perpetual commentary on testimony”¹⁸ primarily through an examination of the texts on the necessity of bearing witness by Holocaust survivor, chemist and self-proclaimed accidental writer Primo Levi. Drawing on

Romani staff at the European Roma Rights Centre; excerpts from old laws restricting the rights of Roma; anti-Roma graffiti; or various public figures—Viviane Reding, Livia Jaroka, Nicolas Sarkozy, Teodor Baconschi, Gabor Vona, Adolf Hitler.”

¹⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 13.

numerous accounts from survivors of the concentration camps, Agamben contends that one of the driving forces behind and reasons for holding on to life in the camp was the idea or hope of becoming a witness.¹⁹ Although he is the author of numerous books, essays, short stories and poems, Levi did not really consider himself an author but rather became one out of the need to bear witness. It was out of his compulsion to speak, not only for himself, but also for those who could not, that he became a writer. Levi finds parallels with his need and urgency²⁰ to write in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and quotes the text as an epigraph to his collection of essays *The Drowned and the Saved*:

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns,
And till my ghastly tale is told
This heart within me burns.²¹

Levi claimed that bearing witness brought him a kind of interior peace²² yet further asserted that he and other survivors “are not the true witnesses”²³ and are the exceptions of the camp and not the rule. It is the drowned, the *Muselmänner*, those who cannot speak who are the true, complete, witnesses of the camp.

The *Muselmann* appears in many survivor accounts of the camps as a description for a particular type of prisoner, and in Levi's view is a paradox of the camp. For Levi, the *Muselmann* is the one who is the complete witness but the one who cannot bear witness and cannot speak.²⁴ The *Muselmann* is a figure that Agamben uses to examine the threshold between the human and non-human in the zone of indistinction created by the biopolitical conditions of the camp. In the jargon of the camp, the *Muselmann*, which literally means the Muslim, is the name given to the ‘living dead’ or corpse-like figures, an ‘anonymous mass’

¹⁹ Hermann Langbein stated: “I firmly decided that, despite everything that might happen to me, I would not take my own life ... since I did not want to suppress the witness that I could become.” Quoted in Ibid, 15.

²⁰ “The need to tell our story to ‘the rest’, to make ‘the rest participate in it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of completing with our other elementary needs. The book [*If This is a Man*] has been written to satisfy this need: first and foremost, therefore, as an interior liberation. Hence its fragmentary character: the chapter have been written not in logical succession, but in order of urgency.” Primo Levi, *If This is a Man – The Truce*, trans. Stuart Woolf (London: Abacus, 1987), 15-16.

²¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge quoted in Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Michael Joseph, 1988).

²² Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 17.

²³ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 63.

²⁴ Agamben states: “If we give the name “Levi’s paradox” to the statement that “the *Muselmann* is the complete witness,” then understanding Auschwitz – if such a thing is possible – will coincide with understanding the sense and nonsense of this paradox.” Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 82.

that “form the backbone of the camp.”²⁵ Levi describes them as “continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead in them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death.”²⁶ This death that could not be called death is cruelly highlighted by the way the corpses of *Muselmänner* were described by the SS as *Figuren* (figurines): i.e. they did not die human; they became something else, their corpses were produced.²⁷ Oftentimes these inmates could not stand for long periods of time due to muscle loss as a result of starvation and malnutrition, which resulted in a lack of balance that sometimes caused them to sway from side-to-side. Survivors described them as completely emaciated and in a continually unresponsive, almost trance-like state, totally unaware of their environment and impending death.²⁸ There is some conjecture as to why these prisoners were called Muslims and Levi indicates he does not know either. It has been suggested that the name comes from the idea, in Germany at the time, of the supposed fatalism of Muslims due to their unconditional submission to the will of God (Allah), yet alternatively others have claimed that it was because of the movements of the *Muselmänner* who would sway the top part of their bodies, that they were thought to look similar, from afar at least, to Islamic ritual and prayers.²⁹ Levi describes the *Muselmann* as those who saw the Gordon,³⁰ who reached the bottom and never returned.³¹ In Greek mythology when the onlooker beholds the Gordon they turn to stone, which is perhaps a metaphor utilised by Levi to suggest a point of no return; i.e., once a human becomes a *Muselmann* they can no longer re-enter humanity. This limit-figure is

²⁵ Levi, *If This is a Man – The Truce*, 96.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Agamben is here drawing on the expression the “fabrication of corpses” by Martin Heidegger and the “manufacture of corpses” by Hannah Arendt in relation to the concentration camps. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 70-72.

²⁸ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 41-46. A quote (page 41) Agamben uses from survivor Aldo Capri illustrates the prisoners’ fear of eventually becoming like the *Muselmann*: “I remember that while we were going down the stairs leading to the baths, they had us accompanied by a group of *Muselmänner*, as we later called them – mummy-men, the living dead. They made them go down the stairs with us to show them to us, as if to say, ‘you’ll become like them.’”

²⁹ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 45.

³⁰ The Gordones are three sisters from Greek mythology with hair of living snakes and when an onlooker beholds one of them they turn into stone. Medusa, the most well known of the three, Sthenno and Euryale are the other two, is the only sister who is mortal.

indistinguishable as human or nonhuman and is, for Agamben, paradigmatic or exemplary of complete desubjectification and the triumph of power over the human being.³² Indeed, he asserts, “in Auschwitz ethics begins precisely at the point where the *Muselmann*, the ‘complete witness,’ makes it forever impossible to distinguish between man and non-man.”³³

The triumph of power over the human in the camps and the production of inhuman biopolitical conditions created a situation in which the human being is reduced from a speaking being to a living being, one who is simply surviving life, engaged in inhuman survival. The human and the nonhuman are intimately connected, as the camp has made them inseparable: the *Muselmann* “signifies the inhuman capacity to survive the human,”³⁴ while the survivor demonstrates “the human being’s capacity to survive the *Muselmann*, the nonhuman.”³⁵ The act of witnessing in this context involves ‘the speaking being’ (the survivor) speaking by proxy for or in the stead of the living being (the *Muselmann*), who has been reduced to a state of bare life and lost this ‘human’ capacity. However, as Agamben asserts, this means “the one who bears witness in the human is the inhuman,”³⁶ that what is being spoken is the voice of the inhuman through human agency: “Testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and where the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his own speech.”³⁷ The act of subjectification therefore requires a desubjectification, which involves speaking for an absence, a void, something that has been completely negated, the living being who cannot speak. Agamben suggests that subjectification is formation of ‘consciousness in the event of discourse’ but this is always already a traumatic event, precisely because it is inseparable from desubjectification and depersonalisation.³⁸ Indeed, the

³¹ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 63-64.

³² Agamben asserts: “Human power borders on the inhuman; the human also endures the non-human ... humans bear within themselves the mark of the inhuman ... their spirit contains at its very center the wound of non-spirit, non-human chaos atrociously consigned to its own being capable of everything.” Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 77.

³³ Ibid., 47. This assertion is made with direct reference to the title of Levi’s book, *If This is a Man*.

³⁴ Ibid., 133.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 120.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 123.

“Muselmann and witness, the inhuman and the human are coextensive and, at the same time, non-coincident; they are divided and nevertheless inseparable.”³⁹ At the core of testimony is a lacuna, due to the fact that the complete witness cannot be called, but it is in this void and through this lack that Agamben posits the true value of bearing witness to desubjectification, of testimony itself. Speaking in the name of an impossibility of speaking means addressing this gap between the human and the inhuman, between subjectification and desubjectification; it resists the reduction of one to the other, of human life being reduced to survival: it resubjectifies the survivor.

This notion of ‘an inbetweenness’ and a divided yet inseparable whole is also central to the idea of the remnant foregrounded in Agamben’s title: *Remnants of Auschwitz*. It is a theologic-messianic concept which has roots in the books of the Old Testament; in these books it is not the whole people of Israel that are saved but a remnant of Israel. While the prophets (e.g. in Isaiah 10:22) address all of Israel, it is not the whole who will receive salvation (“For although thy people be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall be saved”); the whole people, therefore, “necessarily posits itself as remnant.”⁴⁰ The remnant does not simply indicate the whole or a numerical portion of it, but the contact points between them. Furthermore, Agamben claims that, similarly to how the remnant of Israel represents neither the whole nor the part of the people, but rather the “non-coincidence of the whole and the part … so the remnants of Auschwitz – the witnesses – are neither the dead nor the survivors, neither the drowned nor the saved. They are what remains between them.”⁴¹ It is through testimony that these remnants come into being and help salvage the human from the inhuman biopolitical conditions that the camps created.

Central to Levi’s writing and Agamben’s analysis of it is giving testimony and bearing witness to desubjectification. What Agamben foregrounds in Levi, specifically, is his bearing witness

³⁹ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 163. The quote from Isaiah is taken directly from Agamben’s text.

⁴¹ Ibid., 164.

for the *Muselmann*, the compete witness who cannot speak, who cannot be an interlocutor. At the core of this conceptualisation of testimony and witnessing is the notion of audibility. After Auschwitz, after the Holocaust, the *Muselmann* was not heard because he could not speak and his voice was only present through the voice of another. However, after the Porrajmos, the Roma Holocaust, there was a quite different issue of (in)audibility. It was not that Roma could not speak; the issue at hand was that they were not heard, not given the opportunity to speak. Bearing witness to their desubjectification was not granted. They were not called to witness the crimes committed against them under National Socialism, as others were at the Nuremberg Trials. Indeed, in his frank polemical style Noam Chomsky asserts: “The Gypsies were treated just like the Jews in the Holocaust, but nobody’s batting an eyelash about that because nobody gives a damn about the Gypsies.”⁴² In the essay “The Grey Zone” in *The Drowned and the Saved* Levi recounts a story he was told about a football match, in a field outside a crematorium, played during a ‘work’ break between the SS and the *Sonderkommando*, work units composed of prisoners whose primary function was to act as guards and help dispose of bodies. Levi suggests that spectators made bets, urged the players on, applauded good plays and acted with a degree of normality as if “rather than at the gates of hell, the game were taking place on the village green.”⁴³ Agamben vehemently argues that one could not view this as a moment of humanity amongst terrible horror; on the contrary, this apparent moment normalcy is for Agamben, and indeed for Levi, a “true horror of the camp.”⁴⁴ There is a similar horror in the normalcy of Roma inaudibility, especially with regard to the Porrajmos, and in the fact their continued desubjectification and discrimination has been normalised and widely accepted.

Katie Trumpener points to this acceptance of antagonism towards and hostility against Roma when noting the general knowledge of Roma internment from the mid-1930s onwards in

⁴² Noam Chomsky, “The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many: Noam Chomsky Interviewed by David Barsamian,” *Biblioteca NomadAnt*, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://nomadant.wordpress.com/biblioteca/textos/prosperous-few-restless-many/>.

⁴³ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 38.

Germany: “the initial internment of the Roma was kept a secret from no one. Concentration camps were built on the outskirts of the capital city, and the internment of the Sinti and Roma was not only covered by a number of Berlin newspapers, but was even joked about in their column.”⁴⁵ The upper echelons of the Nazi party saw no real need to conceal the mistreatment and discrimination of Roma, a policy which was increased with the advent of the Berlin Olympics in 1936 because of the general perception of their asociality and criminality throughout much of Europe.⁴⁶ Ian Hancock, the Roma activist and academic who writes extensively about the Nazi crimes committed against Roma and who coined the term Porrajmos, demonstrates that Roma posed no numeric, political, economic or military threat to the German state, but like the Jews, to Nazi ideologues they presented a racial problem and were considered to have a contaminating effect on the Aryan ‘Master Race’.⁴⁷ The Nazi party drew on pre-existing literature, such as jurist Karl Binding and psychiatrist Alfred Hoche’s book *The Eradication of Lives Undeserving of Life*, which suggested Roma were a “dead weight on humanity” (*Ballastexistenzen*) and that their apparent criminality was a hereditary, genetically transmitted disease, which was passed on through procreation.⁴⁸ ‘The Gypsy Question’ or ‘Gypsy Plague’ was not fundamentally related to issues of anti-sociality, as was later claimed in post-War literature and legal documents, but was ideologically racial and supported by claims of Roma genetic inferiority and malfunction by Nazi scientists.⁴⁹ By 1936 strict anti-Roma laws had come into being and sterilisation programmes were in place, as were the first deportations to Dachau in time to have the streets ‘clean’ for the Olympic games.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 26.

⁴⁵ Katie Trumpener, “The Time of the Gypsies: A ‘People Without History’ in the Narratives of the West,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (1992), 844.

⁴⁶ Ian Hancock, “Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust,” in *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 51-53.

⁴⁷ Ian Hancock, “The Neglected Memory of the Romanies in the Holocaust/Porrajmos,” in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (London; New York: Routledge, 2011): 375.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 377. In 1920 Binding and Hoche argued for “euthanizing individual who were *Ballastexistenzen* Three populations were considered: those with gross physical disfigurements, those carrying hereditary diseases, and those in comas considered unlikely to recover. Romanies would fall into the second category.”

⁴⁹ Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” 383.

⁵⁰ Hancock, “The Neglected Memory of the Romanies in the Holocaust/Porrajmos,” 377.

In 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, Dr. Johannes Behrendt of the Office of Racial Hygiene issued a short statement outlining the general Nazi policy regarding Roma at the time: “All Gypsies should be treated as hereditarily sick; the only solution is elimination. The aim should therefore be the elimination without hesitation of this defective element in the population.”⁵¹ In early 1940 testing of Zyklon-B, the cyanide-based pesticide later used extensively in the gas chambers, began on 250 Roma children from Brno at Buchenwald concentration camp. They were used as guinea pigs to measure the effects and effectiveness of the gas.⁵² On 16 December 1942 *Reichsführer-SS*, Heinrich Himmler, made a definitive decree on the ‘Final Solution’ of the ‘Gypsy Question.’ His order stated that “all Gypsies are to be deported to the Ziguenerlager [Gypsy camp] at Auschwitz concentration camp, with no regard to their degree of racial impurity.”⁵³ A passage from the *Memorial Book* at Auschwitz further points to the similarity in Nazi policy towards Roma and Jews:

The Himmler decree of 16 December 1942 (*Auschwitz-Erlaß*), according to which the Gypsies should be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, had the same meaning for the Gypsies that the conference at Wannsee on 20 January 1942 had for the Jews. This decree, and the bulletin that followed on 29 January 1943, can thus be regarded as a logical consequence of the decision taken at Wannsee. After it had been decided that the fate of the Jews was to end in mass extermination, it was natural for the other group of racially persecuted people, the Gypsies, to become victims of the same policy, which finally even included soldiers in the Wehrmacht.⁵⁴

There is considerable disagreement as to the number of Roma who perished as a result of Nazism, both in and outside the camps, and estimates range between 350,000 and 1.5 million or 20% to 50% of the total population of Europe.⁵⁵ However, what should be evident is the specific, ideologically racial policy toward the Roma by the Nazi party and that they were indeed targeted for complete extermination. Like the Jews, they were labelled as vermin, subhuman, with lives equally ‘undeserving of the life’: the reason for their selection and planned elimination was the fact they existed.

⁵¹ Johannes Behrendt, quoted in Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” 389.

⁵² Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” 389.

⁵³ Heinrich Himmler, quoted in Ibid, 389-390.

⁵⁴ State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, quoted in Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview,” 390.

⁵⁵ Hancock, “Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust,” 49-51.

However, in the wake of World War II, the trials that followed and the reparations and compensations paid out by German government agencies included no Roma. They were not called to witness at the Nuremberg Trials and not given welfare compensation like many Jewish victims of Nazism. The evident racist motives behind the Nazi party's persecution of Jews were not disputed in any significant way, however, this same view was not held with regard to Roma by those in office. Therefore, Roma were not officially recognised as "victims of Nazism" and be entitled to reparations for the crimes committed against them.⁵⁶ Furthermore, unlike the case of the Jews, no formal demand for reparations was ever made by the Allies for Roma victims.⁵⁷ In 1951 the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior issued a statement in relation to cases of restitution for Nazi crimes requesting that judges and officials take into account that "Gypsies were persecuted under the National Socialist regime not for any racial reason, but because of an asocial and criminal record."⁵⁸ Gilad Margalit argues that the discrimination against Roma, because of their apparent 'delinquency,' was present in Germany for hundreds of years prior to 1933 and enabled those in power to maintained there was not a substantial enough difference between treatment of Roma in the past to that under Nazism, which "undermined the racial motive for Gypsy persecution and denied many Gypsies their recognition by the authorities as victims of Nazism."⁵⁹ This position was not challenged in any official manner, and the general view is perhaps well summed up by the French ethnologist Georges Montandon:⁶⁰ "everyone despises the Gypsies, so why exercise restraint? Who will avenge them? Who will bear witness?"⁶¹

Many years after the post-War trials steps were taken to address and acknowledge the Nazi crimes against Roma: in 1982 the Roma genocide was officially recognised by the West

⁵⁶ Gilad Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 83.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hancock, "The Neglected Memory of the Romanies in the Holocaust/Porrajmos," 382.

⁵⁹ Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal*, 84.

⁶⁰ Montandon wrote extensively on 'racial-hygiene' and was strongly influenced by German eugenicists and produced much anti-Semitic propaganda in occupied France. Debbie Lackerstein, *National Regeneration in Vichy France: Ideas and Policies, 1930-1944* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012): 212-213.

⁶¹ Georges Montandon quoted in "Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and Overview," 384.

German government and in October 2012, after many years of delay, a memorial to the victims of the Porrajmos was opened by Angela Merkel. However, this is mainly due to persistent Roma activism and received little to no attention in official and unofficial histories of the War, thus reinforcing their perpetual inaudibility. Ian Hancock suggests that still now information about it does not appear in many textbooks about World War II or else scant reference is made of them as ‘other victims.’ He laments: “it is an eerie and disheartening feeling to pick up such books and find the attempted genocide of one’s people written completely out of historical record.”⁶² Due to the fact there was no watershed moment after World War II and no concerted effort made to address or recognise the high levels of discrimination against and disenfranchisement of Roma, they continue to face acts of dehumanisation both in public speech and policy. In his work for the Roma Information Office in Brussels Valeriu Nicolae collated significant examples of ‘hate speech’ targeted at the Roma minority in different European countries by politicians and members of the mainstream media. Many of these statements perpetuated the idea of Roma as subhuman:

Nomads, they are animals. [... There should be] a vaccine for Roma children who, with their saliva and spit, might ‘infect’ Italian children attending the same schools. (Councilman Pierpaola Fantonon TV news in Treviso, Italy, in 2005).

At the present time, I believe that the Roma of Zmoly have no place among human beings. Just as in the animal world, parasites must be expelled. (Dez Csete, mayor of Csor, Hungary, on 27 April 2000.)

[I will] ... isolate the Roma criminals in special colonies ... [in order to] ... stop the transformation of Romania into a Gypsy camp. (A 1997 election promise from Romanian senator Corneliu Vadim Tudor)

Residents are ready to start setting the Gypsies’ houses on fire, and I want to be at the head of this plan. (Russian municipal legislator Sergei Krivnyuk, Volgainform, 17 November 2004).⁶³

These politicians, like many others, were not held accountable for their comments; they were not fined nor did they lose their influential positions as spokespersons for their respective constituencies. Indeed, these types of perspectives proliferate in mainstream media and, as recent European Union Monitoring Center (EUMC) investigations have reported, Roma are the “most discriminated-against ethnic minority in Europe.”⁶⁴

⁶² Hancock, “Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust,” 59.

⁶³ Quoted in Valeriu Nicolae, “Words That Kill,” *Index on Censorship* 35, no. 1 (2006), 138.

⁶⁴ European Union Monitoring Center quoted in Nicolae, “Words That Kill,” 138.

A recent case in Serbia demonstrates how the progress made in addressing the discrimination of Roma is quickly subsumed in a discourse of inaudibility and invisibility and pushed to the wayside whenever something more politically or economically expedient arises. For instance, the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) is an international initiative which involves governments, NGOs and European integration organisations, and currently has 12 full member states, although it is open to all nations. At present the members include European countries with large Roma minorities: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain. The official website describes the effort as “an unprecedented political commitment by European governments to eliminate discrimination against Roma and close the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society”⁶⁵ through a focus on health, education, employment, and reducing the disparities between them and other members of society. In 2009 Serbia held the presidency for the Decade of Roma Inclusion and one might expect, or hope, that during the presidency a concerted effort would be made by public officials and state-run media outlets to address centuries-old discrimination. However, the opposite seems to be the case. In their article, “Uglyville: A Contention of Anti-Romaism in Europe,” Eduard Freudmann and Ivana Marjanović suggest, “[w]hat we witnessed was the total disregard of the Decade’s objectives and even an intensification of discrimination by Belgrade authorities, citizens and media.”⁶⁶ Freudmann and Marjanović also made a film of the same title, which was included in the Roma Media Archive as part of the *Call the Witness* Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale.

The intensification of discrimination was due, in part, to the fact that the presidency coincided with Belgrade hosting the 25th Summer Universiade. The word Universiade is a portmanteau combining the words ‘university’ and ‘Olympiad’ and is a bi-annual multi-sports event which

⁶⁵ “About the Decade in Brief,” *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.romadecade.org/about-the-decade-decade-in-brief>.

is effectively the university or student Olympics. In order to accommodate the eight thousand incoming athletes and officials, the city of Belgrade provided public land on which private investors developed a large complex or ‘athlete’s village’ known as Belville in close proximity to a shopping mall (Delta City) owned by the very same investors.⁶⁷ Two years earlier hundreds of Roma had been evicted from their homes and their settlements had been demolished in order to facilitate the construction of the village. In 2009, orders came from city and Universiade officials that the area next to Belville was to be ‘cleansed’ of its Roma inhabitants as the city authorities ordered the destruction of the remaining settlements. One will see clear parallels here with the Berlin 1936 Olympics and the ‘cleansing’ of the city of its Roma inhabitants to apparently beautify it for an upcoming sports event. This was aided by a media campaign that constructed the Roma population as polluting Belville. This included billboards featuring the Serbian tennis star, and well-known nationalist, Novak Djoković being plastered around the area featuring the phrase “Let’s Clean Serbia.”⁶⁸ Protests arose, captured in Vladan Jeremić and Rena Rädle’s 22-minute film *Belleville* (2009),⁶⁹ which effectively halted the planned destruction of the settlement. As an alternative, the Universiade arranged for a large metal fence to be built around the settlement with police and extra security employed to abate the traffic flow in and out of the area. Claims were made by organisers that what lay behind the fence adorned with banners was not in fact a Roma settlement but a film set. At the axis of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”, both in terms of time and place, those in power were trying to ‘invisibilise’ those they profess to include.

Whilst *Belleville* and *Uglyville* deal with the protests and political background behind the dismantlement and destruction of a Roma settlement in Belgrade, Milutin Jovanović’s film *Migration* (2011) focuses on the day-to-day lives of a small group of Roma who were forced

⁶⁶ Eduard Freudmann and Ivana Marjanović, “Uglyville: A Contention of Anti-Romaism in Europe,” in *Space (Re)Solutions: Intervention and Research in Visual Culture*, eds. Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshamer (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 140.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 142-143.

⁶⁹ The film was available online while the protests were still taking place.

to move from their settlement by Belgrade's Gazela Bridge after it was destroyed by the council. Jovanović is a Roma Serbian filmmaker who has produced numerous works that focus on social issues affecting Roma; for instance, he recently collaborated with the Roma Health Mediator programme on a variety of projects that focus on improving health standards of many Roma communities in Europe. He is also the founder of NeVO, an NGO that endeavours to promote the inclusion and acceptance of Roma and create perspectival change in the public image and understanding of Roma through film and media.⁷⁰ Although Jovanović introduces *Migration* and provides some background about how it came to fruition and how it was financed, the film itself is the primary testimony he gives to the *Call the Witness* pavilion.

Migration is an 18-minute semi-staged documentary about trying to make a documentary from the testimonies of struggling Roma families who live in a Belgrade settlement, dubbed 'carton city' by locals, which comprises of many tiny shipping container-homes. In *Migration* Jovanović follows his friend Gagi, a resident of the settlement, as he tries to interview his neighbours and fellow residents of the settlement about their poor living conditions and everyday struggle with poverty and discrimination. Many of the inhabitants had previously been living in a settlement by Gazela Bridge, the busiest and most important bridge in Belgrade. In a brief introduction to the film which opened his testimony Jovanović mentions that due to restorations to the bridge taking place between 2010 and 2011 the Roma inhabitants were evicted and the settlement destroyed. Furthermore, he indicates that many were given little to no warning about their imminent eviction, which meant some families only had a few of hours to collect their possessions. We are invited to watch Gagi borrow a camera from a friend and explain to his often-disbelieving neighbours that he is serious about documenting the hardship of the settlement; such as large families sharing very small containers without insulation or proper plumbing. However, his search for witnesses who are willing to testify to their disenfranchisement is often problematic and sometimes futile. Suzana

⁷⁰ Suzana Milevska, "Milutin Jovanović Testimony: Migration," *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014,

Milevska suggests that “the potential witnesses have been silenced by a warning not to speak publicly about their difficulties coping with the challenges of daily survival.”⁷¹ As the short film continues, Gagi clearly becomes increasingly frustrated with this silence. In the final minutes of the film he speaks directly to Jovanović’s camera, stating in a somewhat defiant tone: “People say we are dirty, yet most of us work for City Sanitation; we clean after others. Where people throw garbage unselectively, we go by collecting secondary raw materials, we are using it, reselling, and by doing that we are providing a service to the city.” He finally tells his friend Denis, who had been recording the film he is making, to cut and then says: “That’s it. Do you really think anyone cares? Same old story, my friend.” In sense what *Migration* shows is a failed attempt on Gagi’s part to make a documentary and his anger at his own inaudibility. However, it is Jovanović’s film, a work that one might say is about inaudibility that provides a voice and enables Gagi to bear witness to the struggle of his community. *Migration* is a testimony to desubjectification and Gagi and Jovanović are co-authors of this creation, as Jovanović’s film helps complete Gagi’s act of witnessing.

Austrian Roma artist Alfred Ullrich’s testimony calls attention to Roma inaudibility in the public realm and speaks to an official silence surrounding the Lety concentration camp in the Czech Republic. His testimony bears witness to those who have no part, no right to speak in the shared common of the community. Like Jovanović, Ullrich briefly introduced himself and his work to a crowd at the pavilion and to the camera which recorded all testimonies that were then posted on the *Call the Witness* website. However, the primary mode through which Ullrich bears witness is via his art works: a series of photographs, a traffic sign and documentation that relates to the history behind the photography. As an artist Ullrich makes use of a variety of media and means of expression including photography, film, found objects and installations; his works often seek to address the place of Roma in society and to the

<http://www.callthewitness.org/Testimonies/Migration>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

“eternal recurrence of racism”⁷² and exclusion from which they suffer. *Pearls before Swine* is a photo series which documents a performance piece, a dance, carried out on 13 May 2000.⁷³

Ullrich’s performance occurred in front of a former concentration camp in Lety in Southern Bohemia. The camp had been set up in March 1939 before the German occupation and operated until the end of World War II, run solely by Czechs. Lety’s primary purpose was to serve as a labour camps for Roma and, although the numbers are still not clear, an estimated 3500 Roma were killed at the camp and a further 500 deported to Auschwitz.⁷⁴ In the 1970s the area at Lety was converted into a pig farm and its presence, the Roma who died, were excluded and indeed erased from the history. For 50 years after the end of World War II survivors from the camp officially did not exist. It was not until the mid-1990s, when author and activist Paul Polansky discovered over 40,000 documents in Czech archives relating to the camp at Lety, that its existence and the survivors were officially acknowledged. Polansky’s examination of the camp, *Black Silence: The Lety Survivors Speak*, was released in 1998.⁷⁵ Finally, after many years of non-recognition a memorial plaque outside the former camp was erected to commemorate the attempted genocide of Roma. However, the memorial at Lety continues to perpetuate the idea that the site was a Nazi camp rather than one independently run by Czech forces during the war.⁷⁶

Ullrich’s performance involved a literal throwing of pearls before swine as he scattered pearls from a necklace belonging to his sister in front of the locked gate of the swine farm and besides the memorial plaque. At the time this act of bearing witness was recorded by Alan

⁷² Suzana Milevska and Arun Saldanha, “The Eternal Return of Race: Reflections on East European Racism,” in *Deleuze and Race*, eds. Arun Saldanha and Jason Michael Adams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 239. This is the specific theme of his 2010 video installation *Crazy Water Wheel*.

⁷³ Ullrich also presented another work at the *Call the Witness* pavilion, *Dachau, Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe* (2011). It involved a street sign forbidding travellers to trade in the area, however on the piece itself the instruction has been crossed out. Milevska suggests: “This simple action highlights how seemingly neutral regulations in fact enforce the segregation of Roma travelers from others. Thus discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is preserved through language and visual public memory, something that gives way to reinforcing the already existing stereotype of Roma people as “exotic” creatures full of wanderlust.” Suzana Milevska, “Alfred Ullrich Testimony: Pearls before Swine and Dachau, Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe,” *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.callthewitness.org/Testimonies/PearlsBeforeSwine>.

⁷⁴ Milevska and Saldanha, “The Eternal Return of Race: Reflections on East European Racism,” 238.

⁷⁵ Paul Polansky, *Black Silence: The Lety Survivors Speak* (New York: G Plus G, 1998).

Levy in an English-language weekly, *The Prague Post*, in a piece called “The World has to Know”. The title of the work draws its name from the Gospel of Matthew (7:6) and is part of the Sermon on the Mount. The King James version reads: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” As Milevska points out, the passage contains violent imagery opposed to the ‘loving one’s enemy’ version of Jesus more popularly taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:44); it presents certain groups as unworthy of touching sacred objects, for they should be feared as they will tear you or your community apart if you allow it.⁷⁷ Therefore, the title and the work itself refer to the fact that in this context Roma are the ones considered unworthy, it seeks to preserve the memory of those who lost their lives in the camp, a memory deemed ‘wasteful’ because this perceived lack of worthiness. The pig farm was used to cover over the history of the camp at Lety, and Ullrich’s performance and the photographic series that followed it bears witness to the desecration of this memory and testifies to the inaudibility surrounding the camp for so many years.

Like Ullrich, fellow Austrian Roma artist Marika Schmiedt also lost many relatives in concentration camps during World War II. One of her early documentaries, *An Undesirable Society* (2001), focuses on her search for information about family members who died in camps across Europe and her painstaking attempts to overcome numerous bureaucratic hurdles to retrieve information about her family from various civil and national archives in Austria. The film serves as a testimony for her silenced family. This includes an aunt who was still alive, though Schmiedt never knew she existed before the commencement of filming, but who refused to participate in the film claiming, according to an intertitle at the end of the film, “we are not Gypsies and want nothing to do with it.” For Schmiedt’s aunt, the shame of being Roma and discrimination associated with it was too much to bear. Much of Schmiedt’s artistic

⁷⁶ Milevska and Saldanha, “The Eternal Return of Race: Reflections on East European Racism,” 238.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

output deals specifically with the connection between an unresolved historical racism that is allegedly past and its traumatic ruptures in the present. Indeed, Schmiedt's work featured at the *Call the Witness* pavilion, was *Vermächtnis/Legacy* (2010-2011) focuses on the traumatic legacy of Nazism in Austrian Roma communities. Schmiedt clearly states the function of her artistic practice:

Through this confrontation of the alleged “past” racism with the existing – but mostly obscured – racism today, my work seeks to create a space for discussion, dialogue and critical awareness. I believe that my artistic interventions as a woman and Roma may bear long-term effects that – in part – can contribute to the prevention of a dangerous repetition of history in our times (and the future).⁷⁸

Indeed, her focus as an artist and a researcher is to break the invisibility and inaudibility around Roma discrimination and desubjectification in both its historical and contemporary manifestations. In a similar fashion to Ullrich and Jovanović, Schmiedt's primary mode of testimony, of bearing witness at the *Call the Witness* is performed through her 42-minute film, *Vermächtnis/Legacy*, and a brief recorded introduction.

In the context of the Roma pavilion *Vermächtnis/Legacy* operates as a testimony-within-testimony. It is testimony in the sense that it is a creation, in the manner discussed by Agamben, which speaks in the name of inaudibility and attempts to make audible that which is not, that which has been kept silent. Furthermore, it is a film about testimony; it is a record of it, and it is about the important nature of bearing witness. The film is centred on the Austrian Roma woman painter and musician Ceija Stojka, who survived internment at three different concentration camps: Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Ravensbrück. *Vermächtnis/Legacy* opens with still images of different sets of eyes staring back at the viewer. There is something decidedly uncomfortable and disconcerting about the way the eyes, engulfed in darkness, hold the look of the viewer. The film concludes with the same motif; however, this time these same eyes are given both a bodily and a definite historical context. They are the eyes of Roma men, women and children, from their arrest sheets, before being interned at camps such as

Auschwitz or Ravensbrück and whose testimonies and legacies the documentary tries to bring to light. Bringing this history into the open, into public space and consciousness, also serves as the primary motivation behind Stojka's artistic endeavours. She confides to Schmiedt that "the reason I paint ... [is] so that things don't remain in the dark." However, her drive and desire to speak is tempered with an ingrained fear of persecution and discrimination, which also informs the way in which her female descendants have come to perceive and experience the world. As Milevska notes, what "Schmiedt explores in the work is very similar to a question asked by philosopher Giorgio Agamben: What is the juridical structure that allowed such events to take place?"⁷⁹ For Schmiedt, like Agamben, it is a question that needs to be continually asked, in order to stop the memory fading or being erased and to prevent the eternal return of racism against Roma. In the final minutes of *Vermächtnis/Legacy* Stojka says to Schmiedt: "You are a witness to my story, you are a contemporary witness." Although Schmiedt protests, saying to Stojka that she is still here and she can still speak and bear witness, we see at work what Agamben suggests of testimony – namely, that it involves the act of the author's and in every authors creation there is always a co-author.

Unlike the testimonies of Jovanović, Ullrich, or Schmiedt the testimony of Daniel Baker⁸⁰ and Paul Ryan, entitled *Mirror Mirror*, is a lecture-performance that was completed and recorded at the Roma pavilion and then included in the *Call the Witness* archives in order to be viewed for the first time or re-watched at a later point. It focused, as stated by the witnesses, on a 'gap in knowledge' about Roma visuality and, linked to this, Roma (in)visibility and (in)audibility. The audience at the pavilion looked on as Baker and Ryan ornamented the space from which they would deliver their testimony, an act which was clearly part of the performance itself. The performance is an artwork in which the discussion of art and its function in society is the

⁷⁸ Marika Schmiedt, "Marika Schmiedt," *The Gypsy Chronicle*, accessed December 23, 2013, <http://thegypsychronicles.net/marika-schmiedt/>.

⁷⁹ Suzana Milevska, "Marika Schmiedt Testimony: Vermächtnis/Legacy," *Call the Witness: Roma Pavilion 54th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2011*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.callthewitness.org/Testimonies/VermachtnisLegacy>.

primary focus: specifically Gypsy art practice and its relation to an understanding of Roma culture. The testimony was delivered in the format of an academic panel with two interrelated presentations. There were slides detailing the theoretical framework of their talk, specifically key ideas from social anthropologist Alfred Gell and semiotician Charles Sanders Pierce, which inform both Baker's and Ryan's work. There was also pre-recorded video material, projected imagery, some of Baker's other artworks, and documents such as photos and exhibition catalogues relating to the different artworks from selected Roma artists, including Suzye Llwyd (also known as Killi Mengri), Celia Baker, Jim Hayward, Simon Lee, and Paula Stanford. Baker primarily outlines what he describes as Gypsy visuality and Gypsy style, and makes the connection between Roma artistry and the way in which Roma are treated. He also discusses a 2007 exhibition he co-curated with Ryan called *No Gorgios*, which Baker notes, "is a play on the 'No Travellers' signs until recently commonplace in parts of the UK. Gorgio (the Anglo- Romani version of 'gadje' or 'gajo' as used in other parts of Europe) refers to those outside the Gypsy community."⁸¹ Drawing on works from this exhibition Ryan provides analysis of the artists mentioned in order to examine hierarchies of making, collecting, and exhibiting.

The *No Gorgios* exhibition⁸² presented works by "Gypsies who make art that appears not to be concerned with the Western Fine Art canon"⁸³ rather than pieces by professional artists who are also Gypsies, such as Baker. The exhibition was promoted as a collection of contemporary artworks and the fact non-professional Roma artists created them was not made evident to

⁸⁰ The artistic director of the *Call the Witness*, Maria Hlavajova, notes Baker's contribution to the pavilion as a whole: "Crucial in putting together the testimonies was Daniel Baker, without whose knowledge, patience, and support the project would not have been possible." Hlavajova, "Introduction."

⁸¹ Daniel Baker, "Breaking Beyond the Local," *Third Text* 22, no. 3 (2008): 409.

⁸² Baker suggests that: The [rabbit] catapults that became the signature image for the show were bought at Stow Horse Fair. These hybrid objects with their wooden handles carved and painted to form animal shapes, and their rubber and spent bullet extensions, were for sale at thirty pounds each. The maker had an armful of them. He was agreeable to the idea of exhibiting them as artworks in an exhibition but the price was the same whether the catapults were used as toys, ornaments, weapons or art. This versatility of the object, along with the flexibility of the maker and the trust in the creativity of the interpretant, allows the object the potential to inhabit multiple environments and find a way of operating appropriately – a feature common to many of the items displayed in the exhibition and not without resonance in the resource and adaptability of Gypsy identities." Ibid, 411.

visitors until the end of the exhibition. The purpose of this was to avoid prior expectations and to “activate the [art] objects so that their possible cultural meanings increase and catalyse the viewer to a fresh appraisal.”⁸⁴ Baker also conducted a study to investigate if there was a commonality in the Gypsy visuality presented in *No Gorgios*, and if so what might it look like. He suggests in his testimony that flashiness, allure, enchantment, entrapment, ornament, functionality, diversion, discordance and contingency were the key elements which he realised for the first time characterized Gypsy visuality and style, and key components that also inform Roma culture. Drawing on ideas from Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency* Baker asserts in his testimony that “artefacts are the equivalent of persons and vice versa in so far as they function as social agents it follows that Gypsy visuality can be considered the equivalent of Roma communities in terms of the social relations that they generate. This means that one both reflects and represents the other.”⁸⁵ Interestingly, Ryan reads the last sentence of Baker’s testimony before the title of the work *Mirror Mirror* is projected again. There is a somewhat confusing switch of roles and we begin to hear Ryan’s testimony, the beginning of which is read by Baker. Baker and Ryan are thus reflecting and representing the other, the Roma and non-Roma, positions in the work itself. They are endeavouring to open up a new discussion on Gypsy visuality and by doing so a new understanding of Roma culture. They create, through co-authorship, a perspectival change in understanding Roma through aesthetic means. Their testimony is an act of co-authorship and speaks in the name of inaudibility in order to challenge it.

Mirror Mirror seeks to affect the way we imagine a system in which Roma are continually excluded and disenfranchised as does the *Call the Witness* project as a whole. *Call the Witness* engages in a process of dissensus through the act of having Roma bear witness to their own desubjectification. It involves a concerted attempt to redistribute the sensible by challenging

⁸³ Ibid, 409.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 413.

who and what is audible and visible in the shared common of the community. Indeed, the Roma pavilion creates a remnant of continued exclusion but also *imagines* a place in which heterogenous voices meet and those who cannot speak speak.

⁸⁵ Daniel Baker and Paul Ryan, “Daniel Baker and Paul Ryan Testimony: Mirror Mirror.”

Laibach is Laibach: Overidentification as Dissensus in Neue Slowenische Kunst

Laibach: The only way to stay partly outside the system is to speak the language of its ideology. The only way is to change yourself into your enemy and subvert the system. [...] That is what we were doing before (under communism) and this is what we are doing now (under capitalism). We still continue to use the language of ideology as our own language.¹

The Brooklyn Rail: Do you feel that artistic neutrality can be said to exist? Can art ever be above or divorced from politics?

Laibach: Never. Or everything we did and do stand for was wrong.

The interlinked Slovenian art collectives Laibach and Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK, New Slovenian Art) have attempted to intervene in the political landscape of contemporary Europe throughout their long lifespan (1980-present). Although I will focus most directly on the work of Laibach, often described as the musical-wing of NSK,² I will not be solely focusing on the musical elements of the movement or discussing them in isolation, but rather looking at them in relation to the many other interlinked facets of NSK. Formed in 1980 in the industrial town of Trbovlje in central Slovenia, Laibach often performed in full military uniforms in a style akin to military marches, in what could be said to be a “(hyper)literal repetition of totalitarian ritual.”³ Laibach began as a kind of ‘return of the repressed’ and many of their works borrow symbols and signs from the past in order to reappropriate and recontextualise them. What this process endeavours to do, a process NSK call retrogardism, is retroactively modify the way the past is narrated to reconfigure the way the present is understood. In 1984 NSK was developed as an expansion of the concepts explored in the work of Laibach, who already had graphic design, fine art, costuming, and video as important components of their aesthetic. “NSK proclaimed itself to be an abstract social body situated in the very sociopolitical space of Europe, which simultaneously represents a western and an eastern phenomenon.”⁴ At the time NSK comprised of avant-garde theatre (Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre, later renamed

¹ Laibach, quoted in Gregor Tomc, “We Will Rock YU: Popular Music in the Second Yugoslavia,” in *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, ed. Dubravka Djuric and Misko Suvakovic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), 459.

² Marina Gržinić, “Neue Slowenische Kunst,” in *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, eds. Dubravka Djuric and Misko Suvakovic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), 248.

³ Ibid., 250.

⁴ Ibid., 248.

Red Pilot Cosmokinetic Theatre and Noordung), fine arts (Irwin), design (New Collectivism), film and video (Retrovision), and the Department of Pure and Applied Philosophy.⁵ Many of these different groups within NSK worked in reference to others in the movement. For instance, much of the work of Irwin, a collective in which all artists take equal credit for their productions that involve painting, sculpture, installations, etc., is often a “reinterpretation and recreation of Laibach’s iconography.”⁶

The work of Laibach and NSK relates specifically to the theoretical framework of this project in several key ways. First and foremost, their work is always attempting to position itself at the confluence of aesthetics and politics; more specifically, their work embodies the idea of dissensus. As a movement and a collective NSK developed a way of operating in which they adopt and use the language of the dominant ideological system under which they are working, be it communism or neo-liberal capitalism, through a process which is described as overidentification. Because of the consistency of this approach under shifting historical circumstances, the NSK movement dealt directly with the paradigmatic shift between pre- and post-1989 discourse in the way of thinking, talking, and defining how the world is organised socially and politically. Despite their ongoing productivity, however, they have often been identified only with this paradigmatic shift. In a review of a Laibach performance at the Tate Modern in London, which was part of a NSK symposium in April 2012, reviewer Andrew Haydon suggested that although the performance was important as a document of a historically significant group, there was now “no concrete context for that with which they were over-identifying.”⁷ This seems symptomatic of a form of interpretation that maintains Laibach were always “primarily orientated against a socialist system”⁸ and sidelines their numerous interrogations of Western popular and capitalist culture. It also implicitly reinforces the neoliberal discourse that we currently live in a post-ideological, fluid, borderless world.

⁵ Ibid., 247-248.

⁶ Ibid., 261.

⁷ Andrew Haydon, “Laibach: Monumental Retro-Avant-Garde,” *Exeunt* (2012).

This chapter focuses on how the combination of retrogardism and overidentification in the work of Laibach and NSK attempts to produce a feeling of uneasiness in the audience to challenge them to think about where they stand in relation to the ruling ideology. Jill Bennett suggests that when art shocks us it provides “a jolt that does not so much *reveal* truth as thrust us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry.”⁹ Laibach’s work does not tell us what to think about our relationship to ideological systems but does force us to question how we relate to them. In short, Laibach provides the question not the answer.

Ian Parker suggests that overidentification as an aesthetico-political concept “is drawn from the armoury of psychoanalysis and forged by cultural activists in the Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) into a weapon against Tito Stalinism and contemporary neo-liberalism.”¹⁰ In an aesthetico-political context, overidentification can be seen as having positive connotations and be understood as a resistant and subversive practice, which is quite different from the negative associations the term has in a clinical context. Indeed, Parker notes,

Here it is typically configured as a seductive and harmful part of what is termed in the dominant psychoanalytic tradition in the English-speaking world ‘countertransference’; this ‘countertransference’ indexes the ‘resistance’, ‘inner conflicts’ and ‘blind spots’ that afflict the psychoanalyst. These may be treated as interferences that mislead the analyst and throw them off track, or as their ‘appropriate emotional responses’ that cue them into what the analysand is feeling and attempting to communicate to them.¹¹

Obviously overidentification could potentially cause problems for the analysand, but the term designates a problem with the analyst, in that they become too emotionally invested and identify too strongly with the trauma of the analysand. Overidentification is often used in an institutional framework, particularly in relation to ‘special education’ and also carries with it negative connotations. The term is also conflated, in many cases, with the idea of

⁸ Alexei Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), 269.

⁹ Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 11.

¹⁰ Ian Parker, “The Truth about Over-identification,” in The Truth of Žižek, eds. Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (London: Continuum, 2007), 144.

¹¹ Ibid, 146.

overrepresentation.¹² For example, a study by the Connecticut State Department of Education concluded that “black and hispanic students are more than twice as likely to be identified with intellectual and emotional disabilities than their white peers,’ [which was understood as raising] ‘issues of overidentification and disproportion.’”¹³

The term has now entered discussions about art and politics through writing on NSK, with Žižek’s unusually straightforwardly entitled “Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?” (1993) being an important example of this. In this text Žižek suggests that Laibach and NSK “staged an aggressive inconsistent mixture of Stalinism, Nazism, and Blut und Boden ideology,”¹⁴ which was labelled fascist by Yugoslav authorities and considered an ‘ironic imitation of totalitarian ritual’ by many cultural commentators. However, he notes that much of the support for Laibach, particularly from those on the Left, was accompanied by significant uneasiness about their apparent ‘ironic imitation.’ In a set of prosopopoeic questions relating to this uneasy feeling Žižek asks, “What if they really mean it? What if they truly identify with the totalitarian ritual?” – or, in a cunning transferral of identification back onto the uneasy public, “What if Laibach overestimates their public? What if the public takes seriously what Laibach mockingly imitates, so that Laibach actually strengthens what it purports to undermine?”¹⁵ These questions and this uneasiness, he argues, are perpetuated by the premise that ironic distance from a particular social system is a subversive position, which by logical extension means that if you take it seriously you are a conformist. Žižek asserts that this is a wrong alternative. A social system, according to Žižek, has inherent to its way of functioning the assumption that its own ideology must not be taken literally or seriously. The ideal political subject is thus one that retains cynical distance from an ideology because such cynical distance

¹² Ibid, 145. Parker suggests, “In ‘special education’ in the United States the ‘overrepresentation’ of African-American students is viewed as [...] a problem. Certain ‘discrepancy formulas’ are used to determine that when, for instance, these students make up 12% of the student population and have a 30% presence in special education this is way above the margins of chance, and it is then termed an ‘overidentification problem’. It should be noted that while ‘overidentification’ is assumed to be synonymous with ‘overrepresentation’ in this context, it is not; since these terms are signifiers they operate in chains of equivalence and difference that are symbolically structured – from a Lacanian point of view there is no such thing as a synonym.”

¹³ Quoted in Parker, “The Truth about Over-identification,” 145.

¹⁴ Žižek, “Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?”

is built into the system itself; it is required for the system to function normally. This cynical distance is, for Žižek, the *modus operandi* of our contemporary supposedly “postideological” world and therefore is itself a mode of conformism.

Furthermore, Žižek argues that every system has inherent within it an ‘unwritten code’ or ‘obscene hidden reverse’ which permits transgressions of public law yet still confirms the subject within it. He uses the example of Rob Reiner’s film *A Few Good Men* (1992), in which two marines are ‘secretly’ ordered to beat another marine who has broken one of their ethical rules, to illustrate how the transgression of public law is built into the system itself:

The function of this “Code Red” is extremely interesting: it condones an act of transgression – illegal punishment of a fellow soldier – yet at the same time it reaffirms the cohesion of the group, i.e. it calls for an act of supreme identification with group values. Such a code must remain under the cover of night, unacknowledged, unutterable – in public everybody pretends to know nothing about it, or even actively denies its existence. It represents the “spirit of community” in its purest, exerting the strongest pressure on the individual to comply with its mandate of group identification. Yet, simultaneously, it violates the explicit rules of community life.¹⁶

Laibach’s and NSK’s strategy of dissensus is contrary to this; they do not maintain cynical distance from the ruling ideology, which actually permits such violations of public law; rather, they overidentify with it, exaggerate it, in order to bring to light this unwritten code, this hidden reverse of the system. They take the stated norms of the system more seriously than the “system that proclaims them itself.”¹⁷ It is this lack of distance from that which is being critiqued that distinguishes Laibach’s and NSK’s “reworking and fusing together of widely differing pre-given aesthetic and ideological elements”¹⁸ from many forms of ‘culture jamming’ (*Adbusters*, for example) that are (loosely) based on the Situationist International idea of *détournement*. Situationist actions also involve the recombination of readymade aesthetic elements and ideas, but they are different from NSK precisely because the *détournement* form of culture jamming remains palatable. It “relies upon a kind of critical

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stephen Shukaitis, “Overidentification and/or Bust?” *Variant* 37, Spring/Summer 2010, 26.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

distance from the elements used,”¹⁹ whereas Laibach’s lack of distance from the ideological perspective with which they overidentify evokes a sense of uneasiness.

A poster by NSK group New Collectivism demonstrates how NSK attempted to draw out the ‘obscene hidden reverse’ of Yugoslav socialism. In 1987 New Collectivism submitted a poster for an event that celebrated both the birthday of former president Tito and ‘Youth Day.’ The poster was a reworking of a Nazi painting, “The Third Reich” (1936) by Richard Klein, which showed an athletic nude young man at its centre surrounded by Nazi symbolism. New Collectivism had simply replaced the Nazi symbols with socialist ones and the swastika with a communist star. Initially it was chosen as the most “politically appropriate” poster by the federal jury and gained wide public acclaim, until a journalist published a piece drawing attention to its history.²⁰ Marina Gržinić notes that the “complete identification of the federal jury with the poster’s visual ideology” reveals that the communist imagery was “the obscene hidden supplement” of the Nazi symbolism.²¹ It is this latent and repressed symbolism that is brought to the surface in the New Collectivism poster.

As can be noted from the New Collectivism poster, an important theme present in many NSK works is a return of repressed history, which we will see is intrinsic to the very concept of Laibach. The obscene hidden supplement is often brought to light through a process of overidentification with a repressed history, thus instigating and evoking a return of the repressed. Many NSK works recontextualise signs and symbols from the past, an aesthetic process they refer to as retrogardism, or the “formation of the monumental Retro-Avant-Garde.”²² They argue that this process is a form of ‘anti-repression’ in which traumas affecting the present (and the future) are traced back to the past and worked through in the present.²³ Indeed, Alexei Monroe suggests that “retrogardism attempts to free the present and change the

¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁰ Gržinić, “Neue Slowenische Kunst,” 254.

²¹ Ibid.

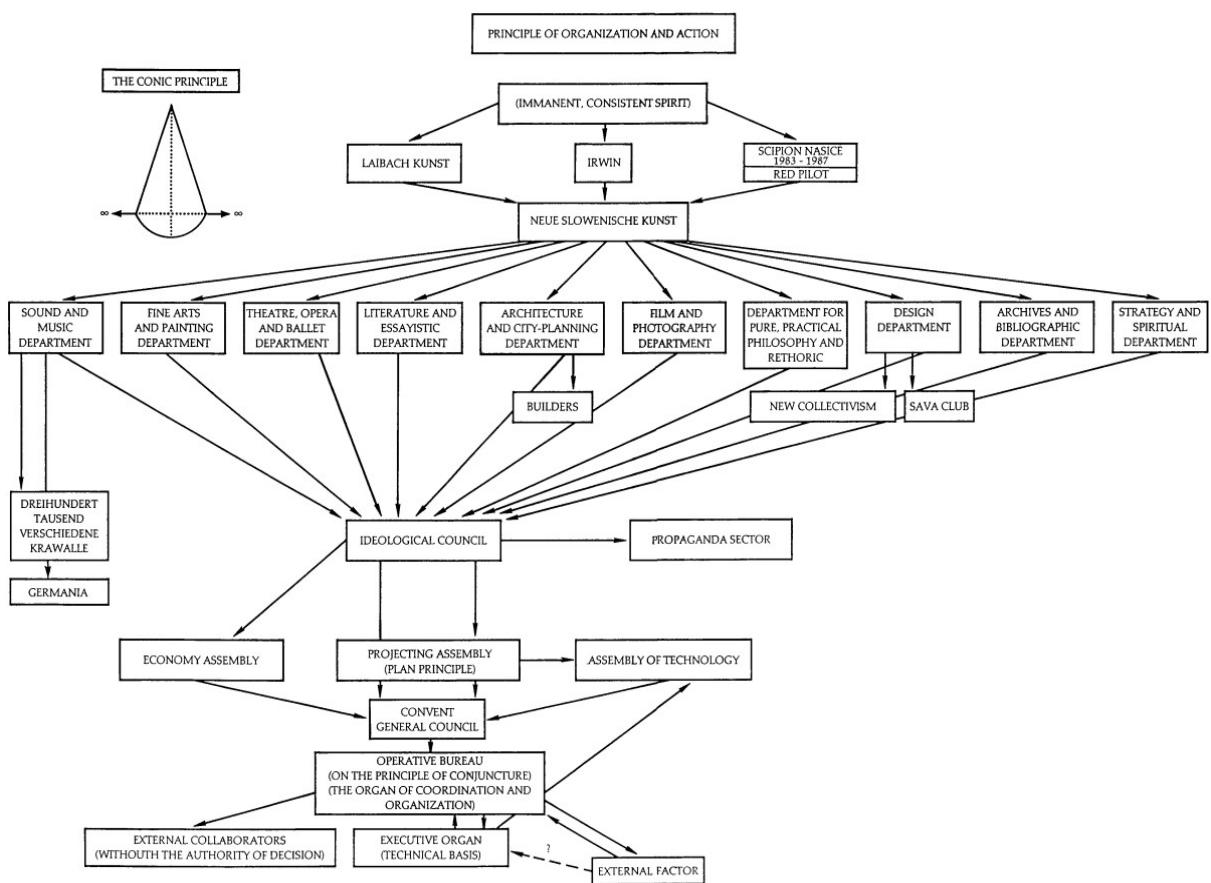
²² Shukaitis, “Overidentification and/or Bust?,” 26.

²³ Ibid.

future via the reworking of past utopianisms and historical wounds.”²⁴ What it also endeavours to do is retroactively modify the way the past is narrated. In a sense this method follows the way Žižek describes the return of the repressed:

The Lacanian answer to the question: From where does the repressed return? is, therefore, paradoxically: From the future ... As soon as we enter the symbolic order, the past is always present in the form of historical tradition and the meaning of these traces is not given; it changes continually with the transformations of the signifier's network. Every historical rupture, every advent of a new master-signifier, changes retroactively the meaning of all tradition, restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way.²⁵

The works produced by NSK artists frequently operate within the tensions of past, present, and future, between the retro and the avant-garde. The NSK organigram (pictured below)



is exemplary of both this retrogradism and overidentification. The organigram, or organisational diagram, which was disseminated two years after NSK was formed, was itself

²⁴ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 120.

²⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 55-56.

an overidentification with the bureaucratic mass-organised totalitarian state apparatus at the same time as it “retroactively gave NSK bodily representation.”²⁶

If we look at the discussions and controversy that surround Laibach’s name we can begin to see some of the uneasiness that Žižek mentions and which the group and NSK as a whole generate. The word ‘Laibach’ is the old German name for Slovenia’s capital city and has significant connotations and associations in Slovenia. The appearance of the band Laibach and the reappearance of the name Laibach were signalled by a poster on a wall in Trbovlje featuring a prominent black cross under which featured the single word ‘Laibach.’ The black cross is used as their moniker and appears on their posters and album covers, as well as being incorporated into other *NSK* artworks. Although not a direct copy of another work, it draws parallels and associations with works by Russian supremetist Kazimir Malevich and also the crosses that appeared on German WWII vehicles.²⁷ The cross incorporated into the NSK insignia also combined Dada artist John Heartfield’s anti-fascist axe, a pair of deer antlers, and an industrial cog. Laibach’s name alone has created considerable controversy and I have therefore included here a rather substantial statement, taken from an interview in the early 1980s, by Laibach on the spectral quality of their chosen name:

The name LAIBACH first appeared in 1144 as the original name of Ljubljana [...]. It appeared again during the reign of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, this time as an alternative to the already existing Slovene version. “LAIBACH” again appears in 1943, [...] when the Germans took control of the city. This was the period when the Nazis and Belogardisti (White Guard) arrested, tortured and murdered those citizens of Ljubljana who did not believe in the victory of the Third Reich. In 1980, with the emergence of a youth culture group, the name LAIBACH appeared for the fourth time, suggesting specific possibilities for the formation of a politicized – systematically ideological – art, as a consequence of the influence of politics and ideology. In this sense, the name summarizes the horror of the communion between totalitarianism and alienation generated by production in the form of slavery.²⁸

In a documentary on NSK, *Predictions of Fire* (*Prerokbe Ognja*, Michael Benson, 1996), Laibach suggest that the group began as a kind of ‘return of the repressed’ and their name is a moniker for this position. They maintain that if history is repressed it will boil over and the fourth re-emergence of the name Laibach signifies this eruption of repressed history. In one of numerous rhetorical statements that open *Predictions of Fire* Laibach assert that it is not the past that shapes a nation’s mythology but a mythology that shapes its past. The naming of the group through the return of a repressed symbol, ‘Laibach,’ to the contemporary political landscape was one of the key methods the group chose to disrupt this mythology – a

²⁶ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 116.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

mythology that attempts mask Slovene collaboration with the Third Reich and the uneasy relationship between ‘Germanization’ and expressions of Slovene identity. Furthermore, Alexei Monroe, drawing on Fredric Jameson, suggests that what Laibach are doing is ‘making strange’ what is actually familiar in order to bring it to, or see it in, a new light; in Laibach’s own terminology, they are “demasking and recapitulating.”²⁹ The name caused considerable controversy in Slovenia, as a result of which Laibach were banned from performing under their own name between 1983 and 1987, which meant, for example, that the promotion for their 1985 album “Anonymous” only included the black Laibach cross and not their name.³⁰

Although much of Laibach’s early works attempt to highlight “the correlations between fascism and the Yugoslavian socialist tropes,”³¹ there has often also been a keen focus on Western popular culture, as Laibach will treat pop lyrics “as serious ideological texts.”³² In 1987 Laibach released the album *Opus Dei*, which featured numerous ‘covers,’ including two versions, one in English (“Opus Dei”) and one in German (“Leben heisst Leben”), of the Austrian band Opus’ song “Live is Life.” Both the lyrics (“the feeling of the people is the feeling of the land,” for instance) and the accompanying video for “Opus Dei” evoke a ‘Blut und Boden ideology’ and a “paean to völkisch belonging”³³ but also point to the complex relationship between Slovenia and Austria. As Monroe notes, the album’s title is a reference to the Austrian band’s name, but it also has several other layers of allusion. The literal translation of Opus Dei is “the work of God”, which can suggest, perhaps somewhat problematically for some, that Laibach’s album itself is the “work of God”. Secondly, there is the “allusion to the quasi-Masonic Spanish Catholic sect Opus Dei, which has been linked to extreme right-wing activities.”³⁴ The album also featured a reinterpretation of the *Queen* song “One Vision,” originally written for Live Aid in 1985. Like many of the songs they rework, this is not a

²⁸ NSK, *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1991), 43.

²⁹ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 155.

³⁰ Ibid., 162.

³¹ Alexei Monroe quoted in Haydon, “Laibach: Monumental Retro-Avant-Garde.”

³² Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 229.

³³ Ibid.

simple cover. The original song has the ostensible theme of world peace and unity, with lyrics such as “One man one goal one mission, One heart one soul just one solution … There's only one direction, One world and one nation, Yeah one vision.” Laibach sing the song in German, renaming it “Geburt einer Nation” (Birth of a Nation), and perform it as a mixture of Wagnerian operatic military march and disco, thus recontextualising the (perhaps) innocuous lyrics. Stevphen Shukaitis suggests that “through its transformation [“Geburt einer Nation”] draws out and amplifies the grotesque parallels between the pleasures of pop culture and fascist modulation of crowd emotion through propaganda and epic scale theatricality.”³⁵ As “Geburt einer Nation” attests, even before the fall of Eastern Bloc communism Laibach demonstrated engagement with Western popular culture.

In the video for Laibach’s 1988 single, “Sympathy for the Devil”, a reworking of a Rolling Stones song, there are exaggerated “literalising Western clichés about East European cultures.”³⁶ The clip was made by Retrovision, the film and video wing of NSK, who claim: “Retrovision unites images and visions of the past and the future into a positive vision of the present.”³⁷ The video is set in a castle, surrounded by mist, in the Slovenian mountains and is adorned with numerous animals’ heads and hunting trophies, with Laibach dressed in overly militant hunting outfits. The members of Laibach are presented as taking ‘obscene enjoyment’ in the consumption of food and alcohol, while outside the castle people are partaking in acts of mindless violence. The video ends with Laibach walking through a series of caves with fire torches in hand before arriving at a courtyard surrounded by ruined buildings in which three semi-naked children play. The singer protectively puts his arms around the children, symbolising his new role as head of the family. What the video is doing is turning the clichéd Western gaze of the East back onto the West, in a gesture of overidentification with the idea of Balkanism. As discussed in Chapter 2 Žižek suggests that Balkanism and the idea of the

³⁴ Ibid., 230.

³⁵ Shukaitis, “Overidentification and/or Bust?,” 26.

Balkans functions “in a similar way to Edward Said’s concept of ‘Orientalism’: the Balkans as the timeless space onto which the West projects its phantasmatic content.”³⁸ Laibach (and Retrovision) are adopting the language of Balkanism that both exoticises and demonises the Balkans, framing the region and its people as passionate yet barbaric. The “Sympathy for the Devil” video also plays up the fear of “what one imagines about the Other’s *jouissance*,”³⁹ which Jacques-Alain Miller suggests is central to racism and nationalism. Žižek further adds: “What really bothers us about the ‘other’ is the peculiar way he organizes his enjoyment, precisely the ‘surplus’, the ‘excess’ that pertains to this way: the smell of ‘their’ food, ‘their’ noisy songs and dances, ‘their’ strange manners, ‘their’ attitude to work.”⁴⁰ Laibach provide ritualised version of a stereotypical ‘excessive Eastern enjoyment,’ projecting their apparent barbarity back to a Western audience. The kind of chauvinism of Balkanist discourse that Laibach and Retrovision overidentify with in the video is evidenced by the kinds of questions they were asked in interviews at the time, such as “Do you know of the animal rights movement in the West? How do you feel about it?” – to which Laibach replied: “We know about it, but the animals don’t.”⁴¹ What Laibach are doing in “Sympathy for the Devil” is embodying the conflicting Western stereotypes of the Balkans, exaggerating them, and projecting them back onto a Western mediascape. The East-West theme continues through much of their later work; however, there is a more pronounced focus on the “the unsafe sanctity of our democracies enslaved to neo-liberalism and high capital.”⁴²

Indeed, in 1992, Laibach’s album *Kapital* confronted the issues of high capital and the changing East-West dialectic. The album’s German title this time was not intended to conjure

³⁶ Michael Goddard, “We Are Time,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 11, No. 1 (2006): 48.

³⁷ NSK, *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, 228.

³⁸ Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 225, September-October (1997): 38.

³⁹ Jacques-Alain Miller, “Extimité,” in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure and Society*, eds. Mark Bracher, Marshall W. Alcorn Jr., Ronald J. Corthell, and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (New York: New York University Press, 1994): 79.

⁴⁰ Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, 203.

⁴¹ NSK, *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, 56.

up the spectres of Nazism, but, perhaps obviously, Marx's tome, *Das Kapital*. Laibach's response to the collapse of a socialist system they had been critiquing was not one of celebration but one of critique. Again, their response was retrogardist. At a time when "the triumph of the economy was being presented as the key to a new rational prosperous world"⁴³ and amidst declarations about the death of communism at the 'the end of history,' they created a work that again represented the return of the (recently) repressed: now a Marxist critique of capitalism. We can see from statements by Laibach in relation to *Kapital* that they adopted overtly Marxist language:

In socialism the abyss between subject and superstructure was large enough to produce skepticism, in capitalism there is no abyss between the subject and the superstructure, because superstructure and subject are brutally melted together. The superstructure carefully creates sentiments to disguise this brutality. Sentimentality in the victory of Kapital therefore acts as a superstructure covering brutality and eliminates the abyss between subject and itself.⁴⁴

Laibach's project thus became an attempt to bring to light this hidden brutality that covers over the abyss to create enough room to disrupt the 'police order.' With *Kapital* Laibach also questioned the "East's wholehearted and unthinking embrace of Western systems,"⁴⁵ and the East's place within this new configuration of the distribution of the sensible. The track "Wirtschaft ist tot" (The Economy is Dead) implies that Western economic models are not necessarily transposable or preferable in these different Eastern political and economic environments. The accompanying video references the underground factory scenes from Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927), in which numerous NSK symbols are incorporated, such as the industrial cogs from their insignia and the Laibach cross. It also, as Monroe suggests, evokes a kind of camp *Flash Gordon* aesthetic, with all the characters featured in the clip appearing in a metallic silver paint.⁴⁶ The song begins with pre-WWII-style strings and includes samples from a contemporary German financial report combined with a repetitive techno beat that is

⁴² Luke Turner, "Retro Monumental Avant-Garde: Laibach Live at the Tate Modern." *The Quietus*, April 16, 2012. Accessed August 29, 2012. <http://thequietus.com/articles/08524-laibach-tate-modern-live-review>.

⁴³ Michael Goddard, "We Are Time," 48.

⁴⁴ Laibach, quoted in Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 236.

⁴⁵ Conor McGrady, "Raising the Volume: Laibach: Art, Ideology and War," *Fortnight*, No. 389, Supplement: Art and War: Aesthetic Responses to Twentieth Century Nightmares (Sep., 2001): 16.

⁴⁶ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 237.

broken on occasion by different jarring sounds such as those of sirens. The end of the clip features an image of the earth as if from space, suggesting that this hyper-modern work area that Laibach and the ‘factory workers’ inhabit is a spacecraft, and across the world are the words, written in English, BECOME A CITIZEN OF THE FIRST GLOBAL STATE OF THE UNIVERSE.’ As we will see, this statement is actually a pre-cursor, or at least can be viewed retroactively as a precursor, to the development of the *NSK* state. The song and clip offers a contradictory mix of a retro-sci-fi dystopian future that simultaneously offers hope of the first global state. However, as the song’s title suggests, the economy is dead, and therefore it is not the kind of global state or ‘global village’ offered in free market globalisation discourse. Although at this point they do not tell us what this global state will look like, they do question the obscene hidden brutality of this new world order that Laibach treats as a totalitarian return.

During their “Occupied Europe Tour” (1994-95) for the album *NATO* (1994) Laibach incorporated many corporate symbols into their stage set in the place of communist or fascist iconography to create a link between the “imperial elements of financial capital”⁴⁷ and totalitarianism. Laibach stated that “Democracy is just a milder term for developed totalitarianism” and part of exercise of *NATO* was to unmask this. Monroe asserts that “Laibach recapitulate NATO as an ideological regime, and link the economic system it represents to pop culture.”⁴⁸ All the songs featured on *NATO* are recapitulations of songs that deal with themes of war, nationalism, and colonisation, originally by such acts such as Pink Floyd, Europe, Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, and Edwin Starr. Musically, it was Laibach’s most commercial and accessible album up to that point with its disco pop-techno sound. Laibach have always been “fascinated by disco aesthetics” because they maintain that disco “rhythm stimulates automatist mechanisms and co-forms the industrialization of

⁴⁷ NSK, *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, 57.

⁴⁸ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 240.

consciousness according to the model of totalitarianism and industrial production.”⁴⁹

Laibach’s reworking of the Motown anti-Vietnam war song “War,” originally performed by Edwin Starr, “presents contemporary reality in which there is no distance between pop culture, capitalism, and militarism.”⁵⁰ Laibach keep the question-and-answer part from Starr’s original song “War! What is it good for?” but instead of answering with “absolutely nothing” as in the original they respond with: “Mobilization, Science, Religion, Domination, Communication, Teleportation … GM, IBM, Newsweek, CNN, Universal European, VCR, NGM, Seimans, Sony, Universal European,” all sung in slow choral style over a driving techno beat.

A press release about the album *NATO* (1994) states that it is “the seventh in a sequence of official Laibach LP releases that have artistically redefined the political map of Europe.”⁵¹ The album revisits the East-West dialectic, but this time with quite specific reference to NATO’S influence in the Balkans. If we read the album, the tour that promoted it and the accompanying videos retroactively, we can see them as predictive of things to come. Monroe suggests that “many NSK works have ‘turned out to be’ prophetic.”⁵² For instance, the lyrics from the 1996 song “God is God” (“You shall see hell clear the sky, You shall see good and evil, You shall see city walls crumble and towers”) have quite a different resonance when performed after September 11 than they did in 1996. Considering two of Laibach’s key strategies – overidentifying with ruling ideology and drawing out the spectre of things that are repressed by culture and society – one could argue that the apparently prophetic nature of Laibach’s and NSK’s work is a result of taking the language of an ideological system to its logical end. Žižek suggests that we already imagined September 11 as a ‘spectral apparition’ fantasised about in numerous Hollywood blockbusters and that “this fantasmatic screen apparition entered our

⁴⁹ NSK, *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, 46. This was from an interview with *Glasbena Mladina* from the early 1980s.

⁵⁰ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 240.

⁵¹ Laibach, “Nato,” *Laibach*, accessed January 7, 2014, <http://www.laibach.org/discography/nato/>.

⁵² Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 13.

reality.”⁵³ Laibach similarly imagined the influence of NATO in the former Yugoslavia because it was present in the obscene underside of their rhetoric, visual as well as verbal. NATO logos appeared on much of Laibach’s promotional material and were incorporated into many of their stage sets, and the tour brought them to places that, it would turn out, NATO would have a significant presence in and impact on, such as Sarajevo (NATO intervened in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995) and Belgrade (bombed by NATO in 1999). The final song on the album is “Marš na Drinu” (March on the River Drina) and is a reworking of a Serbian nationalist song originally composed as a march in the battle between Serbian and Austro-Hungarian forces in World War I. The song was played after several military victories from loud speakers carried by Serbian tanks at the beginning of the Serbian military offensives in the early 1990s and in the former capitals of the Yugoslav Republics (Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje and Zagreb), so it clearly had traumatic associations for audiences when Laibach toured there in 1994-95.⁵⁴ Žižek’s notes that what is significant about Laibach’s interventions is “you cannot pin them down. Theirs [...] is] an abstractly totalitarian symbolization, but one that always slipped away if one wanted to thrust in and ask, what actually is it?”⁵⁵ In this situation it raises the uneasy question: could Laibach, a Slovene group, be supporting Milošević? Slovenia was the first of the Yugoslav Republics to win independence, which it gained in 1991 after 10-day armed conflict with Milošević’s Yugoslav People’s Army.⁵⁶ Slovenia has also had a pro-NATO stance and joined NATO’s “Partnership for Peace” in March 1994 and later NATO in 2004.⁵⁷ Laibach’s *NATO* poses questions to both Western and Balkan audiences that create a sense of uneasiness in both.

The first single from *NATO* is a reworking of the Europe hit “The Final Countdown” and the video begins with the same shot that ended “Wirtschaft ist tot”, an image of the world from

⁵³ Slavoj Žižek. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London; New York : Verso, 2002), 16.

⁵⁴ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 241 and 304, note 113.

⁵⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “Everything Provokes Fascism/ Plečnik avec Laibach,” *Assemblage* 33, August (1997): 58.

⁵⁶ John K. Cox, *Slovenia: Evolving Loyalties* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 79-82.

space with the words ‘BECOME A CITIZEN OF THE FIRST GLOBAL STATE OF THE UNIVERSE’ blazoned across it. However, on this occasion the idea of a global state is the theme of the whole video. This global state is the ‘NSK State in Time,’ a name that implies the state functions with “the absence of any kind of physical space.”⁵⁸ In Ljubljana in late 1992 Irwin and NSK theorist Eda Čufer released a statement outlining how this should be conceived:

The NSK state in time is an abstract organism, a suprematist body, installed in a real social and political space as a sculpture comprising the concrete body warmth, spirit and work of its members. NSK confers the status of a state not to territory but to mind, whose borders are in a state of flux, in accordance with the movements and changes of its symbolic and physical collective body.⁵⁹

In the “Final Countdown” video we see the production of hundreds of NSK passports, but they are not linked to any particular territory as the entire video is set in a spacecraft. The video ends with the statement ‘BECOME A CITIZEN OF THE FIRST GLOBAL STATE OF THE UNIVERSE, THE STATE OF NSK’ in ten different languages. Although most of the work establishing the NSK State was primarily carried out by Irwin, they assert that Laibach constituted the ideological impulse of the state and claim that the development of the state was borne out of the activity of the NSK groups from their very formation. The message is thus that the state was planned from the beginning as part of the logic of overidentification and was formalised at time when the Yugoslav state was disintegrating:⁶⁰ “The logic of over-identification [...] was manifested in the totality with which NSK adopted all the aesthetic, ritualistic, and symbolic features of states.”⁶¹ This is most clearly represented in the creation of NSK passports. In 1995 the NSK State ran an event at the National Theatre of Sarajevo in which the theatre was declared an NSK State territory and numerous ‘diplomatic’ passports given out to attendees.

states in Europe since 1989, a context that provides cover for the appearance of yet another. The

⁵⁷ Ibid., 155-57.

⁵⁸ Marina Gržinić, “Total Recall – Total Closure,” in *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. Irwin (London: Afterall, 2006), 327.

⁵⁹ Eda Čufer and Irwin, “NSK State in Time,” IRWIN, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://irwin.si/texts/nsk-state-in-time/>

⁶⁰ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 248.

⁶¹ Avi Pitchon, “Irwin: The Eye of the State,” IRWIN, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://irwin.si/texts/irwin-the-eye-of-the-state/>.

passports' authentic appearance and their "diplomatic" status proved a successful deterrent to close scrutiny by officials unfamiliar with the NSK State and its passports.⁶²

The imagined community that is the NSK State still exists (in time) and at the time of writing passports can still be purchased from the NSK website for €24.⁶³ The NSK (trans)national anthem appears on Laibach's 2006 album *Volk*, which features reworkings of 13 other national anthems. *Volk*, which means 'the people' in German and stands in for the nation, means 'wolf' in Slovenian and the album's cover features three white sheep. The allusion created here is that nationalism, however benign it may seem, follows the biblical idiom of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

On 14 April 2012 Laibach performed a show at the Tate Modern in London entitled "Laibach: Retro Monumental Avant-Garde." They performed songs from most of the key points in their career, from the early 1980s industrial songs to songs from *Kapital*, *NATO* and *Volk*, and most recently their work on the soundtrack to *Iron Sky* (2012). A live album of the show was released shortly afterward and a catalogue written by Alexei Monroe was produced to accompany the show. This retroactively gives Laibach, the band, institutional status as art. However, critics such as Andrew Haydon questioned the contemporary relevance of Laibach, and suggested they no longer have anything to overidentify with; hence the institutionalisation of Laibach signals the end of their political relevance. In response, when asked in a recent interview about the relevance of their political intervention if the dismantling of the Berlin Wall also signalled an end to utopian ideals, Laibach answered in a manner very similar to Alain Badiou's description of the 'new walls' of globalisation:

Since the Berlin wall has disappeared new walls – ideological and very concrete – have been built around the world, some much longer and bigger than the one in Berlin: the wall built between Israel and Palestine (8 m high); the segregation/immigrant wall in Padua, Italy (3 m high); also a segregation wall in the Czech Republic, built to separate the Gypsy population from the rest in the city of Usti nad Labem (4 m high). [...] Also, the border wall between the USA and Mexico, walls in Iraq, between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, etc, etc. There is also a mental wall built between Europe and Turkey, a wall between the EU and the rest of (Eastern) Europe, walls between the English speaking world and the others, etc, etc. So- if it's only due to walls – there are plenty of reasons for the renewal of Utopia and

⁶² Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 255

⁶³ "How to Get an NSK State Passport." The NSK State. Accessed February 20, 2014. http://www.passport.nsk.si/en/how_to_get_an_NSK_passport.

utopian ideas.⁶⁴

Laibach exist to question the ruling ideology and critics who claim the end of the group's relevance often do so on the grounds of a presupposition that we live in a unified, post-ideological world. As is attested by the above statement, this is clearly not the case: "Today, the lesson of Laibach is more pertinent than ever."⁶⁵

Žižek suggests that a typical (leftist) argument against Laibach and perhaps by extension NSK follows from the well-known Groucho Marx statement, "These people talk like fascists and act like fascists, but this should not deceive you – they *are* fascists."⁶⁶ We could add to that communists, hard-line neo-liberalists, nationalists, etc. The Groucho Marx joke begs the question, if Laibach, or anyone for that matter, completely overidentify with a particular ideological position, how are they not subsumed by it? How do they not become the thing they are overidentifying with? Žižek seems to argue for complete overidentification as a tool for political intervention. I suggest that Žižek is partaking in a kind of Laibachian manoeuvre himself in that he is overstating the extent of the overidentification in order to force readers into a critical engagement with their own position. The awareness of such an engagement, however, means there must be some kind of limit or gap between the ruling ideology and the overidentification. In the case of Laibach this gap is created by their multiple and unpredictable appearances, as one minute they may appear fascist and the next as Stalinist or Slovene folk nationalist. Monroe notes that most fans of fascist and neo-Nazi music cannot fully identify with Laibach's fascist imagery, as it is often juxtaposed with communist or Slovene partisan imagery. The incorporation of disco and techno rhythms also runs counter to the guitar based "Oi" style music popular in these circles.⁶⁷ This is what adds to the uneasiness and uncomfortable nature of Laibach's and NSK's productions, but this is also what shocks audiences into thought.

⁶⁴ Refer to my introduction for a discussion of Badiou's concept.

⁶⁵ Slavoj Žižek, "Foreword: They Moved the Underground," in *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, Alexei Monroe (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005) xv.

⁶⁶ Groucho Marx quoted in *ibid.*, xiii.

Bringing to light the obscene underside of the ruling ideology provides the impetus behind Laibach's and NSK's overidentification, which, along with retrogardism forms the backbone of their dissensual methodology. I suggest that the obscene underside of our current 'golden age,' in which the world is supposedly postideological, borderless, and unified, is one that is underpinned by a system of borders that perpetuate exclusion and one in which the ruling ideological position claims 'there is no alternative' to this system. Laibach de-mask this claim and in doing so disrupt the consensus of the police order. For example, by positioning symbols of globalisation, neoliberalism and liberal democracy in the place of totalitarian iconography like they did with *NATO*, Laibach draw out the totalising imperatives of the current ideological system which seeks to establish itself as 'the only game in town.' Laibach and NSK redistribute ideological partitions that many take as a given, for instance, the divisions between communism and fascism or neoliberalist free markets and nationalist orthodoxy, in order to demonstrate their connections and interlinkedness. Through this redistribute of ideological coordinates they seek to "artistically redefine the map of Europe" thus provoking a dissensual rupture in Europe's moving image.

⁶⁷ Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*, 244-45.

The Hamlet Spectre

The time is out of joint. The world is going badly. – Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*.

Giving and forgiving have an essential relation to time – it binds forgiveness to the past but is granted in the present of the present. – Jacques Derrida, *Forgiving the Unforgiveable*

In 2001, in Zürich and then later in Berlin, German filmmaker, theatre director and performance artist Christoph Schlingensief staged a version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which he subtitled: *This is Your Family – Nazi-Line*. The play was part of a national deradicalisation programme designed to help 'redemptive' neo-Nazis reintegrate into society. Schlingensief used *Hamlet* as a vehicle, a way into what we could call radical deradicalisation. This is to say that the form of his project, his inventive staging of *Hamlet*, is radical, but the outcome involves the participants endeavouring to deradicalise from neo-Nazi ideology. In *Specters of Marx* Derrida invokes the language and the motifs of *Hamlet* to evoke the notion of the spectre. Indeed, he utilises the theme of haunting present in *Hamlet* to suggest that contemporary political discussions must be haunted by the spectre of Marx, from whom we can inherit the philosophy of responsibility and the spirit of radical critique.¹ Both Derrida and Schlingensief thus use *Hamlet* as a means, a vehicle, a framework and a resource to deal with political issues and both use the play to help re-negotiate links between justice, injustice, punishment and forgiveness.

Schlingensief's staging of *Hamlet* retains, for the most part, a historical set and traditional costuming (14th-15th century); however, sheets of swastika wallpaper are plastered over numerous walls of the set and swastika flags sometimes flank the stage. This is intended to give the appearance that a 'historical' version of *Hamlet* is being performed in the Nazi era. Through much of the performance Schlingensief makes use of an audiotape of a 1962 version of *Hamlet* in which Gustaf Gründgens plays the eponymous role. We will see that Gründgens' link to the Nazi party makes this decision significant. Schlingensief frequently has his actors

move their lips while this audio track is playing in the background. The replication of Gründgens' *Hamlet* is dramatically disrupted in the famous mousetrap scene (Act III, scene II). Usually this scene involves a play within the play of *Hamlet* itself in which Hamlet instructs a group of actors performing for the King (Claudius, Hamlet's uncle), the Queen (Gertrude, Hamlet's mother) and numerous courtiers to act out a play in which a king is murdered by his brother, who goes on to marry the queen. Hamlet aims to force his uncle Claudius to confess to fratricide, or at least gauge from his reaction whether he killed Hamlet's father. In this production, at the beginning of the mousetrap scene, Schlingensief enters the stage as 'MC Fortinbras' dressed in an SS uniform and gives the signal for a neo-Nazi hard rock song to be played, at high volume, to the audience. This primes the audience for further disruption, as the players who then enter the stage ostensibly to perform the play-within-a-play are a group of "redemptive neo-Nazis," to use Schlingensief's phrasing, endeavouring to separate themselves from the right-wing scene. They are also dressed in contemporary fascistic clothing: bomber jackets, white-laced Dr. Martin boots, white braces, long black leather coats, etc. Although this scene remains one of confession, it is not the confession of Claudius that has primacy here but that of the "redemptive neo-Nazis." Each of the six neo-Nazis share their own personal experiences with the audience, both from the stage and amongst the seated crowd. They confess to some of the crimes they committed and explain why they are trying to leave the right-wing scene. By staging this encounter between the redemptive neo-Nazis and the audience, who are given the opportunity to ask questions of the six men, Schlingensief is trying to create a space in which a process of deradicalisation and reintegration can be set in motion. He is forcing the audience to confront the extremist elements of their society, but also giving them the opportunity to 'forgive' these neo-Nazis for their 'sins' in order for a proper reintegration and deradicalisation to occur.

¹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 60-63.

Schlingensief's production also attempts to comment on and create debate about the 'rotteness' of the State, not just Switzerland, where this production was initially staged, but in the surrounding countries, which had all witnessed increased approval ratings and growing influence of far-right parties. Furthermore, this coincided, as Žižek suggests, with a mainstreaming of anti-immigration politics in Europe in the early part of the 21st century, specifically the tendency of the main parties in Holland, Germany, France, Austria, etc, to embrace the maxim of 'this is our country, love it or leave it' that was previously associated with the fringe far-right parties. Žižek argues that this is part of a politics of fear, a result of the predominant mode of politics today, which he calls *post-political biopolitics*.² By post-political Žižek points to the popular belief that contemporary politics has left behind the ideological struggles of much of the 20th century and instead is able to concentrate on high-level management and administration. His use of biopolitics in this context refers to the regulation of security.³ He goes to argue that

with the depoliticised, socially objective, expert administration and coordination of interests as the zero level of politics, the only way to introduce passion into this field, to actively mobilise people, is through fear, a basic constituent of today's subjectivity. For this reason, bio-politics is ultimately a politics of fear.⁴

Although Schlingensief's *Hamlet* is a reaction to a politics of fear in contemporary Europe, I would argue that it does more than reproduce fear as a means of impassioning the political field. Rather, his production endeavours to combat the politics of fear through a notion of giving and forgiving which could be aligned with Derrida's thinking. What I will do here is address Schlingensief's production by analysing the work through the conceptual rubric of *adikia* (disjointure, dislocation, injustice) and *dike* (jointure, ordering, justice), concepts which can be traced back to the oldest extant Greek text, the Anaximander fragment, but which are

² Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, 34.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Although a politics of fear is certainly an appropriate way of discussing contemporary manifestations of far-right politics, this does not mean that a critique of this concept should necessarily only be directed at right-wing ideologies. Rather, it could also be applicable to liberal 'politically correct' politics. Žižek goes on to say, "We're talking here not about the difference between politics based on a set of universal axioms and a politics which renounces the very constitutive dimension of the political, since it resorts to fear as its ultimate mobilising principle: fear of immigrants, fear of crime, fear of godless sexual depravity, fear of the excessive state itself, with its burden of high taxation, fear of ecological catastrophe, fear of harassment. Political correctness is the

also pivotal to the themes and language of the play *Hamlet*. Drawing on Martin Heidegger's and Jacques Derrida's re-evaluations of the Anaximander fragment, I will endeavour to relate these concepts to the contemporary political scene and illustrate how Schlingensief's work attempts to intervene in the *adikia* caused by a current politics of fear.

It may seem strange and perhaps a touch ironic to be utilising the ideas of Heidegger to examine a piece by an artist whose work frequently attempts to critique the continued return of the spectre of Nazism. Heidegger's well documented links with the Nazi party clearly make this association somewhat problematic. Many scholars have suggested that his membership in the Nazi party, until the end of the war, was an 'unfortunate' mistake on his part, related to his desire to retain his place as a professor at the University of Freiburg, and should not be linked with his philosophical writing.⁵ On the other hand, authors such as Victor Farias and Emmanuel Faye argue that Nazism is central to Heidegger's philosophy.⁶ Whichever position one takes on this matter, both are problematic in relation to Schlingensief's *Hamlet*. Considering that the Faustian idea of selling one's soul for personal gain is conjured up by Schlingensief in his production of *Hamlet*, one could perhaps also view Heidegger in such a light. On the other hand, drawing on a philosophical position that supports Nazism as a method of critiquing the rise of neo-Nazism would, most likely, only be applicable if I were engaging in a Žižekian overidentification with Heidegger's philosophy, which I am not. Why Heidegger becomes important here is because of his radical reinterpretation of the concepts of *dike* and *adikia*. His understanding of these concepts is highly relevant to Derrida's discussion of *Hamlet* in *Specters of Marx*. In the first chapter of his book Derrida uses *Hamlet*, especially the scenes with the ghost of Hamlet's father, as an analogy for the spectral quality of Marx's

exemplary liberal form of the politics of fear. Such a (post-)politics relies on the manipulation of a paranoid *ochlos* or multitude: it is the frightening rallying of frightened people." (34).

⁵ Tom Rockmore, "Forward," in *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009): vii-xxi.

⁶ See Victor Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism*, translated by Paul Burrell, Dominic Bernardi and Gabriel R. Ricci (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

ideas. In this section he also provides a close reading of Heidegger, specifically his analysis of the Anaximander fragment, as the basis for his discussion on *dike* and *adikia*. Thus, an analysis and utilisation of these concepts becomes difficult without referring back to Heidegger's article.

The Anaximander fragment is considered to be the oldest extant Greek text and thus the oldest (partial) text of the Western philosophic tradition. It is generally accepted that Anaximander lived from around the end of the seventh to the middle of the sixth century B.C.E. and therefore the fragment is approximately 2500 years old. Anaximander was a contemporary of Thales and also lived and taught in Miletus. Gerard Naddaf suggests that there is consensus that Western philosophy and science find their roots in Miletus and that Anaximander was the first (Western) philosophical writer.⁷ Charles H. Kahn argues that “[w]hat the system of Anaximander represents for us is nothing less than the advent, in the West at any rate, of a rational outlook on the natural world.”⁸ It is generally believed his writings would have been available during the time of Aristotle and that his pupils included Anaximenes and Pythagoras. At any rate, the small fragment that I will quote shortly is the only piece of his written work that remains. Despite the little that is left to us, Heidegger uses the Anaximander fragment, and other early Greek writings by Heraclitus and Parmenides,⁹ to refocus the question of being, which he considers to be neglected in much of the metaphysical tradition. Costas Douzinas suggests that Heidegger “uses the fragment to confirm his fundamental ontology.”¹⁰

Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, translated by Michael B. Smith (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁷ Gerard Naddaf, *The Greek Concept of Nature* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2005): 63.

⁸ Charles H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1960): 7.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, translated by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi. (Harper & Row: New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London, 1975).

¹⁰ Costas Douzinas, “*Adikia: On Communism and Rights*,” in *The Idea of Communism*, eds. Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 2010): 87.

On the first page of his discussion of the fragment Heidegger quotes both Friedrich Nietzsche's and Hermann Diels' translations of Anaximander, not only as a means to show the "different intentions and procedures"¹¹ from which the translations arose but also as an impetus to take "each word of the fragment seriously."¹² Nietzsche's translation appears in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* in an essay on the Preplatonic philosophers; it was published posthumously in 1903, although originally written in 1873.¹³ Diels was a scholar of the ancient Sophists and is considered to have popularised the term Presocratic, *Vorsokratiker* in German; his translation of Anaximander also appeared in 1903 in *Fragments of the Presocratics*.¹⁴ What I quote here has also undergone another process of interpretation through the translation from German into English by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi. The English version of Nietzsche's translation reads: "Whence things have their origin, they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must *pay penalty and be judged* for their *injustice*, according to the ordinance of time [my emphasis]."¹⁵ (Woher die Dinge ihre Entstehung haben, dahin müssen sie auch zu Grunde gehen, nach der Notwendigkeit; denn sie müssen Buße zahle und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden, gemäß der Ordnung der Zeit.) Diels' translation reads as follows: "But that from which things arise also gives rise to their passing away, according to what is necessary; for things render *justice and pay penalty* to one another for their *injustice*, according to the ordinance of time [my emphasis]."¹⁶ (Woraus aber die Dinge das Entstehen haben, dahin geht auch ihr Vergehen nach der Notwendigkeit; denn sie zahlen einander Strafe und Buße für ihre Ruchlosigkeit nach der festgesetzten Zeit.)¹⁷

I have added emphasis to the translations of *dike* (justice, penalty) and *adikia* (injustice) to

¹¹ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 14.

¹² Krell, David Farrell, "Introduction," in *Early Greek Thinking* (Harper & Row: New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London, 1975), 11.

¹³ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 13.

¹⁶ Hermann Diels, quoted in Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 13.

¹⁷ The two German translations differ considerably in their translation of the last phrase relating to time, despite the fact that this phrase is re-rendered the same in the English translations. Nietzsche's "Ordnung" refers to order, orderliness, system and rule. By contrast, "festgesetzt" suggests that something has been established or fixed by agreement or appointment, i.e., that it does not necessarily belong to a divine or universal Ordnung.

focus on elements which, as we will see in Heidegger's "violent interpretation,"¹⁸ have strong connections with the language of Hamlet. Both Nietzsche and Diels follow the traditional translations of *dike* and *adikia*, which are based on goddesses from ancient Greek mythology. The best known image of these goddesses (or personifications of concepts)¹⁹ is Dike throttling the ugly and blotch-faced Adikia while beating her with a stick. In this image Dike is thus rendering justice and forcing Adikia to pay penalty for her injustice.

Heidegger argues that, although justice and injustice may be literal translations of *dike* and *adikia*, they are not necessarily faithful. Rather, Heidegger asserts that one should think of these terms as something closer to jointure and order on the one hand, and disjunction and disorder on the other. He states,

The fragment clearly says that what is present is in *adikia*, i.e. is out of joint. However, that cannot mean that things no longer come to presence. But neither does it say that what is present is only occasionally, or perhaps only with respect to some one of its properties, out of joint. The fragment says: what is present as such, being what it is, is out of joint. To presencing as such jointure must belong, thus creating the possibility of its being out of joint. What is present is that which lingers awhile.²⁰

The 'awhile' for Heidegger is transitional; it lingers between approach and withdrawal, between what he describes as the two folds of absence where something comes to presence: "In this 'between' whatever lingers awhile is joined."²¹ The 'between' is therefore jointure, in the sense of the join and order, as it belongs to whatever lingers awhile. This is a key aspect of Heidegger's ontology: the presence of being involves a lingering, a coming to presence or presencing between the here and the there, between the approach and the withdrawal.

For Heidegger then, presencing, coming to presence, comes about in this jointure. "The jointure belongs to whatever lingers awhile, which in turn belongs in the jointure. The jointure is order. *Dike*, thought of on the basis of being as presencing, is the ordering and enjoining of

¹⁸ Krell, "Introduction," 11.

¹⁹ See T.B.L., Webster, "Personification as a Mode of Greek Thought," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 17, no.1/2 (1954):10-21.

²⁰ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 41.

²¹ Ibid.

order.”²² The original German version reads, “Die *Fuge* gehört zum Je-Weiligen, das ist die *Fuge* gehört. *Fuge* ist der *Fug*. *Dike*, aus dem Sein, als Anwesen gedacht, ist der *fugend-fügende fug* [my emphasis].”²³ We will see that Heidegger’s word play on ‘fuge’, ‘fügend’ and ‘fug’ creates a metaphor of, or at least has linguistic links to, carpentry, building and construction and thus also introduces the sense of bringing something quite materially into being. *Fugend* is the present participle of *fugen*, which means joining, grouting or linking, while *die Fuge* means joint, interstice, gap, or seam. We will see later that Derrida, developing on from Heidegger, uses the metaphor of the hinge in a similar vein, as it suggests the joining and coming together of two things but also highlights the importance of the gap and the seam-in-between in this jointure. *Fügend*, a different word in German, is the present participle of *fügen*, which similarly suggests assembling, joining, connecting and fitting, but it is important to note that ‘*sich fügen*’ means to conform or comply. *Der Fug* is commonly used in the phrase *mit Fug und Recht*, which means ‘rightly so,’ ‘within rights,’ or how things ‘ought to be’. While *das Recht* denotes law, justice and authorisation, *der Fug* is generally not used as a stand-alone word, appearing only in certain formulations, such as *mit Fug und Recht*, to connote ‘right’ or ‘entitlement.’ *Fug* also has roots in the Middle High German word ‘vuoc(-ges)’, meaning craftsmanship and commensurability, which can be seen in the antonym that is still in use, *Unfug*, used to designate something being inappropriate or incommensurable.²⁴ Thus, for Heidegger, jointure and enjoining of order suggest a constructive process of linking and fitting together, an assembling in which the seam or hinge is still present, while also connoting that this process is one that puts things in the ‘right’ order, how they ‘ought to be.’

Adikia, on the other hand, is the absence of *dike*, the absence of order and jointure. It occurs when all is not right with things, when things are out of joint or dislocated (*aus den Fugen*) or

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1994), 357.

²⁴ Thank you to the user Werner (236488) on the dict.leo forum for pointing out this connection.
<http://dict.leo.org/forum/viewUnsolvedquery.php?idThread=220539&idForum=1&lp=ende&lang=de>

not going as they ought to (*aus den Fugen gehen*). As Derrida points out, when the time is out of joint “something in the present is not going well, it is not going as it *ought to go*.²⁵ *Adikia* also suggests a process without care, something reckless. In turn, recklessness occurs in *adikia*. Heidegger argues that the presencing that comes about through the jointure of that which lingers awhile between the here and there can overcome the recklessness present in *adikia*. He states, “Insofar as beings which linger awhile give order, each being thereby lets reck belong to the other, lets reck pervade its relationship with the others.”²⁶ The now archaic word ‘reck’, the opposite of ‘reckless’ that is tantamount to ‘wreck’ for that matter, suggests taking care or having care in relation to others. In his attempt to be faithful rather than literal to the poetics of the fragment, Heidegger posits that care, order and jointure, rather than judgement and the paying of penalties, are the means of overcoming the presence of *adikia*. His translation of the Anaximander fragment is thus significantly different from that of Nietzsche or Diels. The translation, furthermore, is withheld until the end of Heidegger’s essay and thus is continually deferred, perhaps suggesting that the journey to reach the final translation should prove as important as the translation itself. Heidegger’s translation reads, “... along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder”²⁷ (...entlang dem Brauch; gehören nämlich lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs). One will notice that Heidegger’s translation is shorter than both Diels’ and Nietzsche’s, which, according to Michael Eldred, is due to the fact that these were the words considered by contemporary philologists to be genuinely Anaximander’s words.²⁸ Furthermore, Eldred reminds us that in his translation Heidegger returns to an earlier meaning of the Greek word *ti/sij*, which Nietzsche and Diels have translated as *Buße*. Rather than ‘penalty’ and hence punishment as *Buße* connotes, Eldred states that Heidegger claims the word used to mean ‘estimation’ or ‘esteem’. In other words,

²⁵ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 27.

²⁶ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 47.

²⁷ Ibid., 57.

²⁸ Michael Eldred, “Technology, Technique, Interplay: Questioning *Die Frage nach der Technik*,” *Artefact* (2011), accessed December 6, 2011, <http://www.artefact.org/untpltcl/tchniply.html#8>. See footnote number 8.

Heidegger has inverted the meaning of that phrase from the negative (penalty) to the positive (reck and care).²⁹

In *Specters of Marx* Derrida returns to Heidegger's reading of Anaximander and agrees, in general, with Heidegger's ontological positioning. However, he endeavours to bring to the centre the disjointure of *adikia* that he maintains is sidelined in Heidegger's 'overemphasis' on jointure and care.³⁰ Indeed, Derrida foregrounds the dislocation and disjointure of and in Being which he finds to be passed over too quickly in Heidegger. But what is important here, for my purposes, is how Derrida frames the idea of *adikia* as disjointure and disorder and *dike* as jointure and order whilst still retaining, or at least not completely separating them from, the traditional notions of injustice and justice. I wish to focus on Derrida's reassessment of what he suggests Heidegger invokes yet underplays: that is, justice (and jointure) as a gift that is not brought about through vengeance. These ideas are of course key to a play that deals with the problematic nature of trying to put things right, trying re-join that which is disjointed through the act of vengeance.

In Act I, scene V of *Hamlet*, Hamlet first encounters the ghost of his murdered father. The former king tells young Hamlet that his brother Claudius poisoned him in order take the throne and marry Hamlet's mother Gertrude. He commands Hamlet to swear on his sword that he will avenge his father's death to put things right, back in order, in the rotten state of Denmark. Hamlet swears to this act, yet soon after bemoans this new-found responsibility, uttering the famous line: "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right." In Derrida's analysis of this scene he points out that

Hamlet does not curse so much the corruption of the age. He curses first of all and instead this unjust effect of the disorder, namely, the fate that would have destined him, Hamlet, to put a dislocated time back in its hinges – and to put it back right, to turn it back over to the law. He curses his mission: to do justice to a de-mission of time. He swears against destiny that leads him to do justice for a fault, a fault

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 32.

of time and of the times, by rectifying an *address*, by making of rectitude and right (“to set it right”) a movement of *correction*, reparation, restitution, vengeance, revenge, punishment.³¹

Hamlet is thus lamenting the fact of having to carry out a punishment, just as he complains about the notion that justice, putting things right, must come through vengeance. He bemoans the punishment of having to punish, of rendering justice through penalty for another’s injustice. For Derrida then, it is Hamlet, before Heidegger, who problematises *dike* as rendering justice by avenging the injustice of *adikia*. As I have mentioned, this is the manner in which Nietzsche and Diels interpreted the Anaximander fragment, as rendering justice through vengeance for injustice, and it is this process which Hamlet begrudgingly undertakes. What Derrida attempts to do, through a rereading of Heidegger, is to separate the idea of justice and putting something right from that of vengeance and punishment. In a departure from his predecessors, Derrida radically suggests that *dike* is a matter of giving. It is not a gift in and of itself; rather, Derrida argues that to put right *adikia* must involve a gift and not a punishment. He states that there “is first of all a gift without restitution, without calculation, without accountability.”³² He suggests that in Heidegger’s examination of the Anaximander fragment he sets this groundwork, so to speak, for this conceptualisation of the gift, and “removes such a gift from any horizon of culpability, of debt, of right, and even, perhaps, of duty.”³³ He further argues that Heidegger wants to “wrest it away from that experience of vengeance whose idea, he says, remains ‘the opinion of those who equate the just (*Gerechte*) with the Avenged (*das Gerächte*).’”³⁴ I would suggest that Schlingensief’s *Hamlet* plays out these tensions between *dike* (as order, jointure, justice and as a gift) and *adikia* (disjointure, disorder and injustice) on both inter- and extra-textual levels.

Schlingensief’s *Hamlet* is part of larger group of projects and deradicalisation programmes designed to help right-wing extremists ‘drop out’ of the neo-Nazi scene and integrate back into

³¹ Ibid., 23.

³² Ibid., 30.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

society. In a Dutch study conducted in 2006 for *Racism and Extremism Monitor*, researchers gave a report on the different deradicalisation programmes in Germany in order to generate ideas for similar programmes in the Netherlands. The report was one of the first studies to take an in-depth look at the deradicalisation programmes, as the German government did not make public figures about or evaluations of the numerous programmes.³⁵ At the time the report was published (2006) there were approximately 40,000 right-wing extremists in Germany. In Germany a division is made between four different forms of right-wing extremism: political parties, violent right-wing skinheads, neo-Nazi groups (*Kameradschaften*, who are more politically and ideologically focused than the skinhead groups), and political commentators.³⁶ In an attempt to curb the impact of these groups, whose adherents commit around 30 criminal offenses per day, numerous governmental and non-governmental, federal and state-wide ‘drop-out’ programmes were established around Germany from 2000 onwards.³⁷ Schlingensief’s project is associated with the Exit programme set up in that year by then Federal Minister of the Interior Otto Schily (SPD).³⁸ Schlingensief’s project, Nazi-Line, which was started in 2001, thus fell under the umbrella of the government’s Exit programme and involved using theatre to help six neo-Nazis ‘drop out.’ Following his own axiom that “art ought to be more political and politics more artful”³⁹ Schlingensief’s project was an attempt to gauge whether theatre, in a small way, could contribute to the process of deradicalisation. The idea that Schlingensief’s project should operate within the limits of a government initiative may seem strange to those familiar with his oeuvre, as, although his work is frequently highly politicised, it is often quite radical in its political positioning.⁴⁰ What we see with *Hamlet*

³⁵ Sara Grunenberg and Jaap van Donselaar, “Deradicalisation: Lesson from Germany, Options for the Netherlands.” Racism and Extremism Monitor, Seventh Report (2006), accessed February 4, 2014, http://www.annefrank.org/ImageVaultFiles/id_12113/cf_21/Monitor7UK.PDF. Similar programmes were also set up in Norway and Sweden.

³⁶ Ibid., 103.

³⁷ Ibid., 102.

³⁸ See Ibid. There is also a non-governmental organisation called EXIT which is based on a Swedish organisation of the same name.

³⁹ Solveig Gade, “Putting the Public Sphere to the Test: On Public and Counter-Publics in Chancé 2000,” in *Christoph Schlingensief: Art Without Borders*, eds. Tara Forrest & Anna Teresa Scheer (Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2010), 89.

⁴⁰ *Chancé 2000* (1998) which will be discussed in the following chapter is a prime example of this.

however, is a radicalisation of the play through its disjoining and fracturing in order to encourage a ‘real-life’ deradicalisation. Through a connection with the well-known Austrian actor and director Peter Kern, who played Claudius and would later direct a documentary about the production of *Hamlet*, six neo-Nazis who were trying to sever their ties with the extremist scene contacted Schlingensief and arranged a meeting with him in Zürich.⁴¹ Once Schlingensief gauged that the participants were serious about ‘dropping out’, a six-week rehearsal process began. As a method of promoting the project and alongside preparation for the actual performance, street actions were also held to draw attention to some of the xenophobic policies of the Swiss People’s Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei - SVP).⁴² A popular example of the SVP’s controversial campaigns is the image of three white sheep kicking a black sheep off the Swiss flag, underscored by the phrase “creating security” (Sicherheit schaffen).

Schlingensief has primarily produced original works and has done very few adaptations, *Hamlet* and *Parsifal* (2004) being key exceptions.⁴³ Considering that he has produced over 40 original works (films, theatre, opera, actions and installations) I would argue that choosing to adapt *Hamlet* as part of his Nazi-Line project is significant. It is important for three key reasons: the themes of the play, the production history of *Hamlet* in Germany and the idea of confession. Firstly, the themes of the play itself, spectres of the past haunting the present, directly relate to popular motifs in Schlingensief’s work. For instance, *Bitte liebt Österreich* (2000), which I discuss in depth in the following chapter, is an action/public performance in which Schlingensief draws parallels between, and overidentifies with, the political language of contemporary exclusion and the exclusion endorsed under National Socialism. Stevphen Shukaitis suggests that overidentification, particularly in relation to politics, involves “taking

⁴¹ Torsten Lemmer, “Christoph Works!” in *Christoph Schlingensief: German Pavilion, 2011: 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia*, ed. Susanne Gaensheimer, with the assistance of Eva Huttenlauch (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 257.

⁴² “Hamlet,” *Schlingensief*, accessed February 4, 2014, http://www.schlingensief.com/index_ger.html.

the stated norms of a given system or arrangement of power more seriously than the system that proclaims them itself.”⁴⁴ It involves amplifying and exaggerating a particular ideological position in order to point out the inherent flaws in that system. With *Bitte liebt Österreich* Schlingensief uses this strategy to critique the slogans and policies of the far-right anti-immigration party, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), whose founding members were former National Socialists and whose party slogans often echo those of Nazism. In this work, too, as in his production of *Hamlet*, Schlingensief is interested in giving embodiment to the spectres of the past that haunt the present.

The second key reason has to do with the history of German productions of *Hamlet*. Schlingensief links his *Hamlet* to the *Hamlet* of Gustaf Gründgens, an actor who was closely affiliated with the Nazi party. Although the recording of Gründgens’ *Hamlet* to which Schlingensief’s actors lip-synch is from a 1962 performance, a younger Gründgens played Hamlet in 1936, when he was general manager of the State Theatre of Berlin and on the Reich’s Cultural Senate and the President’s Council.⁴⁵ The links between Gründgens, the Nazi party and German theatre is further the focus of a novel, *Mephisto*, by Klaus Mann, who was the son of Thomas Mann and the former brother-in-law of Gründgens himself. *Mephisto* was published in 1936 in Holland, where Mann emigrated in 1933 after the Nazi take-over. The book was banned in Germany under the Third Reich and was first published in East Germany in 1956 and in West Germany in 1965, though it was withdrawn the following year. It was not until 1980 that it was re-published in West Germany, and in 1981 an award-winning West German-Hungarian co-produced film of *Mephisto* directed by István Szabó was released.⁴⁶ The central character of *Mephisto* is Henrik Höfgen, a thinly disguised portrait of Gründgens.

⁴³ Schlingensief did also stage Elfriede Jelinek’s *Bambiland* (2003) but this was not previously staged another director.

⁴⁴ Shukaitis, “Overidentification and/or Bust?”, 26.

⁴⁵ Wayne, Kvam, “Gründgens, Mann, and *Mephisto*,” *Theatre Research International* 15, No. 2 (1990): 144.

⁴⁶ Kvam, “Gründgens, Mann, and *Mephisto*,” 142. The success of the film rekindled interest in the book which reached sales of 500,000 in West Germany and thus evoked a wide-spread re-evaluation of Gründgens career and place of theatre and art in the Third Reich.

Mann, adapting themes from the story of Mephistopheles and Doctor Faustus, charts how Höfgen abandons his initial objections to Nazism and ingratiates himself with Nazi leaders in order to improve his position in the theatre world. He is portrayed as arrogant and cynical and uses his acting ability to help promote Nazi culture. Indeed, Mann openly asserts about Gründgens himself:

I visualize my ex-brother-in-law as the traitor *par excellence*, the macabre embodiment of corruption and cynicism. So intense was the fascination of his shameful glory that I decided to portray Mephisto-Gründgens in a satirical novel. I thought it pertinent, indeed necessary, to expose and analyse the abject type of the treacherous intellectual who prostitutes his talent for the sake of some tawdry fame and transitory wealth.⁴⁷

The turning point of both Höfgen's, and indeed Gründgens', career was playing the role of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust I* and *II* shortly before Hitler came to power in 1933. Through much of the film version of *Mephisto*, the Minister President of Prussia, modelled on Hermann Göring, who had direct control over the Prussian State Opera and State Theatre in Berlin, refers to Höfgen by his stage name Mephistopheles. The irony that becomes clear to both the audience and also to Höfgen as a character is that, although he is most famous and respected for his depiction of Mephistopheles, it is in fact the Göring character who is effectively the true Mephistopheles, as he is the one who provides Höfgen with his elevated position in society but retains a large amount of control over him. This becomes more evident when Höfgen is preparing to play Hamlet and the Minister President makes clear that Höfgen is allowed to perform the role only because he allows it.⁴⁸ The real Göring similarly placed Gründgens' name on Goebbels' Gottbegnadeten list (gift-of-God list), a catalogue of over 1000 artists whose work was considered critical to Nazi culture and who were thus exempt from taking part in the military mobilisation from September 1944 onwards. Although Gründgens was required to give testimony at the denazification hearings, he was exonerated

⁴⁷ Klaus Mann, quoted in Kvam, "Gründgens, Mann, and Mephisto," 141.

⁴⁸ Kvam, "Gründgens, Mann, and *Mephisto*," 144. The actual première of Gründgens' *Hamlet* in 1936 resulted in a public rift between Joseph Goebbels and Göring, as Goebbels maintained the production was 'consciously anti-fascist', although this, according to Gründgens, was not really a matter that directly related to the work itself but rather an attempt by Goebbels to wield power and influence over Göring's running of the Prussian State Theatre and Opera. Indeed, Göring overruled Goebbels numerous times when it came to issues of content and style in works produced at the Prussian State Theatre.

and given permission to continue his career and remained a prominent figure in the German theatre world, playing both Mephistopheles and Hamlet again.⁴⁹

Considering Gründgens' history, Schlingensief's decision to use the audio track from his performance of *Hamlet* is significant. The audio to which the actors in Schlingensief's production are effectively lip-synching or miming helps establish a direct link with the past, a past that haunts Schlingensief's *Hamlet* in the form of a direct association with Nazism, but also one that Schlingensief wants the audience to realise still haunts contemporary political life, both in the xenophobic policies of far-right parties and in the extremist movement from which the 'redemptive neo-Nazis' come from. The lip-synching to Gründgens' audio creates the sense of mechanical recitation and also alludes to the way in which slogans (from extremist groups) are often repeated unthinkingly as if being lip-synched. The use of Gründgens' audio thus sets the scene for the audience's encounter with the confessions of six neo-Nazis.

Confession, as I have suggested, is the third key reason that Schlingensief decided to stage *Hamlet*. As I indicated earlier, the play-within-a-play in *Hamlet* is designed to 'trap' Claudius into confessing to the murder of Hamlet's father, not necessarily in the form of a spoken confession but a confession nonetheless through what Hamlet anticipates will be his behaviour while watching a re-enactment in minute detail of his own murder of the king. In the mousetrap scene Hamlet therefore asks his friend Horatio to assess Claudius' behaviour while watching the play. He instructs his friend to

Observe my uncle; if his occulted Guilt
Do not it self unkennel in one Speech,
It is a damned Ghost that we have seen,
And my Imaginations are so foul
As Vulcan's Stithy. Give him heedful Note,

⁴⁹ In an ironic turn of events Klaus Mann reviewed one of Gründgens' first post-Nazi-era performances in 1946, where he played the protagonist in Carl Sternheim's play *The Snob*. Mann wrote, "When the curtain goes up, the 'snob' - according to the stage directions of the playwright – is all alone on stage, standing behind a desk, a letter in his hand. Gründgens had to stand there at least five or six minutes, smiling and bowing, until the roaring applause died down and he finally could speak his opening lines. It was really an extraordinary ovation and was repeated at the end of the play. The stage was littered with flowers; the audience hysterically enthusiastic. . . So he stood there again, beaming and charismatic as ever, with a white tie, pink make-up on his face, and a blonde wig: the undisputed idol of Berlin, of pre-Nazi and post-Nazi Berlin." Mann quoted in Kvam, "Gründgens, Mann, and *Mephisto*," 148.

For I mine Eyes will rivet to his Face,
And after we will both our judgements join
In Censure of his Seeming. (Act III scene 2)

In this scenario Hamlet plans to judge and condemn the king (Hamlet seems to have already made up his mind), to make him pay penalty for the injustice he brought on Hamlet and his father. The confession that Hamlet seeks is not a religious one from which Claudius will receive forgiveness for his ‘unforgiveable’ crime of fratricide, but one that will justify, even demand, Hamlet’s revenge. The text draws attention to the tension between confession, forgiveness, and vengeance in the scene that follows, in which Hamlet intends to kill Claudius after he has observed his guilt during the play. After Claudius leaves the court, Hamlet searches for him with the objective of making him pay penalty with his life, but is prevented from carrying out his plan because at that moment he discovers his uncle, Claudius, is praying. Hamlet believes that if he kills Claudius while he is praying God may grant forgiveness and permit him passage to Heaven:

Now might I do it, but now 'a is a-praying;
And now I'll do't; and so 'a goes to Heaven,
And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my Father, and for that
I his sole Son do this same Villain send
To Heaven.
Why, this is Hire and Salary, not Revenge.
'A took my father grossly full of Bread,
With all his Crimes broad blown, as flush as May,
And how his Audit stands who knows save Heaven? (Act III scene 3)

As we can see, there are strong connections between the financial metaphors in Hamlet’s speech and a religious sense of confession and forgiveness. The speech conjures up idea of an audit (present in the parables of stewardship in the gospels of Luke and Matthew), a reckoning of one’s account, which is to be cleared and debts forgiven (if one is truly repentant) when it comes to the Last Judgement. Hamlet insists his uncle must not have a clean account with his debts forgiven when he shuffles off this mortal coil. Nevertheless, Hamlet still curses his duty to put things right, his perceived duty of punishing Claudius by killing him. He curses the situation that requires him to bring *dike* (order and justice) to the *adikia* (injustice and disorder) of his rotten State, a form of *dike* that he believes will only come into being through punishment and vengeance.

The play-within-a-play device in *Hamlet* is one of the most common examples for demonstrating the concept of *mise en abyme*. The expression was first used in relation to literature and visual art in a dairy entry by André Gide in 1893, but became a popular critical term after the publication of Lucien Dällenbach's *The Mirror in the Text* (1977).⁵⁰ Dällenbach suggests that “[a]s an organ of the work turning upon itself, *mise en abyme* appears as a modality of reflection.”⁵¹ A *mise en abyme* is a work within a work, a smaller, more confined, self-reflexive version of itself. One could think of the Russian matryoshka doll, in which one doll is placed inside of the other, as another example of this. However, what Schlingensief does with the mousetrap scene is something slightly different. I would argue that the scene in Schlingensief's *Hamlet* is closer to what Marie Clair Roper has called a *mise en écart*. In her Derridean reading of Alain Resnais' 1963 film *Muriel* Roper suggests,

The analysis of self-representation in *Muriel* can be approached through the phenomenon of “mise-en-abyme” (“text within a text”), which has been widely studied around literature; by this expression, I mean the “enshrining” within a surrounding film ... of a miniature film ... which would reflect it in a reduced form. One notices in Resnais’ film, this device undergoes a dismantling process, so that the film image cannot be stabilized in a single fixed reflection; the “mise-en-abyme” in *Muriel*, which is multiple, shifted, always displaced and passed around from place to place, belongs more to a generalized and conflictual “mise-en-écart” [setting apart]; the “enshrined” film apart itself ... apart from its project ... apart from *Muriel* itself; *Muriel* is set apart from its own production.⁵²

Similarly, the confession of the six neo-Nazis in Schlingensief's *Hamlet*, like Bernard's film in Resnais' *Muriel*, involves a conflictual setting apart. Like the original *Hamlet* it generates confession, or at least stages a confession, but the confession does not serve as a mirror or a miniature of the play itself. However, if we consider the production history of *Hamlet* that Schlingensief is invoking by using the audio tape of Gründgens' performance, it is not completely separated from the play's history either; it remains on the periphery of it, as a joint but not a mirroring. Schlingensief's mousetrap scene is thus linked to the original play and the history of the play in 20th-century Germany through an inverted mode of confession and

⁵⁰ Moshe Ron, “The Restricted Abyss: Nine Problems in the Theory of *Mise en Abyme*,” *Poetics Today* 8, no. 2 (1987): 417-18.

⁵¹ Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. by Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 8.

⁵² Ropar, Marie Claire. From handout at a seminar on *Muriel* at Harvard University, November 9, 1977. Quoted in John Francis Kreidl, *Alain Resnais* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 113-14.

through links to Nazism evoked by the use of the audio from Gründgens' performance, thus producing a *mise en écart* performance of a *mise en abyme* structure. We can also see the importance of the full title of Schlingensief's piece, *Hamlet: This is Your Family – Nazi-line*.⁵³ Nazi-line not only alludes to the idea of a helpline for Nazis, which the production is effectively providing, but also suggests a kind of genealogy, as does the phrase "Hamlet: This is Your Family." The title functions to link the contemporary neo-Nazi amateur actors to Gründgens, implying that they are the family of Gründgens in the context of post-20th century theatre.

It is the mousetrap scene, the play-within-the-play and the setting for the (oblique) confession, that becomes the key scene in which Schlingensief unhinges the original text and brings *adikia* into his production of *Hamlet*. By doing so, Schlingensief does injustice to the play, disrupts it and literally fractures it, conjuring up a necessary seam or interstice in order to arrive at the possibility of forgiveness. In Act III scene 2 of Schlingensief's *Hamlet*, Schlingensief enters the stage as Fortinbras in a SS uniform, and provides the signal for the beginning of *Deutschlandlied* (Song of Germany), a neo-Nazi hard-rock song from a band signed to the record label RockNord, belonging to one of the six 'redemptive neo-Nazis', Torsten Lemmer. The neo-Nazi amateur actors then have an open exchange with the audience, explaining who they are and their associations with the right-wing scene; they then renounce their links with neo-Nazism and invite questions from the audience. Thomas Irmer points out that, although the confessions of participants about their involvement with the right-wing scene are apparently true – that is, they are not written by Schlingensief – they are not ad-libbed and are clearly well rehearsed.⁵⁴ In the Zürich performance, Lemmer admitted that he had made a living from his xenophobic views and actions, through RockNord album sales (his share was

⁵³ The title was originally in English.

⁵⁴ Thomas Irmer, "Out with the Right!: Or, Let's Not Let Them in Again," *Theater* 32, No. 3 (2002): 64.

worth over a million euro),⁵⁵ the management of skinhead bands, the sale of neo-Nazi paraphernalia such as badges and flags, and the book he had written about skinhead rock. Lemmer, who had arranged that his close associates, “other right-wing ... comrades-in-arms”⁵⁶ Jan Zobel, Tim Holzschnieder and Jürgen Drenhaus, also take part in the project, was the most controversial member of Schlingensief’s entourage, and Schlingensief drew criticism from German politicians and media outlets for using Lemmer in his production. For instance, Green party speaker Cem Özdemir claimed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper that Schlingensief’s use of Lemmer in the project reflected badly on the entire reputation of the drop-out programmes.⁵⁷ Commentators questioned the sincerity of Lemmer’s confession and repentance, claiming it was a vehicle for him to gain media attention and thus help pave the way for a new career path, both as a politician (he ran for mayor of Düsseldorf) and an author (he wrote about his departure from the neo-Nazi scene in, for instance, *Rechts raus: Mein Ausstieg aus der Szene* (Right Out: My Exit from the Scene)). Whether we trust the sincerity of the redemptive neo-Nazis’ confessions, Lemmer did help found deradicalisation programmes in Zürich, Düsseldorf and Berlin, so he publicly distanced himself from the neo-Nazi scene in an active manner.⁵⁸ By placing Lemmer and his associates on stage, Schlingensief also forces the audience to encounter radical elements within society and confront the fear that these men represent. This is a fear that is seen both in the ideology of neo-Nazism – fear of the immigrant and fear of the Other, as manifested in hate speech and acts violence – and a fear of confronting and accepting that this ideology is actually a (small) part of liberal society.

Indeed, throughout his career Schlingensief has dealt with fear and more specifically a politics of fear in a variety of ways. As we shall see in the next chapter, in *Bitte liebt Österreich* he overidentifies with the politics of fear disseminated by the FPÖ. In 2003 he even founded the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁶ Lemmer, “Christoph Works!,” 257.

Church of Fear, which one can still join online, a church that proclaims to be “a community of non-believers that renounces the beliefs proffered by ‘public secret societies’ in the worlds of politics, business and culture. The CHURCH of FEAR is openly suspicious of sermons from political sectarians, TV evangelists and global conspiracists; they stand accused of instrumentalizing weakness and pain, frustration and hysteria - of consumerizing fear.”⁵⁹ With *Hamlet*, Schlingensief is attempting to engage with the concept of fear through a staged encounter between ‘the redemptive neo-Nazis’ and the audience. The audience in this context stands in for a general liberal sensibility belonging to the “leftist culturati”,⁶⁰ as Lemmer puts it, which, at least publically, has a politically correct tolerance for otherness. Žižek suggests that “[t]oday’s liberal tolerance towards others, the respect of otherness and openness towards it, is counterpointed by an obsessive fear of harassment. In short, the Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive, insofar as this Other is not really other.”⁶¹ One could view the relationship between six ‘redemptive neo-Nazis’ and the audience in a similar way: they are Other to the audience who can tolerate them insofar as they are not intruded upon by the neo-Nazis’ reintegration. However, Schlingensief is endeavouring to challenge this schema and burst the ‘tolerance bubble,’ so to speak. There is also another layer to the fear of the Otherness of the neo-Nazis in this context, particularly for the Berlin audience. The neo-Nazis represent a fear of the alien from within; they do not come from a different cultural heritage or speak a different language. What this encounter requires the audience to do is to recognise that actual reintegration cannot happen if the Other must always remain at a distance. The confession scene in Schlingensief’s *Hamlet* brings this fear into the foreground in order to highlight that deradicalisation needs this encounter if actual reintegration is to occur.

⁵⁷ Irmer, “Out with the Right!: Or, Let’s Not Let Them in Again,” 66.

⁵⁸ *Hamlet: This is Your Family: Nazi-Line*, directed by Peter Kern, K & K Film Produktion, 2001.

⁵⁹ “Church of Fear,” *Schlingensief*, accessed February 4, 2014,
http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt_eng.php?id=t040.

⁶⁰ Lemmer, “Christoph Works!,” 257.

Nonetheless, the idea of confession certainly has religious overtones and forgiveness is a central part of the confessional process. Derrida suggests that “[s]ometimes, forgiveness (given by God, or inspired by divine prescription) must be a gracious gift, without exchange and without condition; sometimes it requires, as its minimal condition, the repentance and transformation of the sinner.”⁶² In their introduction to Derrida’s *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney further remind us about “the way in which the Abrahamic moral tradition, in which forgiveness is a central concept and which is at the basis of the three great monotheisms, has globalised itself in a more or less secular form. Increasingly, we live in a world where forgiveness is demanded, granted, or withheld.”⁶³ I would argue that Schlingensief’s reworking of the mousetrap scene attempts to evoke a secularised version of this confession-forgiveness scheme. The confessions of the neo-Nazis suggest that they owe a debt to society for the wrongs they have committed. Indeed, the financial metaphors of confession mentioned earlier are almost taken literally by Lemmer, who donated a large portion of the wealth he made from the propagation of xenophobic ideas to future deradicalisation programmes. In saying this, Schlingensief’s disjoining of the mousetrap scene in order to stage an encounter between the audience and the neo-Nazis does not force or require the audience to buy into the confession-forgiveness scenario. What it does do, however, is to challenge them to entertain the idea that if these deradicalisation programmes are to be taken seriously, if they are actually to encourage reintegration, then a secularised version of this scenario, amounting to the forgiveness of debt (with all the numerous connotations of that word), must be taken seriously. It highlights the idea that neither liberal tolerance of the Other nor the repulsion and exclusion of the Other are paths through which actual deradicalisation and reintegration will occur. What Schlingensief has

⁶¹ Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, 35.

⁶² Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 44. For Derrida pure forgiveness is “without power, unconditional but without sovereignty” (58).

⁶³ Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney, “Preface,” in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), x.

done is to resuscitate the ghost of Hamlet Senior in order to test the dissensual possibility of justice for the past without vengeance. To do this, Schlingensief had to disrupt the play itself and introduce a form of *adikia* into the production in order to work toward an idea of *dike*, with all its gaps and seams, that favours actual reintegration over punishment.

Be Careful with that Trauma, Christoph: Schlingensief's Dissensual Staging of 'the Unrepresentable'

In Austria in 2000 the far-right anti-immigration party, the Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ), having received 26% of the vote in the general election, helped form part of a coalition government with the Christian conservative Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP). This provoked heated debate and protest both in Austria and throughout the European community, much of which called into question the legitimacy of the government and its policies.¹ From 11 June to 17 June, as part of the Vienna Festival, Christoph Schlingensief staged an event, *Bitte liebt Österreich: erste österreichische Koalitionswoche* (Please Love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week), to protest against this coalition. Luc Bondy, the director of the 2000 Vienna Arts Festival, had invited Schlingensief to create a work that would demonstrate the Viennese art community's opposition to the FPÖ's place in the government. In the project, twelve asylum-seekers were 'confined' in a series of containers that formed makeshift rooms, which were located in a central square (Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz) in Vienna. Above the containers a large sign with the words 'Foreigners Out' was visible. Six cameras were set up throughout the containers and monitored the participants' activities and daily routines, and the footage was streamed live via the Internet. Tabloid-style profiles of the participants were also posted on the *Bitte liebt Österreich* website. The format overtly mimics that of the highly popular reality television show *Big Brother*, which had begun its first season, with huge ratings, on the German subsidiary channel RTL 2 in early 2000. In keeping with the *Big Brother* format, all but one of the participants were supposed to be eliminated or 'voted out' of the container, yet instead of merely leaving the show the asylum seekers were to leave Austria. The documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* (Paul Poet, 2002), which was conceptually

¹ Denise Varney, “‘Right Now Austria Looks Ridiculous’: Please Love Austria! – Reforming the Interaction Between Art and Politics,” in *Christoph Schlingensief: Art Without Borders*, eds. Tara Forrest & Anna Teresa Scheer (Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2010), 109.

designed by Schlingensief, provides extensive coverage of the week-long event. Indeed, the documentary was conceptualised as part of the project itself, an extension of it, rather than a neutral observation of the event.

The containers which Schlingensief placed in the central square in Vienna intentionally evoked the Nazi concentration camps and were used to denote a return of repressed Nazism in the political landscape of contemporary Austria. The camps and the Holocaust more generally are widely considered to be unrepresentable, unsayable and unthinkable by many scholars, political commenters and artists. The idea of unrepresentability connotes that art lacks the appropriate language and form to represent the exceptional nature of a traumatic event such as the Holocaust; as such, Schlingensief's reproduction of the camp, in direct connection with the popular culture form of reality television, provoked considerable debate and controversy. Indeed, the collision Schlingensief orchestrated between the 'sacred' terrain of the Holocaust, *Big Brother*, and the exclusionary politics of FPÖ created public debate and disagreement, and thus set about disrupting and reconfiguring discourses on representation and unrepresentability in field of politics and aesthetics in a modern Austrian context.

With *Bitte liebt Österreich* Schlingensief enacts a dissensual staging of 'the unrepresentable' in order to foreground the exclusion inherent in the neo-conservative politics of fear. This chapter will primarily focus on how Schlingensief's reproduction of that which is considered unrepresentable (e.g. the concentration camps) is utilised to represent those who are unrepresented, excluded and rendered invisible within dominant public discourse (such as asylum-seekers and refugees). I will explore how Schlingensief's work draws parallels between and overidentifies with the political language of contemporary exclusion and that of a repressed National Socialist past. Furthermore, I also briefly discuss his work *Chance 2000* (1998) primarily as a means to extrapolate how Schlingensief conceptualises current systems of exclusion.

The idea of unrepresentability has a long history within Western art tradition and discussions about aesthetics. For centuries, prohibitions have existed around the representations of the sacred or the sublime, namely, of depictions of God. In more recent times the notion of unrepresentability has become closely associated with the remediation of trauma, particularly in relation to horrific events such as the Holocaust or the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, the discourses of ‘unrepresentability’ and ‘unspeakability’ are particularly prominent in writing that has emerged from studies and depictions of the Holocaust.² Susannah Radstone contends that since the 1990s, with the publication of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1991) and Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), both the idea of ‘trauma theory’ and the concept of unrepresentability have become common parlance within the humanities.³ Among other theorists, Caruth, Felman and Laub maintain that certain events are too unfathomable or horrible to allow for representation, especially fictional representation. Exemplifying such a position, albeit much earlier, Theodore Adorno famously went so far as to suggest that “writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”⁴ Karyn Ball notes that in post-unification Germany there was much public debate about the supposed reprehensible nature of attempting to represent the Holocaust. She suggests that many critics would cite the notion of *Bilderverbot* (injunction against images) in relation to this form of representation, which refers to the Second Commandment and Moses’ ban on the representation of God, of which Adorno’s critique and analysis can be read as a secularisation.⁵ Ball further adds:

² See for example: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).; Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

³ Susannah Radstone, “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics,” *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory* 30, no. 1 (2007): 9-10.

⁴ Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel & Shierry Weber, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 34.

⁵ Karyn Ball, “For and against the Bilderverbot: The Rhetoric of “Unrepresentability” and Remediated “Authenticity” in the German Reception of Steven Spielberg’s Schindler’s List,” in *Visualizing the Holocaust*:

In current discourses of Shoah memory both in Germany and the United States, the image prohibition is typically deployed as a synonym for “unrepresentability”: the magnitude and intensity of the suffering inflicted by the Third Reich is elevated to a divine power that transcends understanding, language, and visualization.⁶

In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, which, as we have seen, stages a dialogue with the writing of Primo Levi, Giorgio Agamben laments the conflation of the Holocaust concentration camp with the incommensurable nature of God presented in the Abrahamic texts precisely because the comparison lends Nazism the status of the mystical. He suggests, “To say that Auschwitz is ‘unsayable’ or ‘incomprehensible’ is equivalent to *euphemein*, to adoring in silence, as one does with god. Regardless of one’s intentions, this contributes to its glory.”⁷ Following Levi, Agamben also critiques the almost complete adoption, across all fields, of the term Holocaust to refer to the extermination and genocide of Jews during World War II, for similar reasons to his problematising of the notion of unrepresentability. He argues that historically the term was used to designate or at least imply a type of sacrifice. By adopting the term for the Nazi treatment of Jews, he asserts, we are granting an “unacceptable equation between the crematoria and the altar,”⁸ and hence an unacceptable link between genocide and sacrifice that unintentionally gives the former philological and perhaps religious justification. However, the idea of unrepresentability remains firmly lodged in discussions about the artistic use or aestheticisation of the camps.

In a chapter entitled “Are Some Things Unrepresentable?” Rancière vehemently argues against the idea of unrepresentability in relation to horrific events such as the Holocaust and the idea that an aesthetic or artistic rendering of the camp must take a form that expresses its exceptional status. He asserts that since the mid-nineteenth century there “are no longer rules of appropriateness between a particular subject and a particular form, but a general availability

Documents, Aesthetics, Memory, eds. David Bathrick, Brad Prager, and Michael D. Richardson (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 162-163.

⁶ Ibid., 162-163

⁷ Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 32.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

of all subjects for any artistic form whatsoever.”⁹ He argues that this is due to a historical change in ways of thinking about and making art. Rancière suggests that there are three main, overlapping regimes of art: the ethical regime (Platonic), the poetic or representative regime (Aristotelian), and the aesthetic regime (dominant over the past two centuries). In the ethical regime “it is a matter of knowing in what ways images’ mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals and communities. This question prevents ‘art’ from individualizing itself as such.”¹⁰ The poetic regime of the arts is representative “insofar as it is the notion of representation or *mimesis* that organizes these ways of doing, making, seeing and judging.”¹¹ For Rancière, the aesthetic regime of art “no longer occurs via a division within ways of doing and making,”¹² in which one mode or form used for expression of an idea or experience is privileged over another, such as speech over visibility for instance. The aesthetic regime eliminates hierarchies of the distribution of the sensible that are constitutive of the representative regime; however, according to Rancière, the onset of the aesthetic regime did not bring about the death of the representative regime. It did, nonetheless, change the ways of thinking about being, doing, making and communicating. Therefore the very premise of unrepresentability afforded in much contemporary discourse about art harbours the “paradoxical desire that, in the very regime which abolishes the representative suitability of forms to subjects, appropriate forms respecting the singularity of the exception still exist.”¹³ For Rancière, the very idea of unrepresentability must be challenged and Schlingensief does precisely this through artistic means in order to enact a political disruption.

Schlingensief makes use of the contentious nature of the concept of unrepresentability and moves past the notion theorised in much contemporary trauma literature. His work takes this

⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 118.

¹⁰ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 21.

¹¹ Ibid., 22. Rancière further adds that this regime is poetic “in the sense that it identifies the arts – what the Classical Age would later call the ‘fine arts’ – within a classification of doing and making, and it consequently defines proper ways of doing and making as well as means of assessing imitations.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 137.

concept of unrepresentability common to art and media, particularly in relation to the Holocaust, as somewhat of a given, as something that is now firmly entrenched within art discourse. However, what his performances demonstrate is that due to political necessity (in this case the mainstreaming of the far right anti-immigration parties in Europe), the idea of unrepresentability must be mobilised to represent those who are excluded from the so-called ‘democratic’ and ‘inclusive’ public sphere. He endeavours to utilise the very idea itself to open up a space for dialogue. *Bitte liebt Österreich* both disrupts the notion of unrepresentability attached to the concentration camps within an aesthetic or artistic context and probes the systems of exclusion operating within a supposedly inclusive public sphere.

Schlingensief has stated that “art ought to be more political and politics more artful”¹⁴ and his work consistently endeavours to interrogate the discursive boundaries of art and politics in terms of the limits of the liberal, inclusive public sphere. Before examining *Bitte liebt Österreich* it will be instructive to look at one his earlier works, which clearly articulates Schlingensief’s interlinking of art and politics as a dissensual encounter. In 1998, in cooperation with the Volksbühne theatre in Berlin, he created an ‘election campaign circus’ - *Chance 2000*, or *The Party of the Last Chance* – which paralleled the German federal election campaigns. The *Chance 2000* party invited the unemployed, the mentally ill and physically disabled (among others) to become candidates for the upcoming election. Under the banner ‘vote for yourself’ members were given the opportunity to put themselves forward as party candidates (and vote for themselves) instead of voting for members of political parties and allowing them to speak on their behalf. Solveig Gade suggests that the “fundamental premise of the performance … [was to demonstrate that] theatre and politics, fiction and reality, cannot

¹⁴ Solveig Gade, “Putting the Public Sphere to the Test: On Public and Counter-Publics in Chancen 2000,” in *Christoph Schlingensief: Art Without Borders*, eds. Tara Forrest & Anna Teresa Scheer (Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2010), 89.

be separated from each other.”¹⁵ This project spanned several months and involved at least five distinct phases or campaign type actions. Firstly, a performance directed by Schlingensief that included actors from the Volksbühne was held in a circus tent in Berlin’s Prater Garden to inaugurate the party. The next phase was a performance tour of Germany designed to collect enough signatures in order for the *Chance 2000* party to be permitted to run in the upcoming elections, which they succeeded in doing. The following phase was a campaign tour dubbed the ‘Tour of Crime’, while the fourth stage was the election night party at the Volksbühne, where it became clear the *Chance 2000* party had received a surprisingly high number of votes: 28,500.¹⁶ After this result, numerous actions, under the banner ‘the State of Chance’, were organized around the country; this was followed by State of Chance ‘embassies,’ or art actions, being set up in Sarajevo, Johannesburg and Namibia.¹⁷

As part of Schlingensief’s campaign strategy, he set up ‘political meetings’ with *Chance 2000* members at fashionable shopping malls (e.g. KaDeWe in Berlin) or exclusive holiday locations frequented by Germany’s political elite, such as Helmut Kohl. Gade argues that “even though Chance members were not excluded from these places in any formal or legislative sense of the word, various factors, such as cultural and monetary capital, would prevent or at least decrease the likelihood of them visiting such locations.”¹⁸ The political meetings were devised by Schlingensief to explore the “implicitly exclusionary mechanisms of certain public places.”¹⁹ It is the theoretical underpinning of this exploration in which I am most interested in here. Schlingensief developed an idea he labelled ‘Systems Theory’ to help explore these mechanisms. He differentiates between System 1 - the discourses produced by those involved in hegemonic structures such as political parties, the art system and the mass

¹⁵ Solveig Gade, “Playing the Media Keyboard. The Political Potential of Performativity in Christoph Schlingensief’s Electioneering Circus,” in *Performative Realism: Interdisciplinary Studies in Art and Media*, ed. Rune Gade and Anne Jerslev (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005), 37

¹⁶ Gade, “Putting the Public Sphere to the Test,” 90.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 92

¹⁹ Ibid.

media, to name a few - and System 2, those who are excluded from the discourses of System 1, such as the disabled, refugees and asylum-seekers.²⁰ The aim of Schlingensief's Systems Theory and *Chance 2000* was to push the excluded citizens of System 2 into a third system, one in which they were 'visible' and 'audible' and could thus challenge the discourses of the dominant system without being subsumed into it.²¹ *Chance 2000* was a dissensual project in that it foregrounded "the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being"²² and both attempted to foster political subjectification and modify politics as a form of experience.

Bitte liebt Österreich, like *Chance 2000*, also endeavoured to challenge the mechanisms of exclusion present in the 'inclusive' public sphere by dealing with the unrepresented, but did so by explicitly engaging with the historical trauma of the concentrations camps and thus more directly with the notion of unrepresentability. Schlingensief attempted to intervene in the political landscape of the time and create a space that fostered dissensus and the meeting, or perhaps in this case collision, of heterogeneous voices. Two major events constituted the primary stimulus for Schlingensief's conceptualisation *Bitte liebt Österreich*. The first was the rise to power of the FPÖ and the second was the immense popularity of German *Big Brother*, which supplied Schlingensief with both the format and a point of reference to help capture the attention and imagination of the Viennese public.

In the 1999 Austrian general elections the FPÖ, led by Jörg Haider, received over a quarter of the vote. Despite a pre-election promise by ÖVP leader Wolfgang Schüssel that his party would not enter government with Haider, the ÖVP and FPÖ formed a coalition in early 2000.²³ One of the FPÖ's major platforms is the prevention of cultural and national 'contamination' from immigration and asylum. Founding members of the party, which

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rancière, *Disagreement*, 30.

²³ Walter Manoschek, "FPÖ, ÖVP, and Austria's Nazi Past," in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (Somerset: Transaction Publishers 2003), 4-5.

formed in 1956, were former Nazis and many party slogans echo those of Nazism. For instance, a popular question that Haider often posed is whether it is necessary to have “140,000 unemployed and 180,000 immigrant workers” which reads much like the Nazi posters which stated “500,000 unemployed – 400,000 Jews: The solution is easy.”²⁴ Furthermore, Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka have noted that one the FPÖ’s main anti-immigration slogans leading into the elections was the phrase *Stop der Überfremdung* (Stop the over-foreignisation), which was originally coined by Goebbels in 1933.²⁵ In 2000, Ernest Windholz, the then chairman of the FPÖ, publically used the phrase “Unsere Ehre heisst Treue” (Our honour is called loyalty), the oath of allegiance of the Waffen-SS, to thank the party’s supporters.²⁶ Although the xenophobic and anti-immigration rhetoric of the FPÖ was controversial, it is not an uncommon sentiment amongst far-right parties, with the SVP in Switzerland and the BNP in the UK as examples, but what caused both domestic and international outrage was not only the revitalisation of Nazi-era slogans but also the expiatory way the FPÖ viewed Austria’s support of the Nazi party during World War II. Lutz Musner notes that in September 1995 Haider

addressed an annual meeting of former SS officers at Ulrichsberg in Carinthia with the statement, ‘The Waffen SS was a part of the Wehrmacht and hence it deserves all the honor and respect of the army in public life.’ He then went on to characterize the nostalgia-driven SS veterans who gather every year to recycle their Nazi memories as ‘people of good character who also stick to their convictions, despite the greatest opposition and have remained true to their convictions until today’.²⁷

Even though statements such as these were controversial for the FPÖ, its candidates, and Haider in particular, received support from the media, especially from Austria’s largest newspaper, *Kronen Zeitung*, a relationship that was also foregrounded by Schlingensief in *Bitte liebt Österreich*.²⁸ Indeed, what Haider and the FPÖ endeavoured to create was an “an artificial rupture between popular culture and ‘serious’ art, aligning the latter with radicals and

²⁴ Reinhold Gärnter, “The FPÖ, Foreigners and Racism in the Haider Era,” in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (Somerset: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 19.

²⁵ Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka, “Introduction”, in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (Somerset: Transaction Publishers, 2003), xv.

²⁶ Manoscek, “FPÖ, ÖVP, and Austria’s Nazi Past,” 6.

²⁷ Lutz Musner, “Memory and Globalization: Austria’s Recycling of the Nazi Past and its European Echoes,” *New German Critique* 80 (Spring–Summer 2000): 79.

²⁸ Tara Forrest, “Mobilizing the Public Sphere: Schlingensief’s Reality Theatre,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 18, no.1 (2008): 92.

intellectuals and re-orienting popular culture along neo-conservative and neo-nationalist lines.”²⁹ In various campaigns the FPÖ attempted to both discredit and remove any public funding for artists or writers that would critique Austria’s political system or its history. For example, Elfriede Jelinek (with whom Schlingensief co-wrote his 2003 production *Bambiland* and who appeared in the *Ausländer Raus* documentary) was specifically targeted by the FPÖ as a ‘defamer of Austria.’³⁰ Tasos Zembylas suggests that criticising the artistic value of a work, rather than trying to censor it, is common in Austria, as the long history of public art in Vienna means that the suppression of such work is controversial. Therefore, the slandering of politically challenging artists or works as artistically illegitimate is the most common way to confront works like *Bitte liebt Österreich*.³¹ The connection that the FPÖ sought to make between popular culture and conservative politics was utilised and subverted by Schlingensief in *Bitte liebt Österreich* in his adoption of the highly popular *Big Brother* format.

Along with the event of the FPÖ’s inauguration there were two genealogical strands that fed into *Bitte liebt Österreich* and returned reconfigured through Schlingensief’s mediation: these were the concentration camps on the one hand and the upsurge in popularity of reality television, more specifically *Big Brother*, on the other. The two were intertwined by Schlingensief to challenge the legitimacy of the FPÖ. Considering the immense popularity of the *Big Brother* format and the ‘unrepresentable’ nature of the camps just discussed, the violent yoking together of the two in such an overt fashion was decidedly, and quite intentionally, unsettling. Misha Kavka notes that in the Netherlands the show was condemned as an ‘inhumane experiment’ by some commenters and referred to as an ‘audiovisual

²⁹ Andre Gingrich, “A Man for All Seasons: An Anthropological Perspective on Public Representation and Cultural Politics of the Austrian Freedom Party,” in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (Somerset: Transaction Publishers 2003), 83.

³⁰ Forrest, “Mobilizing the Public Sphere: Schlingensief’s Reality Theatre,” 92.

³¹ Tasos Zembylas, “Controversial Works of Art: Some Notes on Public Conflicts,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 3, no. 3 (2004): 391. For example, FPÖ campaign poster in 1995 stated “Lieben Sie Scholten, Jelinek, Häupl, Peymann, Pasterk … oder Kunst und Kultur?” (Do you love Scholten, Jelinek, Häupl, Peymann, Pasterk … or art and Culture?).

Auschwitz' in an editorial of the Spanish newspaper *El País*.³² She further adds that there was an "uncomfortable echo" of the camps in the "German reception of *Big Brother*" such that "the head of the media regulatory commission in Hessen accused the programme of representing 'a serious affront to the intimate sphere'" and sought to have it taken off the air.³³ Furthermore, certain politicians and Christian groups in Germany protested against the acquisition of the franchise, labelling it unconstitutional. Interior Minister Otto Schily claimed it was a "massive violation" of Article One of the German constitution, namely that "The dignity of man is inviolable," and called for nationwide boycotts of the show.³⁴ With *Bitte liebt Österreich* Schlingensief amplifies this "uncomfortable echo" of the camp in the initial reception of reality television. This tension seems to reside in the idea that the public enjoyment of the show was due to watching the confinement of 'inmates' and their 'inhumane' loss of dignity, something that should not be represented on television, let alone represented as pleasurable. Schlingensief makes this often implicit connection between the camp and reality television overt and very public.³⁵

In an endeavour to foreground those who are usually excluded from and unrepresented in the public realm, whilst simultaneously critiquing the policies of the FPÖ within the framework of popular culture, Schlingensief utilised the media attention and public debate created by popular interest in *Big Brother* in his staging of *Bitte liebt Österreich*. The first season of *Big Brother* Germany ended its run only two days before the commencement of the project so the format was particularly fresh in the public's imagination. The franchise was first developed in 1999 by the Dutch television production company Endemol.³⁶ The concept of the show is to

³² Misha Kavka, *Reality TV* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 88.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ David Hudson, "Do Germans Like to Watch?" Spiegel Online, March 01, 2000, accessed May 10, 2012. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,67267,00.html>.

³⁵ Kavka points out the initial fears of "inhumane surveillance" linked to the show largely dropped in currency after the first season. Kavka, *Reality TV*, 90-91.

³⁶ Liesbet Van Zoonen, "Desire and Resistance: Big Brother and the Recognition of Everyday Life," *Media Culture & Society* 23, no. 5 (2001): 669-670. Even before Big Brother first aired in the Netherlands on 16 September 1999, it generated considerable controversy and media attention. The very premise of the show was hotly debated by media commentators, journalists and politicians who labelled it "shameless voyeurism on the part

lock a group of ordinary people in a house for a hundred days and monitor their everyday life with a series of cameras and microphones that run twenty-four hours a day. The show operated over two main media formats: the edited daily thirty-minute television version, and the *Big Brother* website, on which live footage was streamed twenty-four hours a day. The website also included participant profiles, as well as the contestants' web diaries and confessions. *Big Brother* quickly became one of the highest rating shows in Dutch television history and by mid-2000 the format had been sold to seven broadcasters in Europe, and one each in the US and UK.³⁷ One of these broadcasters included RTL2 in Germany, which also broadcasts in Austria and Switzerland, and was the first network outside of the Netherlands to make use of the format.³⁸ This immense popular interest in German *Big Brother*, in both its TV and internet formats, and the specific programming schedule meant that Schlingensief's use of the format located his project within a media *Zeitgeist*. Despite the initial concerns about loss of human dignity, in *Big Brother*'s first season in Germany the show had continually high television ratings, on average achieving about 30% of the market share, yet the internet figures were even more significant. The website averaged 3.5 million hits per day, while at times views peaked as high as 5 million, making it the most visited website in Europe.³⁹ The first season of German *Big Brother* ran from 28 February until 9 June 2000; the final show of the season was therefore broadcast only two days before Schlingensief's *Bitte liebt Österreich* project began on 11 June. The slogans that appeared on banners attached to the container and posted on the *Bitte liebt Österreich* website such as "Select your Foreigner! Select his number! Throw him out of the country! Each day, two of them are expelled!," were devised to mimic the language used in *Big Brother* that had become familiar to the public. Schlingensief invited the Viennese public to expel the participants through a system that replicated *Big Brother*; the

of viewers and the ruthless exploitation of ordinary people by the Endemol company ... [a concept that] could lead to irreparable psychological damage to [the] participants [involved]"(669). Although these opinions of Big Brother did not fully subside and intermittent protest against the show occurred in many countries that adopted the format, media commentators began to re-evaluate their position on Big Brother and argued for it as an innovative hybrid of genres and a reinterpretation of the role of the TV viewer.

³⁷ Kavka, *Reality TV*, 86.

³⁸ Van Zoonen, "Desire and Resistance: Big Brother and the Recognition of Everyday Life," 669-670.

public could vote the asylum-seekers out by phone, text message or web vote. The weeklong event attracted over 80,000 votes from the public and a considerable level of participation.⁴⁰

Since *Bitte liebt Österreich* was a theatre/art event staged as part of the Vienna Festival, it was deeply ensconced in the art establishment. However, Schlingensief was attempting to remove the aspect of exclusivity demarcated in the concept of ‘high art’ by infusing his work with popular culture referents, thus invoking broader participation. In a general assessment of Schlingensief’s work from the late 1990s onwards, Gade argues that “Schlingensief is precisely not trying to criticise the media society and its logics from an exclusively artistic position – on the contrary, he willingly lets himself be enrolled in the functioning of the media logic, while at the same time subverting it.”⁴¹ This act of subversion is revealed in the way Schlingensief conflates the expulsion from the *Big Brother* house with the deportation of asylum-seekers from Austria and the xenophobic politics of the FPÖ. A prevalent aspect of *Big Brother* and many other reality TV shows is the idea of watching ‘ordinary people in their everyday lives’; therefore, this conflation also suggests that xenophobia and exclusion have become ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ practices. As one commentator put it “[Schlingensief] wanted to create a “Bilderstörungsmachine”, a machine that disturbs and disrupts existing images and thus calls upon the spectator to scrutinize his own position as spectator – as spectator of this event and as spectator of xenophobia in everyday life.”⁴² Indeed, by politicising the format made popular by *Big Brother* Schlingensief was endeavouring to create a space that encourages the possibility of a perspectival reversal, or at the very least a disruption, in the perception that xenophobia has become part of everyday life and thus

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kirsten Weiss, “Recycling the Image of the Public Sphere in Art,” *Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge*, accessed December 15, 2012, <http://architecture.mit.edu/thresholds/issue-contents/23/weiss23/weiss23.htm>.

⁴¹ Gade, “Playing the Media Keyboard. The Political Potential of Performativity in Christoph Schlingensief’s Electioneering Circus,” 42.

⁴² “Theatre and Social Reality – is there a Political Theatre Today?” *Statens Scenekunstskole: The Danish National School of Performing Arts*, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.teaterskolen-efteruddannelsen.dk/UserFiles/File/Theatre%20and%20social%20reality.pdf>.

represent and foreground those persons that often go unrepresented. He was undertaking a dissensual appropriation of *Big Brother*.

In his project Schlingensief attempts to shame and ‘dirty’ the image of the FPÖ and challenge their legitimacy in government through appropriation of and overidentification with their slogans and policies. Schlingensief suggests that in the project he was “producing images that simply take FPÖ leader Jörg Haider and his slogans at their word.”⁴³ In his opening remarks at the event he claims: “This production is given to you by the FPÖ in association with the *Kronen Zeitung*,”⁴⁴ which is also an attempt to foreground FPÖ’s utilisation of the media to popularise their policies. Schlingensief attempted to shame the coalition government by creating “dirty images” of Austria to voice the (international) public concern about the FPÖ’s xenophobic policies. Interestingly, two groups from opposite ends of the political spectrum attempted to purify these “dirty images.” The conservative *Kronen Zeitung* attacked Schlingensief’s project throughout the week, stating that it lacked any artistic merit and claimed it was perpetuating lies about Austria. A group of activists who raided the container on the fifth day of the event to ‘liberate the participants’ also tried to recreate the image of Austria represented by Schlingensief. As Austrian journalist Armin Thurnher noted in an interview on the *Ausländer Raus!* documentary: “They acted out of the intention to reconstruct the image of a clean Austria. Not just simply some Austria, but the image of a purified Austria.”⁴⁵ Using a police megaphone, Schlingensief invited tourists to take pictures of the “Ausländer Raus” sign attached to the container, and declared: “This is Austria … a completely ridiculous country.”⁴⁶ He also attached a banner with the Waffen-SS motto “Unsere Ehre heisst Treue” (Our honour is called loyalty), used in a speech by Ernest Windholz earlier that year, to the container to highlight the direct rhetorical links to Nazism.

⁴³ Christoph Schlingensief quoted in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, directed by Paul Poet, Bonus Film, 2002.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Armin Thurnher quoted in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*.

Cultural philosopher Burghart Schmidt suggests this citing or mirroring of FPÖ slogans by Schlingensief is a highly effective form of shaming. By incorporating the very language of the party itself, Schlingensief not only criticised FPÖ policy, but also limited the ways they could criticise his project. Schmidt notes that

This method basically reaches back to Karl Kraus and what Walter Benjamin analysed about Kraus: That you don't need to comment to articulate criticism. It is enough to simply cite what you criticise. The quotes just need to be placed in the right position and at the right time and place. Then suddenly a simple citation becomes revelatory.⁴⁷

Laibach and NSK have demonstrated the extent to which this method of ‘citation’ can be effective in highlighting the obscene underside of ruling ideology. The FPÖ quotes that Schlingensief incorporates into his project not only speak to the exclusionary nature of their current policies and ideological convictions, but also directly link them back to Austria’s repressed Nazi past.

Indeed, with *Bitte liebt Österreich* Schlingensief plays on the idea of *Anschluss*, a term coined to refer to the political union of Austria with Nazi-Germany and which, depending on one’s point of view, is used to denote the annexation of Austria by Nazi-Germany or Austrian complicity with Nazism.⁴⁸ In his book, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria*, David Art argues that even though *Anschluss* indicates a union between the two states Austrians have never fully accepted or acknowledged the connection with Nazi Germany and therefore viewed the nation and its inhabitants as not being responsible for either tacit or explicit approval of National Socialism.⁴⁹ Until 1986, there was almost total consensus amongst the Austrian political elite that Austria was actually “the first free country to fall victim to Hitlerite aggression.”⁵⁰ A narrative of victimhood was promoted by politicians and the press, which informed the popular understanding of Austria’s wartime past and national

⁴⁶ Christoph Schlingensief quoted in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*.

⁴⁷ Burghart Schmidt quoted in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*.

⁴⁸ Weiss, “Recycling the Image of the Public Sphere in Art.”

⁴⁹ David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101-102.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 105. This idea was taken from Allied propaganda from 1943 originally designed to stir up Austrian resistance against the Nazis.

identity.⁵¹ However, the international controversy around presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim's wartime record during his service with the *Wehrmacht* and his alleged knowledge of and possible complicity with war crimes being committed at the time disrupted this narrative. Art suggests that during the 'Waldheim affair' a 'new victim frame' was developed:

Christian Democratic politicians, the conservative press, and the powerful *Kronen Zeitung* presented Austria as the victim of international forces seeking to denigrate its history. They linked foreign Jews with a "campaign" against Waldheim and exhorted the Austrian population to resist this challenge. The new victim frame resonated with the Austrian public – Waldheim won the election handily – and became an integral part of the ÖVP's political arsenal.⁵²

However, what the 'Waldheim affair' also triggered was an opening up of debate in Austrian civil society about the links between the political present and the Nazi past, creating significant polarisation between the left and right in Austrian politics. As we have seen, the FPÖ inauguration into government reignited debate around what could be called the return of the repressed *Anschluss*.

Schlingensief's evocation of the notion of *Anschluss* is also layered further in his appropriation of the German version of *Big Brother* to structure his action/installation. Indeed, *Bitte liebt Österreich* tries to further unsettle the at times uncomfortable relationship between Austria and Germany, especially when we consider that Schlingensief, a German artist, entered Austria in order to criticise Austrians for their relationship with Nazi Germany. In the *Ausländer Raus* documentary we see Viennese citizens arguing with and abusing Schlingensief over this very point, asking what right he has to question Austrians over their links to Nazism and telling him to go back to Germany.⁵³ As we have seen, the format that Schlingensief utilised was *Big Brother* Germany and it was the popularity of the German production that Schlingensief was capitalising on, which is also what Austrians were watching and becoming attached to. In fact, Austria never made their own version of *Big Brother*, preferring instead not to pay format rights and make a show, called *Taxi Orange*, that was a 'combination' of Endemol's *The Bus*

⁵¹ Ibid., 103-104. Art suggests: "It is difficult to imagine a better advertisement for Austria than *The Sound of Music* [...] paints a very sympathetic picture of Austria's incorporation in the Third Reich."

⁵² Ibid., 102.

⁵³ *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container.*

and *Big Brother*.⁵⁴ The German-ness of the *Big Brother* success that Schlingensief played with could be understood as a type of ‘televisual *Anschluss*,’ which one could read as either German cultural imperialism or complicity and pleasure in watching and participating in the intimate sphere of one’s neighbours. Nevertheless, Schlingensief’s use of the format further amplifies the uneasiness between these closely connected territories, perhaps metaphorically playing out Big Brother (Germany)-Little Brother (Austria) tensions on the public stage.

Schlingensief engaged with the ‘unrepresentable’ memory of the Nazi concentration camps in order to draw parallels with the FPÖ’s treatment of and rhetoric around immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees. While a large banner with the words “Ausländer Raus” (foreigners out) was unveiled to the public, Schlingensief declared to the crowd of Viennese citizens, tourists and media representatives: “This is Austria … Land of the Nazis. Land of the Fascists!”⁵⁵ The containers in which the asylum-seekers were housed, which Schlingensief himself called “interactive concentration-camps,”⁵⁶ clearly refer to the confinement of ethnic minorities by the Nazis, and also allude to the conditions in which refugees are confined in the deportation/detention centre on the outskirts of Vienna. By placing the ‘concentration-camp-containers’ in the central square in Vienna, adjacent to the opera house, Schlingensief is also implying that traces of this shameful feature of Nazism are still at the heart of Austrian culture and public life. By placing faux concentration camps in the centre of Vienna Schlingensief was attempting to make Austria’s capital *unheimlich* for its citizens. *Unheimlich* literally means unhomely, but it is also the word Freud uses for what has become translated as the uncanny. As I have noted, Freud suggests that the uncanny is not something new, but rather something familiar that has become strange and estranged through the process of repression.⁵⁷ It is through the ‘return of the repressed’ that a potent manifestation of the uncanny emerges.

⁵⁴ Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 171. See footnote 1.

⁵⁵ Christoph Schlingensief quoted in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Freud, *The Uncanny*, 148.

Adapting Freud's concept in *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, Alain Badiou discusses the theory of the uncanny in relation to history.⁵⁸ His discussion of the uncanny here suggests that the repressed elements of the historico-political past can return reconfigured in contemporary political life. *Bitte liebt Österreich* deals with this form of return in a context specific to Austria. Indeed, Schlingensief interrogates this return of Austria's repressed passed in relation to the FPÖ in order to make their slogans and policies appear both familiar and strange to the people of Austria by drawing out the echoes of Nazism. The project endeavoured to represent how this inability of Austrian society to take responsibility for its part in Nazism is manifested in the xenophobic politics of the FPÖ.

Agamben suggests that the camp is “the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living.”⁵⁹ Although Schlingensief’s project is most certainly intentionally “ghosted by the spectre of Nazi concentration camps,”⁶⁰ the re-emergence of the camp as a ‘legitimate’ practice in exceptional circumstances has been galvanised in recent years by images from and state-sanctioned exclusion practiced at Guantánamo Bay. The camp, described by Agamben as a ‘zone of irreducible indistinction’⁶¹ that reduces its inhabitants to a state of ‘bare life,’ is an exemplar of the horror committed under National Socialism but also a symbol of the politics the exclusion of twenty-first century democracies. As Richard Langston suggests of *Bitte liebt Österreich*, “Playing the game of exclusion in the streets of Vienna thus made palpable not only the contemporary politics of exclusion touted by Haider but also its historical precedent, the culmination of modern biopolitics.”⁶² Schlingensief’s interactive-concentration-camps were thus reproductions of that which is widely considered unrepresentable, unthinkable, and unsayable. The camps, which according to Rancière are

⁵⁸ Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, 85.

⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 166.

⁶⁰ Varney, “Right Now Austria Looks Ridiculous,” 117.

⁶¹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 9.

⁶² Richard Langston, “Schlingensief’s Peep-Show: Post-Cinematic Spectacles and the Public Space of History”, in *After the Avant-Garde: Contemporary German and Austrian Experimental Film*, eds Randall Halle and Reinhold Steinöver (Rochester: Camden House, 2008): 219.

subsumed in the “aura of holy terror,”⁶³ were actualised in the centre of Vienna to foreground what must be spoken about, the reconfiguration of repressed fascist rhetoric in contemporary political discourse, and the foregrounding of a politics of fear which excludes the other from the so-called inclusive public sphere.

The connection between the physical space of the installation, the interactive-concentration-camps in Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz, and the mediation of the event online (and later in the documentary) provides a further layer to the politics of representation and unrepresentability. The people that came to watch or partake in the event in the centre of Vienna, whether to protest, take photographs or listen to speeches, could not see the asylum-seekers confined inside the make-shift containers. Banners with FPÖ slogans which adorned the outside of the containers were highly visible and Schlingensief along with other members of his production team could be seen and heard, but those inside the containers were unrepresented on the street. Indeed, the mediation of reality TV-style cameras was required to achieve this representation, which itself functioned on two key levels. Firstly, there was the level of aesthetic representation, as the asylum-seekers were captured live on cameras and streamed as a visible representation on the computer or TV screen. Secondly, however, this was a form of political representation and a politicisation of the reality TV format. The 24-hour per day recordings that were streamed live online enabled the asylum-seekers to speak for themselves, and in effect to represent themselves, without having their voices mediated by someone else, through a representative speaking on their behalf. Paradoxically, it was through a process of mediation that they gained an unmediated voice. Confronting the public with the ‘unrepresentable,’ in the form of an interactive-concentration-camp, Schlingensief provoked them to actively seek out the online stream of the event – which over 80,000 people did⁶⁴ – in order to watch and listen to those who are often excluded from and unrepresented in the public sphere.

⁶³ Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 109.

⁶⁴ Weiss, “Recycling the Image of the Public Sphere in Art.”

By utilising the discourse of unrepresentability to represent those usually excluded from the inclusive public sphere, Schlingensief created a dissensual space in which both the art discourse of unrepresentability and the exclusionary rhetoric of the FPÖ were disrupted and challenged. As mentioned earlier, the self-proclaimed premise of Schlingensief's artistic practice is that 'art should be more political and politics more artistic'. His works *Chance 2000* and *Bitte liebt Österreich* demonstrate the Rancièrean contention that politics can be aesthetic and aesthetics political, as they both potentially enable a reconfiguration of what is perceived as visible and audible in the 'shared common' of the community. In both its embodiment of the return of repressed history and the placement of 'interactive concentration camps' in the daily experience of the Viennese public, Schlingensief's *Bitte liebt Österreich* worked to create a gap in the distribution of the sensible, to render visible that which is not normally seen, by "plac[ing] one world in another."⁶⁵ For Schlingensief, staging the unrepresentable through remediating the camp was a dissensual method through which to spark critical debate about, and reconfigure the public perception of, contemporary exclusionary practice.

⁶⁵ Rancière, *Dissensus: On Aesthetics and Politics*, 38.

Scenes of Dissensus: Artur Źmijewski and Curation as an Artistic Mode of Production

Usually, artists are not asked to identify their political positions. But this time it's different. In my opinion, all artists represent particular political standpoints, even if they don't want to identify them clearly. There is this invisible rule for artists to produce so-called "political art" from an unidentified political position and to keep neutrality, even if it is obvious that they are not neutral.

Our reality is structured by politics; this means that art is also structured by them. Let's present this invisible/hidden structure, this obscene background of art. Politics are not, as politicians would like to convince us, fights for power or dirty games. They are the language of our collective needs which people share.

We are not only human beings, we are also political beings, as Hannah Arendt said. Let's describe what we are doing as artists also in pure political terms. That's why I ask about this "secret" and "private" information. Let's give it a public body.

It doesn't mean that the curatorial choice will be based on preferred political identity—no, it will be based as always on intuition and ambiguity. But this time intuition and ambiguity will be a little deformed by this over-obvious political element. So, we will see what happens.¹

The above statement is a statement of intent and the discursive frame through which the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (27 April – 1 July 2012) is conceptualised. It was included by Polish artist and lead curator of the Biennale, Artur Źmijewski, as an added exposition to the Open Call to artists which asked them, as part of the application process, to state their political inclinations. The curatorial process devised by Źmijewski and his team is similar, at least conceptually, to that of his early work: he sets up a stage, an encounter, and then documents what goes on and reports on how the scenario plays out. Źmijewski's conceptualisation of the Biennale, including the idea of it and the discourse that surrounds it, works as a piece of art. Źmijewski's *modus operandi*, his artistic mode of production, is to create scenarios of dissensus, scenes of productive disagreement in which he asks the spectator-participants to reassess, rethink and reinvest in the particular theme at hand, be that Otherness, collective history, trauma, the body, the act of protest, or the arbitrary nature of discursive boundaries (art, politics, philosophy, sociology, etc.). His artworks create a feeling of discomfort and unease precisely in order to provoke a response to the subject matter. Much of Źmijewski's early video work involves recording an 'exchange of energies' that eventually

¹ Artur Źmijewski, "Explanation," *Berlin Biennale*, accessed May 08, 2013.
http://www.berlinbiennale.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=189&Itemid=2&lang=en.

becomes the final product, but it is the process, the reaction to the process, and the discourse that surrounds it that is important to Źmijewski rather than the artisic end-product. It is through this mode of production and this framework that Źmijewski curated the Biennale, in which it is not the art-objects that were foregrounded but rather the discourses that were mobilised, the discursive boundaries that were crossed, the one-off events that occurred and the overall process that was involved. In this light we can view the curation of the 7th Berlin Biennale as an extension and amplification of the art-making process that Źmijewski has developed through his artworks, which is exemplary of his continued interest in art's function in society and its mode of substantive engagement with politics.

The Art

Throughout his artistic career Źmijewski has consistently refused to let his art simply ‘speak for itself’. His works, in and of themselves, create interest, debate and controversy; they aim to deal directly with political and social issues, and seek to pose questions about contemporary reality and answer similar questions. However, for Źmijewski, this is only part of a larger process, a larger set of ideas which relate to the viewer or consumer of art and their engagement or dialogue with the artwork, which is part of their engagement with the issue presented by the work or ‘art object’. Indeed, in his early treatise, *A Favourite Theory of Art*, originally written as a master’s thesis at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw before being published in *Magazyn Sztuki* (‘Art Magazine’) in 1995, Źmijewski asserts, “An art-object is not a final product and, though working with art has an aim, it is not exclusively the production of an object, but a specific organization of the consciousness of viewer and artist through the creative process or through the work of art.”² The art-object is one aspect in the broader field of conversation between the ‘art system’ or ‘art world’ and the wider public. This exposition on the purposes of art effectively frames the way Źmijewski’s art practice, which

² Artur Źmijewski, “A Favorite Theory of Art,” excerpt, trans. Mazena B. Guzowska, in *Artur Źmijewski: If It Happened Only Once It’s As If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, ed. Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005), 156.

mainly consists of short and medium-length films or ‘directed documentaries’ as Joanna Mytrowska suggests,³ is to be understood. The treatise can be viewed as an early explanation of the ideas behind the art-objects he produces, but it also clarifies why he places importance on other kinds of related work: the dialogues created through his writing and editing in both political and art journals as well as the numerous interviews he undertakes with other artists on topics such as the purposes of their art, the effects it has and how it relates to immediate social concerns.⁴

A key trait of Źmijewski’s art practice is the orchestration and documentation of different scenarios and situations that relate to and engage with contemporary social issues and social reality. He stages and documents encounters that are both visceral and uncomfortable. The themes and subjects of Źmijewski’s oeuvre are set around ideas of the (often disfigured) body, history and memory, trauma, manifestations of power, and conflicting ideological perspectives. He always endeavours to make his art political and draws connections between “issues of reality, power and difference.”⁵ The feeling of oppression is prevalent in Źmijewski’s work, both on a public level and on the personal, immediate, bodily level, and from the perspective of both the oppressor and the oppressed. The influence of power structures on the human body is a central concern not only to Źmijewski but also to the “critical art” scene in Poland, which also involved Paweł Althamer and Katarzyna Kozyra, from the mid-1990s onwards. In the forward to a collection of interviews and conversations Źmijewski had with different artists from this scene, Ariane Beyn and Kasha Bittner suggest that artists of this “critical art” scene use the “image and experience of the human body”⁶ as a starting point to try and “tackle existential questions of humanity under new and yet-undefined

³ Joanna Mytkowska, “Too-True Scenarios,” in *If It Happened Only Once It’s as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, ed. Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005), 12.

⁴ See for example, *Trembling Bodies: Conversations with Artists*, edited by Galeria Kronika and DAAD Berlin (Bytom: Galeria Kronika; Berlin: DAAD, 2011).

⁵ Louise Déry, “Artur Źmijewski: The Issue of Reality,” in *Artur Źmijewski: Scénarios de Dissidence/Scenarios of Dissidence*, eds. Véronique Leblanc and Louise Déry (Montréal: Galerie de L’UQAM, 2011), 47.

⁶ Ariane Beyn and Kasha Bittner, “Forward to the English Edition,” in *Trembling Bodies: Conversations with Artists*, eds. Galeria Kronika and DAAD Berlin (Bytom: Galeria Kronika; Berlin: DAAD, 2011), 9.

capitalist conditions.”⁷ Indeed, a common theme present in the art of Źmijewski and his compatriots is the “the body as a site of experiments and the exposure of the body’s involvement in power structures, sexuality [...], age, sickness and the handicapped, and forms of Otherness in general as well as borderline experiences of death.”⁸

In one of his early works, *An Eye for an Eye* (1998), Źmijewski demonstrates this preoccupation with the human form. The title here clearly refers to the ancient principle of compensation and justice provided to those who have incurred injury at the hands of another or had a wrong committed against them through the punishment of the perpetrator. In *An Eye for an Eye*, which takes the form of a series of photographs and a 10-minute long video, able-bodied participants effectively ‘lend’ their limbs to people who are missing them. Participants lend a leg to help another walk down the street or climb stairs or a hand to assist someone wash themselves. Both the handicapped and able-bodied participants display signs of physical and mental fatigue caused by the tasks they are asked to perform. The work does not have a definitive ‘take home’ message and is highly ambiguous. For instance, art critic Ewa Toniak maintains that the “film contradicts the dominant ideology of exclusion; it is also a blueprint for a new symbolic order based on the female economy of the gift, rather than a male economy of trade.”⁹ One could also read the work as a failure of the very principle of an eye for an eye, as effectively both parties are left in pain after the experiment. Furthermore, *An Eye for an Eye* sets about problematising the popular self-help-type discourse of overcoming “the impossible” and thus reinforcing an “exigency of normality.”¹⁰ Norman Kleeblatt suggests that Źmijewski “seems not merely to be asking why we only acknowledge disabled people when they mimic the ‘normal’ but also raising issues about the ethics of offering even an

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Joanna Mytkowska, “An Eye for an Eye,” in *If It Happened Only Once It’s as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, ed. Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005), 176.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge. Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 117.

appearance of ‘normality.’”¹¹ What the work demonstrates for Żmijewski is that “the impossible remains impossible.”¹²

As we have seen earlier, Giorgio Agamben describes the concentration camps as the salient and prescient example of a space in which the inhabitants are reduced to a state of ‘bare life’, a place in which they have had their life stripped bare. One can read the short video *Game of Tag* (1999) as Żmijewski’s attempt to mobilise the notion of bare life as a springboard to work through repressed traumas. In the video Żmijewski has a group of naked people from a wide age range play the children’s game of tag in two different rooms, one an old, empty cellar and one a former gas chamber of a Nazi concentration camp. At the beginning of the piece we see the participants awkwardly covering their literally bare forms and appearing openly embarrassed about their naked bodies, but they eventually become more lively as the game progresses. Żmijewski suggests that the participants know they are playing a children’s game in a former death camp and this, along with their nudity, explains their initial apprehension. However, he also likens *Game of Tag* to a clinical situation not dissimilar to psychotherapy in which participants are working through ‘untouchable’ memories of the death camps.¹³ Żmijewski asserts,

The murdered people are victims – but we, the living are also victims. And as such we need a kind of treatment or therapy, so can create a symbolic alternative; instead of dead bodies we can see laughter and life. *Berek* [Game of Tag] is about how we can engage with this brutal history and work with imposed memory. It’s possible to have active access to history, and to attempt to emancipate ourselves from the trauma.¹⁴

He further suggests that “you return to the traumas that brought about your complex. You recreate them, almost like in theatre.”¹⁵ Although first exhibited in 1999, in 2011 *Game of Tag* caused considerable controversy when it was removed from the exhibition *Side by Side. Poland-Germany. A 1000 Years of Art and History* (23 September 2011 – 9 January 2012) by the director of the Martin-Gropius Bau (Berlin), Gereon Sievernich, for Żmijewski’s apparent

¹¹ Norman Kleebhatt, “Moral Hazard.” *Artforum*, April 2009, 157.

¹² Artur Żmijewski quoted in Ibid.

¹³ Artur Żmijewski, “Berek,” *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

lack of respect for the “dignity of the victims of the Holocaust.”¹⁶ In the 7th Berlin Biennale Newspaper Źmijewski claims that Sievernich’s act of censorship in fact harms “the dignity of the living.”¹⁷ Indeed, that is why Źmijewski decided to exhibit this reasonably old work again at the 7th Berlin Biennale “to react against this impulse to censor, self-censor, and close off discussion.”¹⁸

In 2004 Źmijewski’s *80064*, which is amongst his best known works, revisited the historic trauma of the Holocaust and again caused controversy. The 11-minute film takes place in a tattoo parlour and involves Źmijewski persuading World War II concentration camp survivor Józef Tarnawa to ‘renew’ his tattooed prison number on his forearm. The project was supposed to be part of *Auschwitz Prozess – Geschichte und Rezeption* (The Auschwitz Trial – History and Reception), an exhibition arranged to mark the 40th anniversary of the trial of Nazi war criminals in Frankfurt-am-Main; however, it was rejected by the organisers at the Fritz Bauer Institute and was first exhibited as part of a solo show at the Centre d’Art Contemporain Brétigny, France. The act of persuading the hesitant Tarnawa to ‘restore’ his number, 80064, does not, according to Pierre Bal-Blanc, represent the “sublimated compassion characteristic of Western Europe, but instead a language of violence befitting the scale of the events described.”¹⁹ However, it is not the violence of authority that seems to worry Tarnawa in the film, but rather an idea that his restored tattoo would be in some way inauthentic.²⁰ He tells Źmijewski that when other survivors see his new tattoo “everyone will be able to tell I renovated it, like a piece of furniture.” In some ways Źmijewski was surprised by the results of his ‘film-experiment with memory.’ He had anticipated the opening of the ‘gates of memory’, the recalling of painful memories, and the ‘eruption’ of images and thoughts from that time.

¹⁵ Joanna Mytkowska, “The Game of Tag,” in *If It Happened Only Once It’s as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, ed. Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005), 152.

¹⁶ Źmijewski, “Berek,” 15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Joanna Mytkowska, “80064,” in *If It Happened Only Once It’s as If It Never Happened/Einmal Ist Keinmal*, ed. Joanna Mytkowska (Warsaw: Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2005), 24.

²⁰ Misha Kavka, *Artur Źmijewski: Reaching Tentacles into Reality* (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art; Pakuranga, N.Z.: Te Tuhi, 2009).

However, this did not happen. When asked if he had the urge to protest against his horrific mistreatment at the camp, Tarnawa replied, “What do you mean, protest? Adapt – try and survive.” Joanna Mytkowska asserts that in “the memory of this former prisoner, the condition for survival, necessitated by the extremely oppressive and restrictive environment, was extreme conformity. And in the film such an act of conformism, consent and subjugation are repeated.”²¹ Repetition of history, conformity, authority and subjugation are all present in Źmijewski’s much larger work for the Polish Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale, *Repetition*.

Repetition, a 75-minute film, documents Źmijewski’s restaging of Professor Philip Zimbardo’s prison experiment carried at Stanford University in 1971. In the original experiment American psychologist Zimbardo attempted to answer the question, “how do seemingly “normal” people react to having roles (and authority) imposed upon them?”²² The Stanford Prison Experiment, as it came to be called, involved a sample group of 24 “psychologically healthy” male college students who had answered an advertisement in a newspaper to participate in psychological study that would last for two weeks. Each student was randomly assigned the role of guard or prisoner. The experiment was called to a halt by Zimbardo after six days, however, as the students had internalised their roles to the extent that they were finding it difficult to differentiate between the study and reality; some became progressively more sadistic in meting out punishment and others became increasingly traumatised by their subjugation. Most of the details from the original experiment were repeated by Źmijewski, who took on the role of superintendent as Zimbardo had done previously. However, a key difference in Źmijewski’s project was that his subjects could leave at any time, although they would forfeit their fee (\$40 U.S. per day).²³ It should be noted, however, that the reasons given by many of the volunteers,

²¹ Mytkowska, “80064,” 24.

²² Anthony Downey, “The Lives of Others: Artur Źmijewski’s *Repetition*, The Stanford Prison Experiment, and the Ethics of Surveillance,” in *Conspiracy Dwellings: Surveillance in Contemporary Art*, eds. Outi Remes and Pam Skelton (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 68.

²³ Derek Conrad Murray, “Carceral Subjects: The Play of Power in Artur Źmijewski’s *Repetition*,” *Parachute* 124 (2006): 82.

who were primarily long-term unemployed, for participating in the project were financial.²⁴ In a similar manner to the Stanford Experiment, in Źmijewski's film there is a display of what Foucault might call the 'play of power relations' or 'the exercise of power', "whereby abusive forms of domination and governance take shape."²⁵ Źmijewski's experiment, however, does end differently. In the Stanford Experiment it was Zimbardo who called a halt to the project, but in *Repetition*, at a response to one of the increasingly power-hungry guards, the prisoners and guards collectively decide that "the boundaries of decent and humane behaviour have been overstepped."²⁶

Some critics questioned the value of work, Źmijewski's motivations and the ethical issues that surround the project, particularly the payment of the prisoners and guards.²⁷ Although the original experiment is often used to demonstrate cognitive dissonance theory, that it is situation and contexts rather than personality that produce behaviour, it would nowadays not be approved on ethical grounds by many psychological associations and the results cannot be verified.²⁸ In the opening of *Repetition* Źmijewski states, "We attempted to recreate the conditions of the Zimbardo experiment, to confirm whether evil is inherent in human nature and always manifests itself whenever we consent." Anthony Downey suggests that if we take this statement by Źmijewski seriously, if this is what he was setting out to explore, then it is something that could, at best, "be read as disingenuous or, at worst, insidious."²⁹ He claims that the claim that *Repetition* is doing research and thus producing knowledge that can be substantiated is hugely problematic, as it is "comprised from the outset not only by payment to individuals but the very fact that Źmijewski has chosen an indelibly flawed experiment to re-

²⁴ Downey, "The Lives of Others: Artur Źmijewski's *Repetition*, The Stanford Prison Experiment, and the Ethics of Surveillance," 73.

²⁵ Murray, "Carceral Subjects: The Play of Power in Artur Źmijewski's *Repetition*," 84.

²⁶ Downey, "The Lives of Others: Artur Źmijewski's *Repetition*, The Stanford Prison Experiment, and the Ethics of Surveillance," 76.

²⁷ Nina Montmann, "Community Service." *Frieze* 102, October 2006, accessed April 16, 2013, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/community_service/

²⁸ Downey, "The Lives of Others: Artur Źmijewski's *Repetition*, The Stanford Prison Experiment, and the Ethics of Surveillance," 71-72.

²⁹ Ibid, 74.

enact in the first place.”³⁰ Downey asks whether the re-enactment is undertaken to question the ethics of the first experiment, but then notes that if it does it neither proves nor disproves the previous hypothesis.³¹ I would argue that Żmijewski is working in larger brushstrokes here, in a cross-disciplinary manner. For one, as an artist he could re-enact the experiment whereas a psychologist could not, in many places least. Furthermore, it is important to consider the name of the exhibition in which *Repetition* was included: *If It Happened Only Once It's As If It Never Happened/Einmal ist Keinmal*. This title refers to the idea that we do not learn from history and therefore the mistakes made are continually repeated. The context is, of course, important here as well. From early 2004, images (and descriptions) of prisoner abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib prison were made widely available to the public. Some of the acts of abuse at Abu Ghraib involved sexual humiliation, simulated sex, stress-positions, unemptied slop-buckets being left so the smell would linger in the cells, all similar to the methods used to dehumanise prisoners in the Stanford Experiment.³² For this reason Professor Zimbardo was called as an expert witness in the proceedings against Ivan “Chip” Frederick, the highest-ranking member of the US military to be court-martialled for offenses at an US-run prison.³³ Furthermore, the aesthetic style in which Żmijewski presents the experiment is one an audience in 2005 would be very familiar with – one akin to the form of Reality TV. Żmijewski’s work has been likened to *Big Brother*, “since he similarly devises a situation, puts subjects into it, and lets the camera roll as a mix of the predictable and unpredictable occurs.”³⁴ Żmijewski’s productive use of the format, which is associated with ‘the everyday’, alludes to how the events at Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay have become an everyday aspect of the War on Terror.

Żmijewski continued his group experimentation and investigation into group dynamics with the 2007 ‘directed documentary,’ *Them*. This work was strongly influenced by his experiences

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 70.

³³ Ibid., see footnote 4.

as a student of Kowalski, when he took part in exercises known as “Common Space, Private Space,” in which students prepared artworks based on a particular position or view they held and other students would respond and alter the other’s work. Shown as part of *Documenta 12* in Kassel, Germany, *Them* involved Źmijewski inviting four antagonistic groups from different stratas of Polish society to his studio in Warsaw to participate in a visual art experiment. The project involved members of the radical right-wing nationalist group Union of Polish Youths (Młodzież Wszechpolska), young left-wing community activists, elderly women strongly identifying with the Catholic Church and a group of liberal Jewish teenagers; the meetings of the groups took place over four different sessions. Firstly, Źmijewski had each of the participants paint symbols of their core beliefs and ideological views. He then invited them to come back together as a group to alter, ‘improve’ and ‘correct’ the work of the others. This began with, for example, a Jewish teenager drawing a rainbow alongside the Szczerbiec sword (adopted as a nationalist symbol by the Union of Polish Youths) because they are “fierce enemies” of homosexuality, which is a position the liberal Jewish teenagers did not understand or least did not recognise as legitimate. What eventually transpires in the film is the cutting and burning of the visualisations from the conflicting groups, thus demonstrating that although each camp has vastly differing views, “the groups behave in similar ways, being violently intolerant of others while claiming to speak for all.”³⁵ Véronique Leblanc suggests: “The progression of the meetings shows the impossibility of establishing a dialogue between the parties. The experience then becomes a powerful allegory of ideological conflict passing from confrontation to radical Otherness.”³⁶ From the personal pronoun that constitutes the work’s title we can observe that the concept of self and other is one of the key thematic concerns. Leblanc further notes that *Them* “underscor[es] the impossibility of travelling the

³⁴ Kavka, Artur Źmijewski: *Reaching Tentacles into Reality*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Véronique Leblanc, “Exposing Conflict: The Dissident Gaze of Artur Źmijewski,” in Artur Źmijewski: *Scénarios de Dissidence/Scenarios of Dissidence*, eds. Véronique Leblanc and Louise Déry (Montréal: Galerie de L’UQAM, 2011), 36.

path back from Other to self,”³⁷ which is also how we could read *An Eye for an Eye*.³⁸ Indeed, what we have with *An Eye for an Eye* is physical jointure, but there is no idealized consensus. Rather, there is a move toward productive dissensus.

With *Democracies* (2009) Źmijewski shifts his examination of the expression of political beliefs and attitudes and the “confrontation of antagonistic ideologies”³⁹ to the public realm. The installation comprises of twenty short videos that are shown simultaneously and were filmed between 2007 and 2009 at different demonstrations, protests, etc., in different locations in Europe and the Middle East. These expressions of political attitudes include an anti-abortion demonstration in Warsaw, the annual loyalist parade in Belfast, a protest against the Israeli occupation of the West bank, anti-globalisation riots, the funeral of Jörg Haider, a riot after the Euro Cup semifinal between Germany and Turkey, and a historical re-enactment of the Warsaw Uprising during WWII. *Democracies* illustrates a concerted effort, particularly after the release of his manifesto in 2007, to work on a larger scale and capture scenarios in which heterogeneous voices are speaking and to create spaces for this to happen.

The Manifestos of Dissensus: Writing and Theory

Between 1992 and 1998 Źmijewski published a magazine called *Czereja*, which was primarily dedicated to ‘Kowalnia’ (the Foundry), the artistic output of the students and graduates from the Department of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw under the tutelage of professor Grzegorz Kowalski.⁴⁰ Kowalski is a prominent sculptor, performance artist, critic

³⁷ Ibid, 37.

³⁸ Sienkiewicz, “Artur Źmijewski,” We can see from Sienkiewicz’s analysis of Źmijewski’s early films such as *Eye for an Eye* some of the conceptual similarities between it and *Them*. “The bodies in his movies are handicapped, crippled, sick, old. It’s the bodies of ‘The Others’ that only rarely find their way into contemporary visual culture. The power that is exercised over it is dispersed, panoptical. It’s the Foucault-like power-knowledge that is not ordained from the above but rather spreads horizontally in the society. Źmijewski was especially interested in how this power was implemented in the visual field and how the imposed constraints could be overcome. Thus his films have become not only a description of a certain fragment of reality, the fragment being uncovered and introduced to the popular discourse, but also an activity encumbered with a certain ideological message and inscribed in it existential question.”

³⁹ Leblanc, “Exposing Conflict: The Dissident Gaze of Artur Źmijewski,” 39.

⁴⁰ Karol Sienkiewicz, “Artur Źmijewski,” *Culture.pl*, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.culture.pl/web/english/resources-visual-arts-full-page/-/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/artur-zmijewski.

and educator and has had significant influence on the “critical art scene” that emerged in Poland in the early 1990s. Karol Sienkiewicz suggests of *Czereja*,

It is a trustworthy reflection of processes characteristic for ‘Kowalnia,’ e.g. the process of abandoning of the traditional sculptural medium in favour of performance, photography and video, and a reflection of discussions conducted in the atelier. The magazine illustrated also Prof. Kowalski’s teaching method, which he termed ‘teaching through partnership.’ This method [...] accentuated the students’ individuality, their freedom in expressing their worldview and freedom in the choice of means of expression, and the ‘primacy of human experience over the work.’ Kowalski repeatedly stated that in his atelier the teachers were learning concurrently with the students and he stressed the ‘two-way flow of artistic impulse.’⁴¹

The magazine included excerpts from theses, reflections on questions and ideas by Kowalski, comments on assignments, numerous interviews and examples of work produced. It “was also a platform for developing Źmijewski’s own attitude towards art, notably, in confrontation with Kowalski.”⁴² Źmijewski published six issues of *Czereja* which now form part of the Kowalnia archive at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. For Źmijewski *Czereja* was not about “immanent discourse between specialists within an autonomous field of art”⁴³ but rather the participation of art in society and in public life. Indeed, *Czereja* is one of the early examples of Źmijewski’s attempt to break down disciplinary barriers or at least make an effort to “connect neighboring disciplines”⁴⁴ and remove some of the exclusivity attached to them. This becomes more evident in his work as art-editor for the magazine *Krytyka Polityczna* (Political Critique), “which brings the fields of philosophy, politics, and art together.”⁴⁵ Źmijewski’s second manifesto, “The Applied Social Arts” (2007), was published in *Krytyka Polityczna* along with a series of interviews that would later be made into the book, *Artur Źmijewski: Trembling Bodies, Conversations with Artists*.

When we account for the ideas expressed and positions taken by Źmijewski in “The Applied Social Arts,” notably the crossing of disciplinary and discursive boundaries, we will notice some close theoretical links with Rancière’s articulation of the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics. In an interview for the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, when

⁴¹ Karol Sienkiewicz, “Conflict and Concord: Abstract,” *Ikonotheka*, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://cejsh-archive.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?08PLAAAA05389>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ariane Beyn and Kasha Bittner, “Forward to the English Edition,” 10.

asked whether his approach was interdisciplinary Rancière indicated that he would describe his attitude “as *a-disciplinarity* or *in-disciplinarity* rather than interdisciplinary.”⁴⁶ The stake of this approach is political and is one that I argue Źmijewski also shares, as both the French theorist and the Polish artist hold that disciplines are exclusionary. Rancière contends, “the distribution of disciplines means the exclusion of those who have not the specific competence for exploring a territory.”⁴⁷ He asks what differentiates the philosophical from the sociological or historical competences, or differentiates a philosophical object from a sociological or historical one? He asserts,

A building, a performance or a discourse are each a form of occupation that concern space or usages of time. They are forms of distribution of the visible and the thinkable. The birth of the museum, of the mise-en-scène or installation art each reframe the common landscape of the visible, the thinkable and the feasible. These forms of reframing don’t belong to any specific discipline.⁴⁸

Rancière, like Źmijewski, maintains that for this reframing and re-distribution to be brought into being one must ‘step out’ of one’s ‘disciplinary frame.’⁴⁹ From the mid-2000s there was a proliferation in the translation of Rancière’s work and in 2007 *Krytyka Polityczna* published the Polish translation of *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Estetyka jako polityka), which included an introduction by Źmijewski. We see the line and tone of argument in Źmijewski’s assessment of Rancière’s work echoed again in the statements issued and discourses that surround the 7th Berlin Biennale. Źmijewski contends,

The meaning is nothing but a social fact, it takes place between people that communicate and act. The politics of art germinates from this mode of thinking. [...] Seen from this perspective, politics is not the use of state apparatus to instill in people a certain set of ideas. It is, rather, a place where our demands, needs and wishes meet. Ergo, politics means art.⁵⁰

Not only are the art-objects that Źmijewski produces dissensual in nature in that they invite the confrontation of heterogeneous voices, but so is his understanding and articulation of the relation between politics and art.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jacques Rancière, "An Interview with Jacques Rancière on Medium Specificity and Discipline Crossovers in Modern Art - Andrew McNamara & Toni Ross," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 8, no. 1 (2007): 99.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Artur Źmijewski, quoted in Sienkiewicz, “Artur Źmijewski.”

With “The Applied Social Arts” Źmijewski wanted clearly and categorically to shift away from the popular notion that artists are free from the weight of ideology because we are ostensibly living in the “post-ideological” period or experiencing an “end of ideology”. One will again notice a convergence here with the thought Rancière. In an interview with sociologist Sebastian Cichocki, Źmijewski plainly states, “Social reality is *a priori* ideological. Either one serves the existing *status quo* or steps up against it.”⁵¹ Źmijewski advocates a pragmatic disruption of this existing status quo, the consensus of the *police order*, in order for art to have a substantive social impact – and, indeed, the idea of social impact is the goal behind his manifesto. In his assessment of contemporary art, particularly art that is considered political, Źmijewski argues that we need to develop a new “language of critical practice” because, clearly, the way art is discussed by critics influences the way we relate to it and think about it. Furthermore, the language used to describe and discuss art affects how it is conceptualised, not only by the public at large but also by the artists themselves. He focuses on the difference between the established idea of an art “virus” and what he proposes as an art “algorithm.” In the language that defines the concept of the “artistic virus”, art, “it is claimed, produces artefacts: social and cultural events that ‘infect’ various parts of the social system just like viruses infect an organism.”⁵² The idea is that the infected system is damaged in some way and must change, must be healed. However, as Źmijewski points out, the idea of a virus has almost entirely negative connotations: “poison, disease, parasite, enemy.”⁵³ He maintains that the impact of an “artistic virus” can be nothing other than infection and he questions the usefulness of this as the impact cannot be verified or checked.⁵⁴ Źmijewski proposes that instead of using the metaphor of the virus to describe art having a social impact, artists should rather make use of what disciplines such as mathematics, linguistics and computer science

⁵¹ Artur Źmijewski, “Introduction: Artur Źmijewski in Conversation with Sebastian Cichocki, in *Trembling Bodies: Conversations with Artists*, eds. Galeria Kronika and DAAD Berlin (Bytom: Galeria Kronika; Berlin: DAAD, 2011), 19.

⁵² Artur Źmijewski, “The Applied Social Arts,” in *Trembling Bodies: Conversations with Artists*, eds Galeria Kronika and DAAD Berlin (Bytom: Galeria Kronika; Berlin: DAAD, 2011), 30.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

utilise: namely, algorithms.⁵⁵ Źmijewski is careful not to suggest that an artist simply adopts the same set of procedures as the mathematician (as that would be ‘dysfunctional’), but asserts that as a metaphor for action the algorithm is more useful than the virus. He argues, “[a]lgorithms imply something operational and positive, a mode of purposeful action.”⁵⁶ He suggests that changing the ‘language of critical practice’ will help restore the effectiveness of art that he believes has been dwindling through institutionalisation. As I have mentioned, the crossing of disciplinary and discursive boundaries is key in this process.⁵⁷ Indeed, Źmijewski advocates encroaching “upon other fields, such as [. . .] politics, as a way of proving oneself. The point is to work with people who are not in awe of art. Stature is what protects artists and critics from being ‘called’.”⁵⁸ We will see in the discussion of the Biennale that this idea of the artist not being ‘called’ to task, or more specifically the concept of artistic immunity, is something Źmijewski endeavours to remove, as he maintains that artistic immunity is something which inhibits the effectiveness and impact of art on society.

7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

As the research also focuses on the question whether artists consider themselves to be political, please inform us about your political inclination (e.g. rightist, leftist, liberal, nationalist, anarchist, feminist, masculinist, or whatever you identify yourself with) or whether you are not interested in politics at all.⁵⁹

- Excerpt from the Open Call to artists for the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.

As we can observe from the above requirement for all artists submitting work to the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, there is an overt foregrounding of the relationship between politics and art. What is also evident from the statement is that a key principle of the Biennale

⁵⁵ Ibid. Źmijewski states: “an algorithm is a procedure (a finite set of well-defined instructions) for accomplishing some task which, given an initial state, will terminate in a defined state.”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ In an interview about *Trembling Bodies*, in which Źmijewski is in conversation with other Polish artists he describes compatriots this cross disciplinary way: “My interviewees have that something, I mean an impossible possibility. It’s too esoteric to find its own place and be recognised in scientific or political discourse. I regard Paweł Althamer as a doctor who cannot practise outside the area of art. I think Katarzyna Kozyra or Zbigniew Libera are outstanding sociologists who can formulate their own research methods and come to useful conclusions. [...] Konrad Kuzysyn is an archaeologist of the present time, and Roman Stanczak a social psychologist.” Artur Źmijewski quoted in Stanisław Ruksza, “Trembling Bodies – How to use this Weapon?” in *Trembling Bodies: Conversations with Artists*, eds. Galeria Kronika and DAAD Berlin (Bytom: Galeria Kronika; Berlin: DAAD, 2011), 14-15.

⁵⁸ Źmijewski, “The Applied Social Arts,” 30.

⁵⁹ Joanna Warsza, “Open Call & Artwiki,” *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 13.

is that it is both an art and a research event. Źmijewski stated that he did not want to take a ‘standard’ curatorial approach to planning the 2012 Biennale and rather likened it to the logic of journalism. He thus asserts that he and his curatorial team completed “research that follows the news.”⁶⁰ The idea was to focus on artistic reactions to ‘news’ in order to elaborate upon how artists respond to social and political events. The *7th Berlin Biennale Newspaper*, which was available on the opening day of the Biennale, follows this premise; it is an artwork which includes responses to socio-political events, provides information about the structure of the Biennale, and also affords a discursive framework to the Biennale as a whole. In the newspaper Źmijewski’s co-curator Joanna Warsza asserts,

We went to Hungary, monopolized by the right-wing party Fidesz; to Iceland, where a group of artists established a political party and won the election in the city council of Reykjavik in the aftermath of the financial crisis; to Russia, rocked by anti-Putin protests; to Madrid, the hotbed of the ¡Democracia Real YA! movement; to New York, where Occupy Wall Street continues its struggle; to Tunisia in the wake of the first free elections; and to Egypt in a time of post-revolutionary turmoil.⁶¹

Źmijewski, and his curatorial team, Warsza, and the Russian collective *Voina* claim that this type of research did not involve attending gallery openings, visiting studios, etc., but was rather a hunt for art in “civil disobedience, [...] in representative state art, in the politics of memory, in capitalist appropriation, or in educational activities seen as ‘bad art.’”⁶²

Breaking the News, which is stylistically and discursively very similar to Źmijewski’s own *Democracies* project, is a case in point of the journalistic method adopted by the Biennale curators. It involved 10 different pieces of ‘art journalism’ and examples of activist expression were shown simultaneously. *Breaking the News* was created with footage from artists and activists from Egypt, the Ukraine, Israel, Slovenia and the UK, to name a few. It was displayed as an installation at the Biennale but also in virtual spaces such as the Biennale website, Youtube, and Facebook. In their assessment of *Breaking the News* Źmijewski and Warsza explain that the installation “presents the activities of a number of artists whose documentary practice, readiness to act, civic disobedience, and willingness to put themselves on the front

⁶⁰ Joanna Warsza, “Doing Things with Art: A Vocabulary that Helped to Build the Structure of the 7th Berlin Biennale,” *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012 , 9.

⁶¹ Ibid.

line exemplify how they can go beyond their individual self-interests and work toward real political relevance.”⁶³ Like *Democracies*, *Breaking the News* presents the kinds of stories that are freely available on the Internet but are frequently not presented as ‘news’ because they provide a considerably more in-depth, involved and alternative picture or narrative than a conventional news item.

The visual identity of the 7th *Berlin Biennale Newspaper* and much of the Biennale advertising was developed by Berlin-based graphic designer Mario Lombardo. Lombardo designed the Biennale logo, the font used in the newspaper and other official Biennale-related material as well as the colour schemes used in the catalogues and other forms of promotional material. Lombardo suggests that the design aesthetic of the Biennale is “consciously based on an amalgamation of direct or indirect political communication methods.”⁶⁴ He borrows ‘loaded’ symbols from a variety of design disciplines from different eras and different ends of the political spectrum that revolve around “power, politics, money, angst, corruption and art.”⁶⁵ The font, BUREAU_BB7_Grotesk, is based on the logo of Russian gas and oil conglomerate Gazprom, combined with typography from 1957 CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/ Christian Democratic Union of Germany) and 1961 SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands/Social Democratic Party of Germany) federal election campaigns as well as Dadaist Kurt Schwitters’s MERZ oeuvre.⁶⁶ The logo is a composite of seven different elements: four currency symbols – the dollar, the yen the pound and the euro – along with the number 7 and two facing letter B’s for Berlin and Biennale. Lombardo says of the logo, “it is an image that toys with ambiguity, aims at debate, is not easily recognizable in its aesthetic vocabulary, and should ideally, provoke a feeling of the uncanny in the observer.”⁶⁷ The sense of estranged familiarity connoted by the uncanny is created by the amalgamation of well-

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Artur Źmijewski and Joanna Warsza, “Breaking the News,” *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 11.

⁶⁴ Mario Lombardo, “The Aesthetic Vocabulary,” *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 31.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

known symbols to make something new that seems familiar to the observer. The logo thus appears somewhat fascistic even though it does not directly reference or allude to fascist iconography. Considering that this logo sits alongside the title *7th Berlin Biennale Newspaper*, which appears in a blackletter or gothic typeface similar to that used by the Nazis, the echoes of fascism are foregrounded further. The newspaper effectively functions as a political document, since it is a manifesto for the Biennale, and as a work that combines “propagandist communication methods” from a wide array of political perspectives in order to address, through an evocation of a kind of uncanny discomfort, the “interplay of political signals”⁶⁸ that are both condensed and dislocated within it. In and of itself the newspaper is also exemplary of the interconnectedness of politics and art that Źmijewski is clearly trying to promote and articulate.

This interplay of political signals is the key premise to Burak Arikan’s *Network Map of Artist and Political Inclinations*. The work includes the names of the 4,592 artists who submitted portfolios to the Biennale, all connected visually through red lines and clusters of names centred around the more popular political inclinations with more sparsely grouped names around the less common ones. In total, 395 different political designations are represented, with many of the artists affiliated with political positions such as socialist, leftist, liberal, feminist and green. What this piece illustrates is Źmijewski’s emphasis on the politics of the artists rather than primarily reading the politics out of the art-object. The piece thus endeavours to remove the shield of artistic immunity that Źmijewski criticised in his manifesto. *Network Map of Artist and Political Inclinations* (320 x 525 cm) is a large work that took up most of the back wall of the first exhibition space when one entered the Kunst Werk (KW) Institute, the base of operations and the central exhibition space for the Biennale. This piece by Istanbul-based artist Arikan provides a “social network graph” and key reference

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

point and link to the ArtWiki project,⁶⁹ a digital version of the Biennale run in conjunction with the one that took place in Berlin. ArtWiki was developed, together with Żmijewski and Warsza, by Berlin-based web activist Pet Schultz, and it functions as an art library founded on the model of Wikipedia. Warsza suggests, “ArtWiki is the tool through which we want to extend the Biennale exhibition and create an open, not-for-profit platform for information exchange for artists, their activities, and their political standpoints, to show today’s political spectrum of artistic attitudes.”⁷⁰ In the exhibition space at KW visitors to the Biennale could also sift through the hard copies of the portfolios submitted in order to see a wider range of artistic perspectives as well as to gain some access and insight into the curatorial and selection process. The portfolios were kept in manila folders in large bookshelves and metal drawers, which created the sense that the space was part gallery, part studio, part office space.

The way Żmijewski used the KW Institute as an exhibition space demonstrates not only his non-standard curatorial approach but also how his approach to curation is directly linked to his artistic mode of production and, I would suggest, is a continuation of his artistic practice. Indeed, the KW institute functioned more like a large-scale installation than a series of discrete exhibitions showing the work of different artists. It was in effect an exhibition space that had been rethought as an installation: works such as Żmijewski’s own *Berek* were displayed in a corner, behind a black curtain with very little signage, on the top floor of KW, while a small office providing information about Yael Bartana’s “First International Congress of Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland,” which was held between May 11 and 13 2012, was given prime location close to the entrance of the KW institute. The interior of the KW institute itself had a ‘shabby,’ almost dirty appearance reminiscent of a set for a play or a piece still under construction. Events were often given primacy over art-objects at the 7th Berlin Biennale with many works only taking place or being ‘exhibited’ for a couple of days over the two-month

⁶⁹ “ArtWiki: Home,” *ArtWiki*, accessed May 02, 2013, <http://artwiki.org/ArtWiki>

⁷⁰ Warsza, “Open Call & Artwiki,” 13.

span of the Biennale.⁷¹ However, it was the inclusion of members from the Indignados and Occupy movements that perhaps constituted the most striking way Źmijewski had rethought the KW institute as an installation and his artistic mode of production as curation.

Indignados/Occupy Biennale, staged at the KW Institute, is the clearest example of how Źmijewski's curatorial style should be understood as part of his oeuvre and as a work of art in and of itself. Like *Repetition* and *Them* it was a staged encounter, an attempt to produce 'scenarios of dissidence,'⁷² or more specifically scenarios of dissensus. Źmijewski and his curatorial team turned over the main exhibition hall at KW to activists from Occupy Berlin, Barcelona, Madrid, Amsterdam, among others, to "provide a space without restrictions for activists to represent their work, advocate their positions, organize meetings and events, educate the public, and more."⁷³ Although Źmijewski and Warsza claim that Occupy Biennale was not supposed to be an art installation,⁷⁴ it still followed similar principles to those in Źmijewski's earlier works. It involved creating a situation with a specific location, and inviting a range of different participants to take part in his scenario. Like *Repetition*, *Occupy Biennale* took an event, or in this case a series of events which have significant ideological baggage, and worked with them to orchestrate a dissensual environment. The aim was to stage disagreement, not simply for its own sake, but rather because, like Rancière, Źmijewski seems to view disagreement as something essentially political. For him, the act of disruption is

⁷¹ For example, the *New World Summit* conceived by Rotterdam-based artist Jonas Staal is a concept of an alternative parliament made of organisations currently placed on international terrorist lists. Staal suggests, "The *New World Summit* aims to articulate a new kind of public political space where representatives of the organizations debate the limits of the current democratic system. The referents who are participating in the summit are not prosecuted, but see themselves as agents of fundamental democratic principles. The event itself is based on a notion of fundamental democracy pursuing the ideal of an open, egalitarian society" (Jonas Staal, "New World Summit," *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 26). This event was held between May 4 and May 5 2012. Another important event in the programme was the "Civil Initiative for the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime," which was included as a Biennale event and took place on June 2 2012. It was part of a civil initiative led by the Romani Elders advocating for the completion of the *Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialists* in Berlin. Construction of the memorial began in 2008 near Brandenburger Tor but was halted soon after due to conflict between the designer and the Berlin authority. See Tímea Junghaus, "Civil Initiative for the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime," *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 27.

⁷² The name of a Źmijewski exhibition at the Galerie de L'uqam in Montreal, curated by Véronique Leblanc and Louise Déry.

⁷³ Artur Źmijewski and Joanna Warsza, "Indignados/Occupy Biennale," *Berlin Biennale Newspaper: Act for Art, Forget Fear*, April, 2012, 11.

productive, as it forces reassessment of the shared common of the community and challenges consensus to the *police order*. In his artworks as well as his curation, Źmijewski is asking us to rethink or reassess the gallery, the museum, the exhibition hall as places of dissensus, “political spaces where we can create and conduct political activity.”⁷⁵

The activists taking part in the Biennale eventually protested against what they perceived as an experiment which penned them into “a human zoo with a viewing platform where viewers watch[ed] activists eat, assemble, fight and sleep.”⁷⁶ The activists made numerous demands, which included “all curatorial, administrative, communications and budgetary decisions were [to be] made collectively at bi-weekly assemblies. Additionally, the curators were no longer called curators but former curators.”⁷⁷ These proposals were agreed to by Źmijewski and Warsza, who decided to meet the demands of the activists. When questioned about the situation, Źmijewski responded, ‘Maybe the ‘human zoo’ was good, because they reacted, and it started a process.’⁷⁸ Clearly, Źmijewski would not have known how the activists would react to the scenario he placed them in; however, it is precisely this type of reaction, this rallying against the discomfort created by the encounter, that is garnered through his curatorial framework and that ties his work as a curator to his work as an artist.

The 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art was Źmijewski’s attempt to put his manifesto of dissensus, “The Social Applied Arts,” into practice in order to move his artistic mode of production to a larger arena and wider audience. In the catalogue, *Forget Fear*, Źmijewski states,

Making art, politics, and the philosophy of politics, are all entwined by artistic imagination into the knot of fantasy and action. But the goal is pragmatic – the creation of social and political facts; taking and

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ A statement by activists quoted in Christian Viveros-Fauné, “Biting the Hand That Feeds Them,” *The Art Newspaper*, 237, July-August (2012), accessed May 10, 2013. <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Biting-the-hand-that-feeds-them/26755>

⁷⁷ Christian Viveros-Fauné, “Biting the Hand That Feeds Them,” *The Art Newspaper*, 237, July-August (2012), accessed May 10, 2013. <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Biting-the-hand-that-feeds-them/26755>

⁷⁸ Artur Źmijewski, quoted in Viveros-Fauné, “Biting the Hand That Feeds Them,” *The Art Newspaper*, 237, July-August (2012), accessed May 10, 2013. <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Biting-the-hand-that-feeds-them/26755>

bearing responsibility for views publicly expressed and decisions taken; real action in the real world and a final farewell to the illusion of artistic immunity.⁷⁹

It seems that Źmijewski's artistic responsibility lies in blurring discursive boundaries and forcing a rethinking of and reinvestment in a perceptible reality. Louise Déry has identified congruence between Źmijewski's art theory and practice, and Jean-Luc Nancy's conceptualisation of community. Nancy highlights the problematic nature of the term 'community' within public discourse. For instance, it is used institutionally to signify the European Community, politically in reference to communism, eclesiastically in relation to communion and socially to represent the communal; it has thus, particularly in Europe, become a contested concept that is viewed with some suspicion.⁸⁰ In unpacking this problem by way of Georges Bataille, Nancy opts for what he considers an 'ungraceful' but necessary alternative: "being-in-common."⁸¹ Déry suggests that "Źmijewski has adopted the notion of the in-common, not only because it expresses the desire and need to base one's works on a social and political dimension, but also because it requires the artist to assume part of the responsibility for bringing reality into the shared space of art."⁸² It is this element of Źmijewski's artistic mode of production, his insistence on artistic responsibility and denunciation of artistic immunity, which has become more evident in his curation than even in his prior art practice. Indeed, what is dissensual about Źmijewski's work and what could also be read as the sense of responsibility behind his art practice and artistic mode of production, is the redistribution of boundaries between disciplines and specialisations. Rancière suggests that he "write[s] to shatter the boundaries that separate specialists – of philosophy, art, social sciences, etc. [...] for those who are trying to tear down the walls between specialities and competencies."⁸³ Źmijewski's art practice endeavours to do the same kind of dissensual work.

Game of Tag blurs the boundaries between staged performance and collective psychotherapy;

⁷⁹ Artur Źmijewski, "Forget Fear: Forward," in *Forget Fear: 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art*, eds. Artur Źmijewski and Joanna Warsza (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2012), 17-18.

⁸⁰ Déry, "Artur Źmijewski: The Issue of Reality," 53.

⁸¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor; trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 1-42.

⁸² Déry, "Artur Źmijewski: The Issue of Reality," 53.

“The Social Applied Arts” is a combination of criticism, political manifesto and art practice; and *Forget Fear* functions as curation and installation to extend Źmijewski’s artistic mode of production. All are inescapably political as they set about disrupting and reorganising the coordinates of the sensible by moving the disciplinary borders established by consensus.

⁸³ Rancière, "Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," 257.

Like a Prayer: The Case of Pussy Riot

Pussy Riot's performances can either be called dissident art or political action that engages art forms. Either way, our performances are a kind of civic activity amidst the repressions of a corporate political system that directs its power against basic human rights and civil and political liberties.

— Excerpt from the closing statement of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, one of the formerly-jailed members of *Pussy Riot*.

Żmijewski's co-curators at the Berlin Biennale, the Russian art collective Voina (War), claim that there is no line between their art practice and politics. Indeed, for them art does not have an end point, a place at which art stops and politics begins. Voina were formed in 2005 by Oleg Vorotnikov and Natalia Sokol and began to gain a public profile in 2008 through engagement in street protests, pranks, graffiti art, and the requisition of public space. The ambition of the collective is to “revive romantic Decembrist traditions of intellectual dissent through anti-war that is simultaneously constructive and destructive, applying monumental and non-commercial forms of absurdity, sarcasm and the carnivalesque”¹ in order to undermine “socio-political obscurantism,” “ultra-right reaction” and “outdated repressive-patriarchal socio-political symbols and ideologies.”² A prominent example of their form of art is the *Fuck for the heir Puppy Bear!* action, which garnered much public attention in Russia. On 28 February 2008, the day before Dmitry Medvedev was elected president of Russia, five couples performed various acts of sexual intercourse next to a taxidermied bear at the Moscow Biological Museum. The performance was photographed as well as recorded on video and disseminated on numerous online networks, like most of Voina’s other works.³ *Fuck for the heir Puppy Bear!* was a protest against Medvedev’s election and its title is a play on words, as Medvedev’s name derives from the Russian word for bear, yet the action also references a

¹ Olivier Johnson, “War on the Ru-net: Voina’s *Dick Captured by the FSB* as a Networked Performance,” *Third Text* 27, no. 5 (2013): 594. Johnson also suggests that Bruno Latour’s conceptualisation of the ‘iconoclash’ is a pertinent way of think about Voina’s art practice. Latour defines the iconoclash as “a moment of confusion when one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by the action for which there is no way to know, without further enquiry, whether it is construction or destruction.” See Bruno Latour, “What is Iconoclash?: Or is there a World Beyond the Image Wars?” *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art*, eds Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM; London: MIT Press, 2002): 14.

² “What is Voina,” *Free Voina*, accessed January 12, 2014, <http://en.free-voina.org/about>.

³ See Johnson, “War on the Ru-net: Voina’s *Dick Captured by the FSB* as a Networked Performance,” for more discussion of Voina’s use of online networks.

statement by the politician about Russia's need to increase its birth rate.⁴ After 2009 Voina factionalised into what effectively became discreet St. Petersburg and Moscow divisions, each of whom used the name Voina but performed separate actions and considered themselves separate entities. The St. Petersburg version of Voina, which involves Vorotnikov, Sokol, and 'president' Leo the Fucknut among around 200 others, was the faction working as co-curators of the Berlin Biennale. Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and her husband Pyotr Verzilov were early members of the St. Petersburg division and took part in the *Fuck for the heir Puppy Bear!* action. They went on to found the Moscow faction of Voina and it is from there that Tolokonnikova and other feminist activists formed the punk-art collective Pussy Riot in late 2011.

Although four other Pussy Riot performances had been recorded and disseminated online beforehand, the action that propelled three of its members to international notoriety was a short piece staged at Moscow's Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on 21 February 2012. On this date five members of Pussy Riot entered the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, discarded their bags and winter coats, and in various brightly coloured balaclavas, short-skirted dresses and tights walked through the gate which separates the nave from the altar and iconostasis and began to sing and dance, although witnesses disagree on the exact lyrics. Within about 40 seconds the women were forcibly removed from the area by security and worshippers. Shortly afterwards footage of this event was combined and edited with that of a performance at another Orthodox church two days earlier and the pre-recorded song "Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away" (also known as "Punk Prayer") was released on *Live Journal* and YouTube.⁵ On 3 March Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were arrested and charged with hooliganism and on 16 March Yekaterina Samutsevich was caught and charged with the same

⁴ Henrik Aeshna, "Sex Orgy in a Museum! – What do Pussy Riot and Voina have in Common? Fuck for the heir Puppy Bear!" *Medusa TV*, accessed January 13, 2014, <http://www.henrikaeshna.com/apps/blog/sexd-orgy-in-a-museum-what-does>.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the different videos see Polly McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media," *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, no. 9 (2013).

crime; all were denied bail and jailed for five months whilst awaiting trial.⁶ On 17 August 2012 the three women were charged with criminal hooliganism motivated by religious hatred and sentenced to two years imprisonment including hard labour. However, after Samutsevich hired a new lawyer and appealed the ruling she was released on probation, as she had been stopped by security before entering the iconostasis or soleas, an area in which only clergy are permitted, and was thus not deemed to have committed an act of criminal hooliganism.⁷

The aesthetico-political provocations of Pussy Riot were actualised in 2011; the same year as several other significant protest movements and acts of dissent that strongly affected the visual and political landscape of our contemporary world. These events provoked a reconfiguration of the way our social and political systems operate and a re-imagining of what they look like, which is an act that both Žižek and Jameson point out is sometimes more difficult and less likely than imagining the end of the world. In his book *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* Žižek argues that 2011 is particularly important in this regard, with events such as the Arab Spring, the Greek protests, the UK riots and the Occupy movement having all captured people's attention and imagination.⁸ I would also include the event of Pussy Riot in this grouping. Through a very particularised set of aesthetic practices they intervened in the exclusionary systems legitimised in Russian political life and foregrounded the way this exclusion is imagined, realised and effectively normalised in contemporary Russia and brought these issues to a large international audience. Rancière contends that the political is itself aesthetic as it can help bring about a reconfiguration of the visible and the audible in the shared common of the community. This is precisely why the event of Pussy Riot is of interest here, as they capture public interest through a combination of political and aesthetic means.

⁶ Information about their arrest and trial is freely available. For a range of articles with different areas of focus see for example: Anya Bernstein, "An Inadvertent Sacrifice: Body Politics and Sovereign Power in the Pussy Riot Affair," *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 1 (2013), Sergei Prozorov, "Pussy Riot and the Politics of Profanation: Parody, Performativity, Veridiction," *Political Studies* (2013), doi: 10.1111/1467-9248.12047, Catherine Schuler, "Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot." *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 1 (2013) or Yngvar Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy: Lost Contexts of Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer." *Popular Music and Society* 36, no. 1 (2013).

⁷ *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, directed by Mike Lerner and Maxim Pozdorovkin, Roast Beef Productions, 2013.

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London; New York: Verso, 2012).

For example, their intentional combination of politics and aesthetics in order to challenge systems of exclusion as well as their act of speaking when and where they have ‘no right’ to speak in the shared common of the community illustrate a striking act of dissensus. The artistic merits and abilities of Pussy Riot have been chauvinistically downplayed in many circles, by supporters as well as detractors,⁹ and the apparent lack of political motivation behind their acts was one of the primary lines of argumentation by prosecution and a key reason given by the court for their verdict.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Pussy Riot’s objectives were to create a rupture in Russia’s contemporary political landscape through aesthetic means, by modifying the visual and audible space in the *police order* and visualising and audibilising the invisible and inaudible.

Supplementing Rancière’s notion of dissensus with Mikhail Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of the carnivalesque and heteroglossia I argue that Pussy Riot’s utilisation of different speech types and variable modes of aesthetic practice are mobilised to challenge and create a rupture in Russia’s contemporary political landscape. I suggest that unpacking Pussy Riot’s specific mode of dissensus, particularly in relation to the religio-cultural context from which their provocations arose, is also usefully augmented with a discussion of some key ideas of Bakhtin. His notion of the carvinalesque which suggests a subversion of social hierarchies is valuable for thinking through the colour and humour of Pussy Riot’s performances but also the timing of their “Punk Prayer.” Furthermore, Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia refers to the concomitance of different speech types within a single language and a clash of social forces, between official and unofficial discourses. In a homologous manner, Pussy Riot utilise a combination of different speech types, modes of expression and generic forms to challenge the official discourse of the state and church.

⁹ See Olga Voronina, “Pussy Riot Steal the Stage in the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour: Punk Prayer on Trial Online and in Court,” *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, no. 9 (2013): 73-74.

¹⁰ Schuler, “Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot,” 11-12.

There are a myriad of places from which Pussy Riot draw influence for their particular mode of dissensus. By drawing on the Virgin Mary as protector and the figure of the Holy Fool (the figure who has the appearance of a fool but behind this exterior is a sincerity and truthfulness as well as the ability to speak prophetically), Pussy Riot situated their protest within a specific Russian cultural context whilst calling on punk, Riot Grrl, Guerrilla Girl and a superhero aesthetic (as masked crusaders) to open their actions up to a much wider audience and make their specific issue gain more universal recognition. These influences clearly affect the type and form of the performances and actions carried out by Pussy Riot. Indeed, there was a high level of intentionality and premeditation behind Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer," as in all their performances; however, it was not intentionality motivated by religious hatred as the prosecution argued,¹¹ but rather a political protest against the current regime that engaged with and involved artistic forms of display and distribution. As I have mentioned, Pussy Riot grew out of the Moscow wing of Voina and harbour many of the same social beliefs, yet with a clearer and more overtly feminist focus. They formed as a collective in part as a response to Vladimir Putin's announcement that he would run for a third term as president (he had previously served two terms as president between 2000 and 2008 and one term as prime minister between 2008 and 2012 with Medvedev as president, although many critics claimed Putin effectively remained leader).¹² Like Voina, Pussy Riot maintain a strong online presence on a range of social media platforms and are openly critical of the Putin administration's anti-LGBT legislation. In a statement about their agenda Pussy Riot assert they stand for:

[F]eminism; resistance to organs of social control; the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals; anti-Putinism and the radical decentralization of the organs of power; preservation of the Khimkin forest; and the relocation of the Russian capital to Eastern Siberia.¹³

¹¹ We will see that the court were not particularly interested in hearing 'a defense' or counter argument. See for example, Prozorov, "Pussy Riot and the Politics of Profanation: Parody, Performativity, Veridiction," or Schuler, "Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot."

¹² Yngvar Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy: Lost Contexts of Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer," *Popular Music and Society* 36, no. 1 (2013), 122.

¹³ Pussy Riot quoted in Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy: Lost Contexts of Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer," 122.

These became the core principles around which the idea of Pussy Riot evolved and how they presented themselves to the world: as an anonymous collective that endorsed ideas rather than individual personalities.

There is a clear and acknowledged link between Pussy Riot and two US-based feminist movements, the art collective the Guerrilla Girls and the punk subculture Riot Grrrl prominent from the early to late 1990s. The Guerrilla Girls were founded in New York in 1985 as anonymous protest art collective whose major concerns were gender and racial inequality. The ‘art world’ and art institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (New York) or the Tate Modern (London) became significant targets. According to their website the Guerrilla Girls currently have over 100 active members with each taking on a pseudonym, which often draws on dead female artists including Frida Kahlo, Käthe Kollwitz and Hannah Höch, thereby effectively re-integrating these names back into the art scene.¹⁴ They protect their identities through the use of masks, specifically large gorilla masks, a subversion of the idea of masculinity frequently associated with the gorilla in popular culture, King Kong serving as a prime example of this. Their name also evokes the notion of a guerrilla combatant, a member of a clandestine force fighting in an unauthorised army. The Guerrilla Girls claim they are “feminist masked avengers in the tradition of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Wonder Woman and Batman.”¹⁵ The parallels between the masked superhero motif adopted by both Pussy Riot and the Guerrilla Girls are clear, as both encourage a form of anonymous civil disobedience in the name of a common good, i.e. speaking out for excluded members of society. In an interview with Charles Clover of the *Financial Times* shortly after the arrest of the members, one Pussy Riot activist referred to only as Shayba stated,

¹⁴ “Home Page,” *Guerrilla Girls*, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Masks are our visual style and a core principle of the group. We don't want people to focus on us as individuals or biographies. We want people to look at us as an idea [...]. We want people to think that anyone you see walking down the street can be a member of Pussy Riot.¹⁶

Thus, like the gorilla mask utilised by the Guerrilla Girls, the brightly coloured balaclavas employed by Pussy Riot have become an easily identifiable symbol that stands in for feminist, pro-LGBT and anti-Putin sentiment. It is a visual shorthand for an idea or set of principles that is recognisable in street protest, online and in different places around the world. However, a significant difference between the Guerrilla Girls and Pussy Riot is that the Guerrilla Girls' primary mode of political protest is an attack on the art world itself. By contrast, Pussy Riot's activism is specifically aimed at organs of political power within Russian society, e.g. the government and the church, using aesthetic techniques to do so.

Perhaps the most oft cited influence on Pussy Riot, especially in media from the US and UK, is punk, more specifically the punk subcultural movement Riot Grrrl and in particular the band Bikini Kill. Pussy Riot's 11-minute and 6-song album "Kill the Sexist," only available as a free download, is a likely reference to the independent record label that promoted Riot Grrrl bands such as Bikini Kill. The short, fast, aggressive, raw, guitar-driven songs with politically charged, confrontational lyrics focused on female empowerment are clear hallmarks of the Riot Grrrl aesthetic. Bikini Kill member Kathleen Hanna has publically supported Pussy Riot after their arrest and openly stated she would like to tour with them.¹⁷ However, in an email interview with *The St. Petersburg Times* just weeks before their "Punk Prayer" performance Pussy Riot acknowledge debt to Riot Grrrl but differentiate themselves at the same time:

What we have in common is impudence, politically loaded lyrics, the importance of feminist discourse and a non-standard female image. The difference is that Bikini Kill performed at specific music venues, while we hold unsanctioned concerts. On the whole, Riot Grrrl was closely linked to Western cultural institutions, whose equivalents don't exist in Russia.¹⁸

¹⁶ Shayba quoted in Charles Clover, "Pussy Riot Dig Claws into Putin," *Financial Times*, March 16, 2012, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/8efa1f1e-6f82-11e1-b3f9-00144feab49a.html#axzz2rXxTzdIs>.

¹⁷ Jenn Pelly, "'We Are All Pussy Riot': Kathleen Hanna Speaks on the Jailed Feminist Punk Group," *Pitchfork*, August 15, 2012, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://pitchfork.com/news/47516-interview-kathleen-hanna-on-pussy-riot/>.

¹⁸ Pussy Riot quoted in Chernov, Sergey, "Female Fury." *The St. Petersburg Times*, February 01, 2012, accessed January 27, 2014, http://sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=35092.

Indeed, *Pussy Riot* is not part of any particular punk scene and is not connected with punk networks in Moscow or other parts of Russia, nor do they have members in other punk bands.¹⁹ Punk as an idea is DIY and open to anyone who cares to be involved in it; as a musical form, punk is both understandable and recognisable, and for *Pussy Riot* is one of the numerous means through which to actualise their particular mode of dissensus. The title of their best known action, “Punk Prayer”, certainly indicates this. However, punk is a vehicle of social protest for *Pussy Riot* rather than a means unto itself: they are not rebelling against the music industry as such, but using a musical form to spark public debate around a set of clearly stated principles.

Punk’s ‘authenticity,’ or at least the authenticity ascribed to it, is frequently linked to ideas of ‘liveness’, spontaneity and a DIY aesthetic.²⁰ *Pussy Riot*’s actions certainly fall into the category of a DIY aesthetic; however, although the videos posted on YouTube and *Live Journal* may give the appearance of spontaneity and haphazardness, these videos are quite carefully constructed. The actions are pre-planned and well-orchestrated performances in highly public places. Each performance is videotaped and photographed, sometimes in multiple locations, as is the case with “Punk Prayer”. The videos are carefully edited and include audio from the performance setting mixed, for the most part, with pre-recorded songs and samples from other tracks. The videos, photographs, written accounts of the performances, manifesto-like blog posts and interviews relating to the wider objectives of the actions are quickly disseminated online and archived in *pussy_riot Live Journal* in what Polly McMichael has described as a “multimedia event par excellence.”²¹ A total of six songs were posted online before the arrest, with five accompanying videos, and a seventh song and sixth video were released on the day of the sentencing. Their first song, “Kill the Sexist,” was made public on 1 October 2011 when Samutsevich and Tolokonnikova, as part of Voina, spoke at a lecture

¹⁹ Steinholt, “Kitten Heresy: Lost Contexts of Pussy Riot’s Punk Prayer,” 120-121.

²⁰ McMichael, “Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media.” For an in-depth discussion on music, liveness and authenticity see Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatised Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

on punk feminism and introduced it as a new work from a punk collective called Pussy Riot.²²

The first video, “Release the Cobblestones,” was released on 7 November on the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The video involves footage of the band performing atop subways and trolley cars, and the music includes samples from the British Oi! band the Angelic Upstarts’ song “Police Oppression.” The lyrics of “Release the Cobblestones” call for mass protest against the fact that Putin and Medvedev plan to effectively swap jobs again amid calls of fraud and corruption. The most oft quoted line asserts, “Egyptian air is healthy for your lungs/Turn Red Square into Tahrir.”²³ “Kropotkin Vodka,” a third song whose title refers to Pyotr Kropotkin, one of the founders of anarchism, was released on 1 December, three days prior to the parliamentary elections, which provoked large-scale and widespread public protest.²⁴ The video shows footage of numerous ‘impromptu’ performances in high-end fashion boutiques and fancy restaurants, while members discharge a fire extinguisher into air. Shortly after the anti-Putin protests in which over 100,000 people turned out in freezing temperatures, Pussy Riot performed on top of a garage next to a detention centre where political prisoners and opposition activists were being held whilst those behind bars cheered them on.²⁵ A video called “Death to Prison, Freedom to Protests” was subsequently released online. In what Mansur Mirovaley describes as their “breakthrough performance” eight members of Pussy Riot staged the song “Putin Zassal” (translated variously as “Putin Chickened Out”, “Putin Got Scared” and “Putin Pissed Himself”) in Red Square. The members were arrested and released shortly afterward on misdemeanour charges.²⁶

It was the “Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away”/“Punk Prayer” action and accompanying video that brought Pussy Riot to the attention of both Russian and international media. The video combines footage from two separate actions, on 19 February 2012 at Yelokhovo Cathedral and

²¹ McMichael, “Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media,” 101.

²² Ibid., 103.

²³ Mansur Mirovaley, “A Guide to Pussy Riot’s Oeuvre,” *Daily Tribune*, August 18, 2012, accessed on January 20, 2014, <http://www.dailytribune.com/article/20120818/NEWS05/120819465/a-guide-to-pussy-riot-s-oeuvre>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

on 21 February 2012 at Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. In the first the group members have guitars, amplifiers and microphones, although commentators differ in opinion on whether or not these were actually plugged in. As mentioned, the second action, which caused much of the controversy, involved the colourfully attired women making the sign of the cross, performing a prostration and then dancing in front of the altar and iconostasis before being removed by security. Like all their other videos, the audio/music track was inserted in the editing process and therefore what we hear on the video is not what worshippers would have heard, a fact both misrepresented at the trial and many assessments of the event.²⁷ One key element of the trial and sentencing was the fact Tolokonnikova, Alyokhina and Samutsevich were charged with criminal hooliganism motivated by religious hatred; they were effectively charged with a ‘hate crime’ or act of extremism and many supporters condemned their actions as blasphemous or at least disrespectful, even if they considered the sentencing unjust or overly severe.²⁸ An examination of the liturgical context and traditions that Pussy Riot both drew on and subverted is thus pivotal to understanding the aesthetic, political, and cultural significance of the work and the debates that it provoked.

In late 2011, a relic claimed to be the Belt of the Virgin Mary was hosted by the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kyrill, used this opportunity to encourage more participation in Church life and offered divine grace from Mary for those who venerated the Belt.²⁹ The figure of the Virgin Mary holds a very important place in the Russian Orthodox tradition, not only as the Mother of God, but also as a protector, one who intervenes at times of crisis and whom believers appeal to at a time of political turmoil to help re-establish social and political order.³⁰ The Church’s offer of divine grace was complicated somewhat by several issues regarding Patriarch Kyrill, notably his

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ McMichael, “Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media,” 108-109.

²⁸ Schuler, “Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot.”

²⁹ Nicholas Denysenko, “An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot’s Punk Performance in Moscow,”

Journal of the American Academy of Religion 81, no. 4 (2013): 1066-1067.

³⁰ Ibid., 1074-1075.

perceived collusion with the state and his amassing of significant wealth; he is rumoured to own a US\$30,000 watch.³¹ In early February 2012 Patriarch Kyrill also made controversial statements endorsing Putin's campaign for president by criticising the opposition and describing the Putin era as a "miracle of God."³² The Pussy Riot action, which culminated on 21 February 2012, was a protest against these very events and therefore incorporated aspects from the Orthodox tradition.

The "Punk Prayer" video opens with a choral arrangement with music adapted from the refrain ("Ava Maria") of Sergei Rachmaninov's *Vigil*.³³ Altogether, the choral arrangement features thrice in the less-than-two-minute song and is interspersed with *Pussy Riot's* more familiar punk verses.³⁴ The song is based around a petition or prayer to the Virgin Mary. She is not only asked to become a feminist but also to drive Putin out of power and support the protest against corruption in both church and state and the collusion between the two. Doing prostrations, making the sign of the cross, and using a familiar choral refrain, albeit with different lyrics, was intended to demonstrate a "familiarity with and veneration of Orthodox

³¹ Ibid., 1067.

³² Gleb Bryanski, "Russian Patriarch Calls Putin Era 'Miracle of God.'" *Reuters*, February 08, 2012, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/08/oukwd-uk-russia-putin-religion-idAFTR81722Y20120208>.

³³ Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot's Punk Performance in Moscow," 1071.

³⁴ *Pussy Riot* quoted in Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot's Punk Performance in Moscow," 1069.

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away
Put Putin away, put Putin away
(end chorus)

Black robe, golden epaulettes
All parishioners crawl to bow
The phantom of liberty is in heaven
Gay-pride sent to Siberia in chains

The head of the KGB, their chief saint,
Leads protesters to prison under escort
In order not to offend His Holiness
Women must give birth and love

Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
(Chorus)

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist
Become a feminist, become a feminist
(end chorus)

The Church's praise of rotten dictators
The cross-bearer procession of black limousines
A teacher-preacher will meet you at school
Go to class - bring him money!

Patriarch Gundyayev believes in Putin
Bitch, better believe in God instead
The belt of the Virgin can't replace mass-meetings
Mary, Mother of God, is with us in protest!
(Chorus)

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away
Put Putin away, put Putin away.

forms of piety and prayer”³⁵ and also to display a “proper ritual position in approaching Mary,”³⁶ a position that reveals a good understanding of Mary’s status within Orthodox liturgy and tradition, even if the prayer is untraditional. Making appeals to the Virgin Mary in times of political unrest to remove improper leadership and restoring things to their correct order has a long history within the Russia and the Orthodox tradition and can be traced back to medieval Byzantium.³⁷ Patriarch Kyrill had endeavoured to reignite this tradition with the promise of divine grace and the healing power he attributed to the Belt of Mary. He invited the populace to reclaim their religious identity, which in part was lost in Russia during the Soviet period.³⁸ Pussy Riot took advantage of the renewed interest in and public discussion of the Virgin Mary’s supposed power, but subverted the message of the Patriarch. Both Pussy Riot and Kyrill endowed Mary with the capacity to change or correct flaws and inherent societal problems. On the one hand, Kyrill placed the blame on the residual effects of the Soviet regime, leading to the decline of Russians living as ‘Christian,’ whilst Pussy Riot condemned Putin and the Patriarch for corruption and propping up a system that excludes numerous groups, such as LGBT. However, both appealed to Mary, one from an included ecclesial position and the other from an excluded extra-ecclesial one. Pussy Riot’s petition is thus a dissensual one; they have no part in the shared common of the community, they have no official right to speak, but they do so, and they speak for those who are excluded from this community. They reclaim the idea of the Virgin Mary, as protector of the people, and redistribute this idea and challenge both church and government leadership via non-ecclesiastical, aesthetic means.

³⁵ Denysenko, “An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot’s Punk Performance in Moscow,” 1071.

³⁶ Ibid., 1072.

³⁷ Ibid., 1075-1076.

³⁸ Ibid., 1076-1077. Denysenko asserts: “Kyrill and the Church strategically reintroduce Mary as the one through whom hope is delivered and prayers are answered, drawing upon the rich Russian and Byzantine Marian heritage. Kyrill also alludes to the restoration of holy Rus’: the image of a reconstituted society of Holy Rus’ populated by faithful people, gathered together in hope by their Mother, Mary. Kyrill’s strategy was to use the visit of the Belt as the event stimulating such faith by reintroducing the people to the person and image of Mary deeply imprinted upon Russian history and theology. Kyrill claimed that miracles had occurred during the course of the Belt visit and that some had converted to Christianity. When one accounts for the three million people who responded to the Church’s invitation and venerated Mary’s Belt, one could argue that this strategy enjoyed initial success, based simply on the response of the people to the invitation.”

The Pussy Riot performance also conjures up the figure of the Holy Fool, who is preeminent in the Orthodox tradition and is an important character in Russian literature and culture. The Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware outlines numerous significant attributes of the Holy Fool which are found in Orthodox hagiography. He asserts,

By virtue of his inner freedom, through his laughter and his playfulness, [...] the Holy Fool] “mocks” and calls in question any attempt to reduce the Christian life to the level of respectability and conventional moral standards. He mocks all forms of legalism that turn Christianity into a code of “rules” [...] he bears witness to the preeminent value of persons rather than rules.³⁹

This figure has the appearance of a fool but behind this exterior is a sincerity and truthfulness as well as the ability to speak prophetically.⁴⁰ Nicholas Denysenko has suggested that, although many Orthodox leaders have condemned Pussy Riot’s actions, others have “hailed the women as modern incarnations of the Holy Fool.”⁴¹ The members of Pussy Riot certainly demonstrated elements of playfulness, particularly with respect to their clothing and masks, and a challenge to the pre-eminence of rules over the value of people and a mockery of those who uphold such rules. The fact they likely knew their actions would result in heavy punishment is also suggestive of the inner freedom ascribed to the Holy Fool. Indeed, in her closing statement to the court Tolokonnikova clearly situates Pussy Riot within this context: “We were searching for real sincerity and simplicity, and we found these qualities in the *yurodstvo* [the holy foolishness] of punk.”⁴² Pussy Riot are thus mobilising and modernising a figure and idea central to the liturgy of the church they are critiquing. Rather than trying to undermine the faith of believers, they are challenging the institution of the church and its collusion with the state.

The timing of the performance at Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on 21 February 2012 was chosen for its significance as the last day of *Maslenitsa* (similar to Mardi Gras), the final (church) authorised day of carnival festivities before Ash Wednesday. Falling in Shrovetide

³⁹ Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom: Collected Works, Vol. 1* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 169.

⁴⁰ Dana Heller and Elena Volkova, "The Holy Fool in Russian and American Culture: A Dialogue," *American Studies International* 49, no. 1&2 (2003): 154.

⁴¹ Denysenko, “An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot’s Punk Performance in Moscow,” 1063.

week, the action took place at a time “when church tradition allows and even encourages carnival-like escapades and jokes.”⁴³ We can thus view the appeal to the Virgin Mary from an extra-ecclesiastical position and their engagement with the figure of the Holy Fool as a challenge to social hierarchies and order, which is itself exemplary of the carnivalesque as formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin writes,

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act [...] The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it [...] or any other form of inequality among people.⁴⁴

The carnivalesque is itself a dissensual concept, since it calls for disrupting the *police order*, the system which legitimates who can speak and where. In its suspension of hierarchical structures, the carnivalesque posits the equality of any speaking being with another, an idea that Pussy Riot have actualised through their performances. Not only are leaders such as Putin and Kyrill symbolically mocked and dethroned, as the ritualistic decrowning of the king is an important symbol of the carnival,⁴⁵ but their performances have also brought people together through continued protest and support. The masks and bright colours suggest a playfulness and embodiment of ‘carnival spirit,’ yet their encouragement of anonymity offers a visual code that is non-exclusionary, which in turn promotes participation.

One will have noticed the themes of playfulness, laughter, and mockery repeated in the above discussions about the carnivalesque, holy foolery and indeed punk. However, this should not be viewed as contrary to the seriousness or sincerity with which Pussy Riot make their protest; after all, Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina spent nearly two years in prison as a consequence of

⁴² Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, “Pussy Riot Closing Statements,” *n+1*, accessed January 18, 2014, <http://nplusonemag.com/pussy-riot-closing-statements>.

⁴³ Mirovalev, “A Guide to Pussy Riot's Oeuvre.”

⁴⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 122-123.

⁴⁵ Claire Tancons, “Carnival to Commons: Pussy Riot Punk Protest and the Exercise of Democratic Culture,” *E-flux Journal*, 37 (2012), accessed January 18, 2014, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/carnival-to-commons-pussy-riot-punk-protest-and-the-exercise-of-democratic-culture/>.

their actions and beliefs.⁴⁶ Furthermore, as Sergei Prozorov argues, the humour and parody of Pussy Riot contrasts to the style of comedic critique from the Soviet period, *styob* (meaning jibe), which is still a popular form of political commentary amongst Russian intellectuals and artists nowadays.⁴⁷ Prozorov contends that what characterises *styob* is a kind of ironic distancing from structures of authority and the “subjection of the official discourse to a de-sublimating parody that deprives it of both sense and force.”⁴⁸ This may provide the subject partaking in this act with a freeing experience but leaves the thing being parodied, the system itself, unchanged and unaffected. In the Soviet era, it was a method of creating a “liveable space” in a system that seemed “here to stay.”⁴⁹ According to Prozorov, *styob* became less prominent in the Gorbachev era as the ideological grip of the party weakened and it became less necessary, so to speak. However, in the Putin era there has been a return to this form of parody as a method of critique. Prozorov further argues that, although the Soviet regime stopped believing in its own maxims, it hid this behind a façade of strict ideology, yet under Putin the state has even stopped pretending to believe in its own ideological façade. He thus concludes:

In this manner, *styob* has arguably become the true ideology of post-communist Russia, whose function is to make laughable everything, including the ruling regime but also every instance of resistance and dissent, which find each other acceptable only in so far as neither of them is ultimately ‘for real.’⁵⁰

Like Laibach, Pussy Riot use humour as a form of critique, but do not separate themselves from the ruling ideology through ironic distancing. They confront it in a serious and calculated manner. Their protests are deliberate and well planned and they employ a range of aesthetic strategies in their artistic practice in order to carry them out. By drawing on the Virgin Mary as protector and the figure of the Holy Fool, Pussy Riot situated their protest within a

⁴⁶ See for example the closing statements of the two women at their trial for hooliganism. “We are distressed that the great and luminous Christian philosophy is being used so shabbily. We are very angry that something beautiful is being spoiled. It still makes us angry and we find it very painful to watch.” Tolokonnikova, “Pussy Riot Closing Statements.”

“Our motivation is more eloquently expressed in the words of the Gospel ‘For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened’. I, and all of us, sincerely believe that it will be opened for us. But, alas, so far the bars are closed on us.” Maria Alyokhina, “Pussy Riot Closing Statements,” *n+1*, accessed January 18, 2014, <http://nplusonemag.com/pussy-riot-closing-statements>.

⁴⁷ Prozorov, “Pussy Riot and the Politics of Profanation: Parody, Performativity, Veridiction,” 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

particular cultural context whilst calling on punk, Riot Grrl, Guerrilla Girl and a superhero aesthetic to help open their actions up to a much wider audience and make their specific issue gain more universal recognition.

In his essay “Discourse in the Novel” Bakhtin suggests that novelistic form can be defined “as a diversity of social speech types [...] and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized.”⁵¹ Indeed, he argues that the modern novel is ideally suited to exploring the concept of heteroglossia, which refers to the coexistence of different speech types within a single language, for instance social dialects, professional jargon, or the language of authorities such as the church or state bureaucracies.⁵² For Bakhtin all speech forms or types are ideologically saturated and all exist within what he terms heteroglossia. However, the “authoritative discourse” of certain language types such as religious dogma are “opposed to the realities of heteroglossia,”⁵³ and thus place limits on what can be said and how it can be said. Bakhtin further contends,

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized).⁵⁴

What is achieved in the novel is a collision of different speech types and a clash of or disagreement between social forces, between official (authoritative) and unofficial discourses. Drawing on similar techniques, Pussy Riot utilise a combination of different speech types, the language of religion and punk for instance and a range of aesthetics forms to challenge and intervene in the official discourse of the state and church. They use heteroglossic methods to promote heteroglossic ends: equality amongst differently situated speaking beings. In doing so, they are practicing a particular mode of dissensus that speaks to specific local concerns but

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262.

⁵² Ibid., 262-263.

⁵³ Ibid., 270.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 263.

does so in a manner and form that promotes heterogeneity and challenges the discursive borders that effectively negate it.

Conclusion

The artworks and art events examined in this project vary in style and form, and range from popular music to political theatre. Each artwork and artist is responding, in their own way, to a specific set of cultural and political contexts and situations, shaped by particular histories and set of traumas, such as the desubjectification of Roma or the rise of the far-right in Austria. Broadly speaking, each work is a reaction to the shifting political landscape in post-Berlin wall Europe. Each artist attempts to challenge the consensual logic of *police order*, one in which the rhetoric of a borderless world masks a global system of borders and exclusion. Caitlin Manning and Julie Shackford-Bradley argue that the “master narrative of globalization combines political, economic, and cultural terms to project a singular linear progression toward industrialization and capitalism, modernity and urbanization, and secular democracy and a high-tech enhanced middle-class lifestyle.”¹ It is this kind of narrative that Rancière contends forecloses political subjectification as it offers itself up as “clear-cut and irrefutable”² way in which to organise the world whilst simultaneously suggesting there is no alternative to this point of view. He asserts:

The consensus that governs us is a machine of power insofar as it is a machine of vision. It pretends to verify only what everyone can see by adjusting two propositions on the state of the world: one which says that we are finally at peace, and the other which announces the condition of this peace: the recognition that there is only what there is.³

Dissensus, on the other hand, involves disrupting the perceptual underpinning of this order, in this case the master narrative of globalisation, and challenging its apparent naturalness. It is an attempt to evoke a perspectival reversal by trying to bring about a reconfiguration of the visible and the audible in the shared common of the community. Therefore, although many of the works appear different from one another in form and content, there is an underlying common feature that is an attempt at a redistribution of the sensible.

¹ Caitlin Manning and Julie Shackford-Bradley, “Global Subjects in Motion: Strategies for Representing Globalization in Film,” *Journal of Film and Video* 62, No. 3 (2010): 36.

² Rancière, *Dissensus: On Aesthetics and Politics*, 144.

³ Jacques Rancière, quoted in Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 164.

In an interview for *Artforum*, Rancière, discusses what he maintains are moments of dissensus enacted in the work of photographer Sophie Ristelhueber and filmmaker Pedro Costa: “These are a few examples – not models to imitate but illustrations of what ‘dissensus’ might signify: a way of reconstructing the relationship between places and identities, spectacles and gazes, proximities and distances.”⁴ Rancière does not try to systematise his notion of dissensus, or his theory in general, but rather points to such moments in which dissensus is staged. Through different examples he attempts theorise and demonstrate how art can be political by suggesting that it can provide “a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible.”⁵ Rather than provide a single model for dissensus, Rancière endeavours to create space for dialogue and disagreement to occur and thereby to free artists, critics and scholars of discursive, disciplinary and institutional restrictions. He further asserts that the “work of dissensus is to always re-examine the boundaries between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical.”⁶ Indeed, what might be disruptive in one context does not necessarily translate into subversion in another context. Therefore, institutionalising what constitutes dissensus, what it looks like and how it must be enacted becomes counterproductive. As we have seen, supplementing the concept of dissensus with, for instance, the ideas of Agamben, Žižek or Derrida is required in order to provide more specificity in the readings of each of the case studies selected can house a range of theoretical approaches, as the idea itself is open to supplementation and promotes heterogeneity, discussion and disagreement. This, I would argue, is precisely why Rancière does not systematise his concept and close it off to additional development. Each chapter here, therefore, endeavours to elaborate on a different mode of dissensual practice and different form in which dissensus may take in a contemporary European context. The concept of

⁴ Rancière, “Art of the Possible,” 261.

⁵ Rancière, *Dissensus: On Aesthetics and Politics*, 140.

⁶ Rancière, “Art of the Possible,” 266.

dissensus is thus extended in a variety of ways through an analysis of the artworks themselves, and the supplemental theoretical material incorporated illustrates the specificity of each piece.

The opening chapter focuses on how economic globalisation has become a consensual logic of the *police order* in the post-1989 era. It explores how the purported ‘end of history’ effectively signifies an end of alternatives and posits that global capitalism and (neo)liberal democracy is the ‘clear cut and irrefutable’ way to arrange and partition society. In order to develop a cartography of this police distribution of the sensible within a European context I sketch out four broad areas to illuminate and extend this discussion: the Third Way and human rights; the new walls of globalisation; globalisation and altermondialisation; haunting, trauma and the spectres of repressed history. The idea that we live in a post-ideological world in which political and economic systems are simply ‘how they are’ is itself ideological and I utilise Žižek’s critique of Third Way ideology and its commandeering of the idea of human rights to disguise the promotion of free market capitalism. Both Badiou and Balibar are used to discuss the opening of borders throughout Europe and the simultaneous development of new walls which are both physical and ideological. Balibar asserts, “Borders are vacillating. This does not mean that they are disappearing. Less than ever is the contemporary world a ‘world without borders.’”⁷ The physical, ideological, racial and economic borders that partition our contemporary landscape, which both include and exclude people from the shared common of the community, are central to the thesis as it is precisely such borders that the practice of dissensus attempts to disrupt. Derrida offers us an alternative way of thinking about globalisation by foregrounding the concept of the world (*le monde*) over the globe, as in *mondialisation* over globalisation. He argues that, etymologically, the word ‘globe’ implies a closed and finite system that proffers the idea of completeness, which again we see is a logic that admits no alternative. On the other hand, the idea of the world “gestures towards a history, it has a memory that distinguishes it from that of the globe, of the universe, of Earth.”⁸ Derrida

⁷ Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, 92.

⁸ Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews*, 374.

argues that there is an openness to the concept of mondialisation that distinguishes it from globalisation, since inherent within it is the notion of an ‘alter,’ an other or alternative way of forming the world (indeed, world-forming is one of the translations of *mondialisation*).

Derrida’s ideas of spectrality and haunting are also useful to think through the return of the historical repressed in Europe. In his *Specters of Marx* he foregoes the importance of inheriting the idea of responsibility and spirit of radical critique from Marx and I would suggest that many of the works discussed here demonstrate a need to critique the consensual logic(s) of their current situations. Both Agamben and Badiou also help navigate this concept of a return of repressed history, albeit in quite different ways. Agamben illustrates how the Nazi concentration camps still haunt the contemporary world and impact on our political, social and cultural landscape. Agamben’s concept of bare life, a life excluded from commonality with other living beings, which he discusses in relation to the camp, manifests itself in numerous artworks studied here, particularly in regard to the work of Schlingensief and Żmijewski. Badiou, on the other hand, applies Freud’s notion of the uncanny to a collective historical context. He argues that five formal characteristics of Pétain’s Vichy regime return, reconfigured, in the language of Sarkozy’s 2007 electoral campaign. Although Badiou’s example is specific to France we have seen how this positioning of the uncanny within a socio-political framework is highly relevant to many European, and likely other, contexts.

Chapters Two and Three deal quite specifically with repressed history, in the political sense of the term, as the history of Roma desubjectification under Nazism and beyond is often conspicuously absent from many recorded histories. I chose to approach this repressed history from two perspectives: the non-Roma representation of Roma in relation to Emir Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies* and the ‘counter-images’ expressed through Roma self-presentation in relation to 2nd Roma Pavilion, *Call the Witness*, at the 2011 Venice Biennale. In the chapter on Kusturica’s film I argued that *Time of the Gypsies* is example of an ambivalent version of

the distribution of the sensible in that it reproduces and creates knowledge about Roma which legitimises their exclusion from the shared common of the community. I integrated both Bhabha and Said's conceptualisations of the stereotype in order to provide a more specific analysis of this form of knowledge production and distribution. Furthermore, Iordanova and Van de Port's discussion of the concept of projective identification, defining oneself by representing the other, proved useful for locating this analysis of the 'distribution of the Gypsy sensible' within a Balkan, and specifically Serb imaginary.

An important component of dissensus occurs when those who have no part, who do not count as speaking beings in the shared common of the community, take part and speak. In the "Witness to the Devouring" chapter I argue that the *Call the Witness* pavilion at the Venice Biennale attempts to do precisely this, and bears witness to Roma desubjectification and exclusion. The idea of witnessing and testimony was central to the conceptualisation of the pavilion, as the title indicates, and Agamben's detailed exposition of these two concepts proved vital to unpacking the different artwork-testimonies presented at the pavilion. Agamben argues that central to the very logic (and epistemology) of testimony is the notion of authorship and creation. Our modern understanding of the word 'author' derives from the idea of an authority, someone intervenes on behalf another person who cannot speak. In this way, testimony helps bring something into being that could not otherwise have been created. For Agamben, every author is a co-author and every creator is a co-creator, for inherent to the idea of testimony is the authorship and creation of someone who speaks, who is audible, but who speaks in the name of inaudibility. I argue that the artworks focused on in this chapter, and in many ways the pavilion itself, exhibit how witnessing and testimony can be a dissensual act.

Laibach and NSK's particular mode of dissensual practice is closely tied to the concept of overidentification. This idea is taken from psychoanalysis and was initially coined, by Žižek, as an aesthetico-political concept in relation to Laibach. Overidentification is a method by which to dispute particular distributions of the sensible, which in turn have clearly changed

since Laibach initially came into being. Indeed, Laibach's dissensual strategy is to take the language and symbols of the dominant ideology, be it totalitarianism or neoliberalism, more seriously than this ideology takes itself in order to uncover obscene underside of this ruling ideology. Laibach function to disrupt the consensus of the *police order* in a long-running project that is about rethinking and challenging myths and narratives. Furthermore, Laibach encourage the meeting of heterogeneous voices, a key element of dissensus, as they incorporate, often simultaneously, many different systemic voices in their work. This changes the meaning of each component when they are placed next to each other, for instance, by drawing parallels between pleasure of pop culture and fascist modulations.

In *Bitte liebt Österreich* Schlingensief also engages in overidentification as one his strategies of dissensus. However, I argue that his primary dissensual strategy is to enact the discourse of unrepresentability in order to represent the unrepresented, those usually excluded from the inclusive public sphere. Schlingensief reproduces 'interactive concentration camps' in order to make visible those who are invisible (refugees and asylum-seekers). Indeed, Schlingensief's project engages with the politics of representation and unrepresentability on several key levels. Aesthetic representation is illustrated by the fact that the asylum-seekers were captured live on camera and then these images were streamed as a visible representation on the computer or TV screen. Schlingensief also staged a form of political representation as the continuous live streams enabled the asylum-seekers to speak for themselves, and in effect to represent themselves, without having their voices mediated by someone else. It was through the process of (aesthetic) mediation that their voices could be heard (politically) unmediated.

With *Hamlet* Schlingensief's mode of dissensus is what can be termed radical deradicalisation. Although deradicalising neo-Nazis could be viewed as adhering to the logic of consensus, I suggest most liberal democracies would prefer the neo-Nazis in their society to be deradicalised, and it is Schlingensief's method of addressing this process that I argue is dissensual. Firstly, Schlingensief unhinges the original text of *Hamlet* and does injustice to it

by fracturing and disrupting it by staging a neo-Nazi confession in place of the mouse-trap scene. Secondly, he forces the primarily ‘left-liberal’ audience, particularly in the Berlin performance, to encounter a fear of the alien within (the neo-Nazis don’t come from another place or speak a different language). Furthermore, Schlingensief forces the very people who promote deradicalisation and reintegration to confront the fact that this reintegration cannot simply happen ‘over there,’ so to speak; it cannot happen at a distance. As we have seen, Žižek argues that under the model of liberal tolerance “the Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive,”⁹ in line with which Schlingensief posits that if deradicalisation and reintegration is to be actualised, then the Other must intrude.

At the 2012 Berlin Biennale Artur Żmijewski endeavoured both to draw out and foreground the intersections between art and political events such as the Arab Spring, the Greek protests and the Occupy movement. He not only pointed to the significance of politics for art and the fact that artists should not ignore the political in their art practice, but also contended, like Rancière, that the political is itself aesthetic as it can help bring about a reconfiguration of the visible and the audible in the shared common of the community. Żmijewski deals with dissensus in relation to the idea of crossing institutional and discipline-specific borders. In a similar manner to Rancière, Żmijewski maintains that, for a redistribution of the sensible to occur, people must ‘step out’ of their disciplinary frame. His curation of the Biennale, which I suggest is itself part of Żmijewski’s art practice, is an attempt to put his manifestos of dissensus into practice.

In the final chapter I argue that Pussy Riot’s utilisation of different speech types and modes of aesthetic practice challenge the exclusionary systems legitimised in contemporary Russian political life. Rancière argues that aesthetics refers to the meeting place between art practices and political practices; it is a space of the sensible in which the common distinctions and boundaries between art and politics are broken down. I argue that Pussy Riot’s work operates

⁹ Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, 35.

in this space of dissensual aesthetics. Pussy Riot take the influence for their particular mode of dissensus from a wide array of areas, including medieval traditions from within Russia, critical theory and philosophy, radical performance art and western punk movements, to name a few.

Pussy Riot's specific mode of dissensus, particularly in relation to the religio-cultural context in which the Pussy Riot performances took place, is usefully extended by Bakhtin's ideas around the carvinalesque and heteroglossia. Both concepts differently formulate how social hierarchies and authoritative discourse can be challenged and reconstituted. I suggest that a sustained analysis of connections between the ideas of Bakhtin and Rancière are fruitful, particularly in relation to artistic intervention into politics.

As I noted in the epigraph to the introduction, Rancière claims that the act of dissensus crosses borders and stops traffic in the process of disrupting the police order. Laibach's overidentification, Christoph Schlingensief's radical deracialisation and manipulation of the unrepresentable, Marika Schmiedt's testimony within a testimony, Artur Źmijewski's staged encounters, and Pussy Riot's modernised holy foolery present a panoply of methods through which artists can attempt to cross exclusionary borders and re-order the police order. These artists, works and events engage with Europe's moving image, but, more importantly, through the practice of dissensus they try to re-imagine it.

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