DISCOURSE AND DISSENT

HUMAN AGENCY

IN THE LATE MODERN AGE

Roland Bleiker

A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
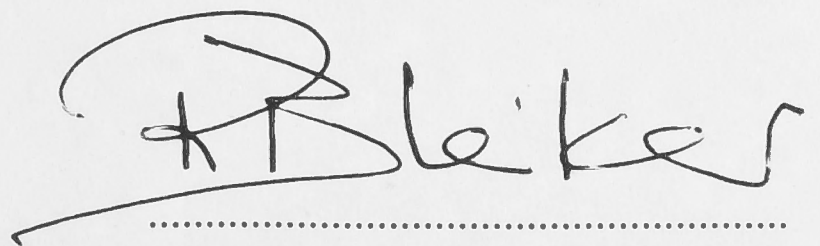of the Australian National University

November 1996

Krumm war der Weg, den ich ging,
krumm war er, ja,
denn, ja,
er war gerade...

Paul Celan, Die Niemandsrose

This thesis is my own original work

(Roland Bleiker, November 1996)

Meinen Eltern in Dankbarkeit

Krumm war der Weg, den ich ging,
krumm war er, ja,
denn, ja,
er war gerade...

Paul Celan, <u>Die Niemandsrose</u>

CONTENTS

PART ONE
A GENEALOGY OF POPULAR DISSENT

PART TWO
REFRAMING DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the problem of conceptualizing human agency in a complex late modern world. By theorizing the constantly shifting interaction between discourse and dissent, I advance a positive notion of human agency that is neither grounded in a stable essence nor dependent upon a presupposed notion of the subject. Such an endeavor entails searching for a path between essentialism and relativism, between suffocating in the narrow grip of totalizing knowledge claims and blindly roaming in a nihilistic world of absences.

I begin my research task by analyzing how the question of human agency has arisen historically. The focus rests in particular on the theory and practice of popular dissent as it emerged and evolved from the Renaissance to today. The underlying assumptions that have been formed during the modern period are seen as overlapping layers of contemporary consciousness that continue to influence current social dynamics. Prevalent images of popular dissent revolve around great revolutionary events. While opposing some overt forms of repression, these narrowly constructed images, and their ensuing political practices, have often further entrenched more subtle, discursive systems of exclusion. I demonstrate the practical relevance of these assertions through a detailed analysis of the events that led to the collapse of the East German regime in 1989.

The thesis then uses the space opened up by the preceding genealogical critique to prepare the ground for a more differentiated understanding of domination and resistance. Central to this task is a methodological shift away from grand theories of dissent towards a discursive understanding of power and human agency. Equally important is an approach to social change that focuses less on spectacular revolutionary events and more on the slow transformation of values that precedes them.

The most promising manifestations of human agency are located, I argue, in seemingly mundane and often neglected aspects of daily life. I pay particular attention to everyday forms of resistance embedded in the use of language. An analysis of Paul Celan's poetic engagement with the Holocaust and its legacy illustrates how language can function as discursive dissent. Poetry may occupy a relatively minor role in cultural dynamics today, but its approach to resisting discursive domination can facilitate understanding of how dissent functions in more daily acts of speaking and writing. By self-consciously stretching the boundaries of existing linguistic conventions, poetry demonstrates how it is possible to engender human agency - not by directly causing particular events, but by transforming values, by creating possibilities to think and act in more inclusive ways.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Introduction

HUMAN AGENCY
AFTER THE DEATH OF GOD

> God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still be caves
> for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. - And we -
> we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.

<div align="right">

Friedrich Nietzsche, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft
tr. W. Kaufmann (translation altered)

</div>

The concept of human agency occupies a central position in the history of Western thought. From Aristotle onwards countless leading minds have philosophized how people may or may not be able to influence their social environment. Do our actions, intentional or not, bear upon our destiny? Or are we simply creatures of habit, blind followers of cultural and linguistic orders too large and too powerful to be swayed?

Today, the echoes of these questions resonate more than ever. One of the most intensely debated themes in contemporary social theory revolves around the complex interactions between agency and structure. Can there be human agency in the late modern world, an époque of rapid change and blurring boundaries between nations, cultures, knowledges, realities? Who or what shapes the course of social dynamics at a moment when new communicative technologies constantly redefine time, space and the ways in which people relate to each other? Can shifting social designs and their designers be discerned at all?

These are some of the central puzzles that stood at the outset of this thesis project; they have guided my research directions, opened up a myriad of other questions and fed my motivation to struggle with them. The result of these ruminations can be summarized quite easily: it is an argument for retaining the concept of human agency despite serious obstacles to this endeavor. Outlining the long and sometimes crooked path that leads to this position is, however, far more intricate than merely presenting its affirmative endpoint. It requires a fundamental rethinking of what human agency is and how we could possibly understand it without imposing our preconceived ideas upon a complex mesh of social phenomena.

I rethink human agency through a detailed scrutiny of the interactive relationship between discourse and dissent. I locate the most promising manifestations of human agency in forms of resistance that engage discursive struggles and engender a slow transformation of societal values. What such a position precisely entails can only be elucidated in the context of my overall approach, which the present chapter now introduces.

I

My project of rethinking human agency owes its methodological starting point to Martin Heidegger's study of Being. Before even addressing the substantive aspects of this topic, Heidegger emphasizes that we always already live in a preconceived understanding of what Being is, and that this understanding is part of the meaning of Being. He thus rejects an approach that relies upon an a priori notion of Being. Instead, he stresses that the question of Being must be posed by investigating the very process of posing the question of Being.[1]

Likewise, the question of human agency cannot be understood independently of how it has arisen in the first place. The concept of human agency is as elusive as the concept of Being. Human agency, accordingly, cannot be apprehended as part of a natural order of things, as something that exists out there, waiting to be unveiled through the right methodological tools. Human agency is, at least in part, determined by what is asked about it in the process of imbuing human action with socio-linguistic meaning.

An analysis of human agency, consequently, must begin by investigating how we have come to think about this issue. Expressed in Heideggerean terms, we must find out how, if we ask 'what *is* human agency,' we already have a certain preconceived understanding of the 'is.' Exploring this framing of questions is only possible in the context of an historical account. Heidegger's approach to this task takes the form of *Destruktion*, a process of deconstructing history, of disclosing what a tradition of

---

[1] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993/1927), § 2, pp. 5-11.

thought transmits and how it does so.[2] While accepting the overall spirit of this endeavor, my own inquiry relies more upon Nietzsche's method of genealogy, expanded and popularized through the work of Michel Foucault.[3]

Genealogies attempt to trace the processes by which we have come to accept our world as natural and meaningful. They are historical investigations into the ideas and events that have shaped our thinking, speaking and acting. The task of genealogies, however, is not to discover a single meaning in history or an authentic origin, an *Ursprung*. Nietzsche employs the terms *Entstehung* and *Herkunft* to explain the task of genealogies. These terms do not indicate an authentic starting point, a source to which everything can be traced back. Genealogies, by contrast, focus on the process by which we have constructed origins and given meaning to particular representations of the past, representations that continuously guide our daily lives and set clear limits to political and social options.

A genealogy of human agency? An analysis of how we have come to represent the history of thinking about human action? Such an immodest undertaking is doomed to fail, at least as long as it strives for completeness. The history of human agency is far too complex and diverse to be retraced coherently through a single genealogical study. Virtually every philosopher has explicitly or implicitly dealt with human agency. These innumerable inquiries range from questions of intentionality, causality and responsibility to ruminations about the evaluation of desire or the moral dimension of human action. I am not trying to comprehend these debates in their totality.

II

My genealogical research deals with the specific domain of human agency that relates to the capacity to act and promote social change. In this sense, my focus lies on the interactions between social actors and such aspects as structure, culture and language.

I retrace the constitution of human agency by observing the theory and practice of popular dissent. Why this particular choice? The question of human agency as capacity to act and promote social change is above all a question of power relations. And power relations are best understood, Foucault claims convincingly, by examining specific attempts that are made to uproot these relations.[4] This is why an

---

[2] Ibid., § 6, p. 20.

[3] See, in particular, Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1991/1977); and Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," tr. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon, in The Foucault Reader, ed. P. Rabinow (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984/1971), pp. 76-100.

[4] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power," in Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, ed. H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), pp. 210-1.

analysis of popular resistance against authoritarian rule is ideally suited to scrutinize the discursive formation of human agency.

I start my genealogical inquiry into popular dissent with a rhetorical Renaissance text, Étienne de la Boétie's Contr'un, or Anti-One. La Boétie claimed, in 1552, that any form of rule is dependent upon popular consent. In the context of its articulation, sixteenth century France, this was a radical claim. But the idea that people hold the key to social change, which is implied in la Boétie's treatise, was also part of a larger humanist movement that started to challenged the prevalent medieval order. In this sense, the Anti-One symbolized the reemergence of the concept of human agency, which had been celebrated in ancient Greece, but was largely pushed into obscurity during the Middle Ages.

La Boétie's Anti-One is a relatively unknown text today. Yet, it played an important role in shaping practices of popular dissent during the preceding centuries.[5] Comparable to Niccolò Machiavelli's humanist texts, which became catalysts for the burgeoning literature on the art of governing the State, la Boétie's Anti-One gave rise to a body of literature that deals with radical resistance to government. I carefully retrace the history of this tradition of dissent in chapters 1 to 3, which constitute the first of three major parts to this thesis. My task is to observe how la Boétie's text was interpreted at various historical intersections and how these interpretations have shaped practices of popular dissent such as mass demonstrations and civil disobedience.

A genealogical task cannot be fulfilled without attention to detail. Indeed, genealogies are all about detail, about the meticulous collection of a multitude of source materials.[6] Shifts in historical consciousness and their bearing upon political practice cannot be assessed adequately through sweeping statements about philosophical trends. Such shifts do not occur as factual events that can be understood on their own terms. They are shaped by the ways in which historical observers interpret events around them.[7] A genealogy of popular dissent cannot be separated from the individuals who, in various time periods, ruminated about the subject in question. This is why I examine closely the work of several authors who wrote directly or indirectly in the wake of la Boétie's Anti-One; among them are Michel de Montaigne, Félicité de Lamennais and, as the legacy of this French text grew more international, Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King and several contemporary writers, such as Gene Sharp and John

---

[5] La Boétie still featured prominently in Pierre Mesnard's path-breaking work on early modern thought, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Sciècle (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951/1935), pp. 389-406. By contrast, many contemporary historians of political thought do not deal with the influence of la Boétie. His work barely warrants a mention, for instance, in Quentin Skinner influential The Foundations of Modern Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[6] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," pp. 76-7.

[7] Paul de Man, Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 95-6,

Rawls. What is human agency for them? How does it function? Who is endowed with the capacity of agent? What values are implied in these respective views and how did they differ from other, more dominant approaches at the time? How did they influence political practices? These are the questions to be asked of the la Boétian tradition in its various evolutionary stages from the sixteenth century to the present.

But the la Boétian tradition, which developed at times in a close relationship with anarchist thought, is not the only story about popular dissent in the modern period. Of course not. Countless other and often better known stories could be narrated too. There are influential liberal and Marxist narratives of resistance and social change. There are structural and functional approaches to revolutionary upheavals, psychological analyses of the crowd or, more recently, inquires into social movements.[8] All of these different stories are part of how we have come to perceive human agency today. Rather than synthesizing all of them in a sweeping intellectual *tour de force*, a genealogy must aim at appreciating the complexity and multiplicity of our past. Its power lies in telling different stories about our world, in making room for voices that have been silenced by conventional historiography. In this sense a genealogy reveals, as Michael Shapiro notes, the arbitrariness of the constitution of meaning "by producing unfamiliar representations of persons, collectivities, places, and things, and by isolating the moments in which the more familiar representations have merged."[9]

The la Boétian story is one of many that have been laid to rest in the graveyards of our collective memory. It is a story about dissent that is worth unearthing, worth being retold in a different light - not to be exhaustive, not to be true or even representative, but to problematize what has been constituted as unproblematic, to illustrate the framing of dominant narratives, to make room for more inclusive approaches to human agency.

---

[8] For key contributions to the sociology of action see Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1949/1937); Alain Touraine, Sociologie de l'Action (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965); Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988); and Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For analysis of the psychological and social impact unleashed by the gathering of large crowds see Elias Canetti, Masse und Macht (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994/1980); Gustave le Bon, Psychologie des Foules (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911) and George Rude, The Crowd in History (London: Lawrence And Wishart, 1981). Among the many works that deal with collective action and new social movements are Alberto Melucci, Nomads of the Present (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989); Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978); and Alain Touraine, La Voix et le Regard (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

[9] Michael J. Shapiro, Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 2.

III

A brief look ahead into the results of my genealogical inquiry is necessary at this point to map out the remaining course of my attempt to rethink human agency. The la Boétian tradition of dissent proved to be not nearly as subversive as its outspoken anti-authoritarian message suggested at first sight. While standing in radical opposition to dominant ideas and political practices, it shared with them similar basic assumptions about the world.

In a mirror image of mainstream modern discourses, the theory and practice of popular dissent has been characterized by the recurring inability to come to terms with what Nietzsche called the death of God, the disappearance, at the end of the medieval period, of a generally accepted world view that provided a stable ground from which it was possible to assess nature, knowledge, common values, truth, politics, in short, life itself. The la Boétian tradition of dissent was one of many humanist attempts to find replacements for the fallen God, to search for new foundations from which humanity could safely reflect upon itself and the world. Details on this will follow later. Suffice it at this point to mention that the compulsion to anchor perceptions of popular dissent in Archimedean foundations took various superseding forms. They include, painted in broad strokes, an unbounded Renaissance trust in the ability of human beings to elevate themselves to the measure of all things (chapter 1), an Enlightenment belief in reason and science, a Romantic reassertion of human agency grounded in the notion of an autonomous Self (chapter 2), and more contemporary positivist attempts to master the question of popular dissent by reducing complex social dynamics to a few universal and empirically assessable laws (chapter 3).

These superseding attempts to ground an understanding of the world in stable foundations are not just linearly unfolding events, historical époques with a clear beginning and end. They are, rather, overlapping layers of contemporary consciousness, sets of carefully crafted lenses that are still used to look at today's world. This is why an investigation into their formation is of utmost importance to gain a more inclusive view of dissent and human agency in today's late modern world.

The larger picture that emerged from my genealogy of popular dissent is, of course, neither new nor particularly surprising. The right to criticism has been recognized, at least since Hegel, as a key feature of modernity. Thus, the existence of strong similarities between radical dissident movements and the political practices they oppose only confirms the larger boundaries that surround modernity's celebration of diversity. And that these boundaries are drawn, at least in part, by the inability to come to terms with the death of God, has been discussed extensively since Nietzsche first tried to capture the modern condition with this metaphor. William Connolly is among those who have most convincingly elucidated the long struggle in a world where there is no longer a God that serves as a unifying center

for humanity. He shows that while successive attempts to ground certainty in other external sources run into grave difficulties, the insistence that such foundations must be found remained a prominent modern theme. This quest for a grounded and perfectly ordered world, Connolly argues, can only be sustained by treating everything that does not fit into this order as irrational, perverse, in need for punishment or destruction.[10] It is self-evident that systems of exclusion emerge from such practices, even if they engage, as the la Boétian tradition does, in the very attempt to resist domination.

IV

I accept the absence of stable foundations. I affirm life in a Nietzschean way, that is, without grounding this affirmation in essences. My task, however, is not to tackle anew this complex problematique, but merely to rethink aspects of human agency in its light. Chapters 4 to 6, which comprise the second part of this thesis, prepare the ground for this endeavor.

How does one start to take on, rather than deflect the responsibility that shifted from God upon the shoulders of humanity? First, it is necessary to recognize that once one has accepted the contingency of foundations one can no longer theorize human agency in ahistoric and universal terms. Meaningful answers to questions of social change can only be gained by analyzing the interaction between domination and resistance in a specific historical and geographic context. With this recognition in mind, I focus on events in East Germany to scrutinize the theoretical puzzles I am dealing with.

The spectacular collapse of the East German regime could be read as a clear endorsement of the la Boétian idea of popular dissent. During the autumn of 1989, after decades of harsh authoritarian rule, hundreds of thousands of East Germans took to the streets and demanded political reform. Day after day, their monophonic battle cry 'we are the people' echoed throughout the country, in East Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Karl-Marx-Stadt and many other cities. The effects were startling: one of the most repressive regimes in east-central Europe collapsed like a house of cards. The scenes of common citizens walking through the Berlin-Wall remains one of the key images that symbolize the end of the Cold War. A sense of optimism was in the air. It was a time of crumbling walls and falling dictators. It was a time of turmoil and change. Decades of entrenched political structures were swept away by popular dissent. The Romantic subject reemerged, inflated with unbounded confidence. History was once more open to be shaped by human agency.

---

[10] William E. Connolly, Political Theory and Modernity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993/1988), p. 13-14

But was all this really a result of popular dissent? Can the East German revolution be explained adequately by the la Boétian proposition that power is dependent upon popular consent? Does human agency work so directly? Can it be understood in the context of structural or relational links between ruler and ruled?

A critical look at the events in East Germany reveals a much more complex picture (chapter 4). A whole range of intertwined factors, domestic and international, contributed to the fall of the regime. The societal context within which the events unfolded was far too intricate to be assessed by a parsimonious model of power relations, let alone by a grand theory of popular dissent. This, too, is not necessarily a very surprising finding. It is consistent with an already widespread Foucaultean position that views power as working in a diffused and stratified way, constantly intersecting with the production and diffusion of knowledge. More interesting, and far more relevant for a rethinking of human agency, are questions that interrogate the characteristics and effects of these processes of social change.

The East German revolution perfectly matches the dominant image of popular dissent, a spectacular unfolding of social change through great events. But such events are often far less potent than their dramatic appearance suggests. This is not to say that the East German revolution was ineffective. It did, after all, uproot one of the most ruthless dictatorships of the Cold War period. But in doing so it also entrenched more subtle and persistent forms of domination that are embedded in discursive practices. A rather harsh judgment? I sustain it by examining the interaction between popular dissent and patriarchy, discursively embedded identity constructs which support gender hierarchies (chapter 5). For women in East Germany, the democratic dawn ushered in drastic setbacks in such realms as reproductive rights, access to daycare or employment opportunities. A revived civil society which identifies men with the public and women with the private sphere further increased the patriarchal character of post-wall German politics. Whether or not other emerging benefits for women will outweigh these setbacks in the long run remains to be seen. At this point the East German case only strengthens a revolutionary model to whose preeminence the la Boétian tradition already contributed substantially: it is a model based on the image of a male revolutionary riding into the sunset of freedom, while ignoring and even entrenching the patriarchal social order that makes this heroic fight possible.

The mapping out of my inquiry into human agency has so far revolved around a discussion of existing theories and practices of popular dissent. Such an approach could easily be perceived as a predominantly negative exercise. But critique, genealogical or deconstructive, is not just negative. It opens up spaces to think and act in different ways. My first step into these spaces takes the form of an alternative understanding of social change in East Germany (chapter 6), one that resists the temptation of subsuming unique features into a universalized and foundationalist narrative. For this purpose I focus not on the spectacular manifestation of popular dissent, but on the slow transformation of values that precedes them. Such an

alternative, discourse oriented approach to power and social change creates various possibilities to rethink human agency. But as soon as this thinking space is ripped open, new puzzles and dilemmas start to flood through its gaping doors.

V

How to lift a concept of human agency out of a genealogical critique? How to ground an understanding of human agency in nothingness? How to retain a positive approach to the problem of action without having to anchor one's position in stable foundations?

The third and last part of this thesis engages with these questions. I assume, with Heidegger, that the nature of human agency is intrinsically linked to how we have come to think about it. But if this is the case, then a critical inquiry into the question of human agency, no matter how eye opening, remains confined by the larger boundaries that were established through the initial framing of the question. To escape the parameters of existing debates, critique must be supplemented with a process of forgetting the object of critique. Such an "active forgetfulness," as Nietzsche calls it, is a form of "*tabula rasa* for the consciousness." It makes room for new things, opens up spaces to pursue issues without being constrained by how we have experienced and absorbed them so far.[11] With this ambition in mind, the last part of the thesis builds upon the knowledge derived from the previous two parts, but does so by pursuing entirely different domains of inquiry.

The main focus now rests with discursive forms of dissent, that is, terrains of resistance that operate through a slow transformation of societal values. This shift is not meant to replace concrete practices of resistance, but to supplement them with a more subtle understanding of the effects that they produce.

But are discourse and dissent not contradictory terms? Is not discourse a concept that emphasizes the process of societal conditioning that allegedly deprives the subject of his/her capacity for authentic cognition, a capacity that presumably is needed for a meaningful expression of dissent? Critics of what is commonly referred to as postmodernism certainly believe so. They draw attention to the relativist pitfalls of such approaches as well as to their inability to speak of agents and agency. Seyla Benhabib represents many concerned scholars when arguing that a postmodern position mistakenly dissolves the subject into chains of signification that lie beyond human influence.[12] We would find ourselves in a conceptual order dominated by overarching discursive systems. People would be reduced to mere bystanders, passive, impotent, irrelevant. Crushed into oblivion. Or so at least we are told.

---

[11] Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, pp. 48-9.

[12] Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and Postmodernism," in Feminist Contentions (New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 20.

Admonishingly. But is this elusive specter called postmodernism really so menacing that it must be warded off at any cost? Is it leading us into an apocalyptic world in which "man would be erased," as a famous Foucaultean passage speculates, "like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea"?[13]

VI

I argue that it is possible to retain a positive but non-essentialist notion of human agency.

We know of proclamations that herald the return of the actor.[14] Most of them were advanced against the determinism of structuralist scholarship. Structuralist positions locate the emergence of social change not in agents and their actions, but in the structural conditions within which their behavior is confined. Revolutionary change is said to be dependent not upon conscious subjectivity, but upon the underlying logic of functional and structural necessity.[15]

Parallel to this defense of the actor against structural determinism, I attempt to salvage the notion of human agency from postmodern annihilations of the subject. However, I advance this position not against, but *through* the body of knowledge referred to, in the largest sense, as postmodernism. I elaborate what could be called a postmodern position on human agency, except that I discard the actual term postmodernism as an unfortunate misnomer. It is misleading in designating a new historical époque, not only because we have hardly transgressed the parameters of modernity, but also because the act of compartmentalizing history expresses an inherently modern urge to control our environment. The term postmodernism may be more useful to indicate a certain epistemological or ontological stance. Yet, many of the authors who are labeled postmodern, such as Foucault, Derrida or Cixous, do not actually use this term. And those who do barely have enough in common to be lumped together into the same category. If anything unites them, it is the acceptance of difference and the willingness to come to terms with the death of God.

Affirming from negation and grounding an understanding of human agency in nothingness is not as problematic as it may appear at first sight. Judith Butler has demonstrated this convincingly. For her, the recognition that power pervades all aspects of society, including the position of the critic, does not necessarily lead to a nihilistic relativism. It merely shows that political closure occurs through attempts to establish foundational norms that lie beyond power. Likewise, to reopen this

---

[13] Foucault, Les Mots et les Choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 398.

[14] Most notably Alain Touraine, Le Retour de l'Acteur (Paris: Fayard, 1984).

[15] Representative are Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) and Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

political domain is not to do away with foundations as such, but to acknowledge their contingent character, to illuminate what they authorize, exclude and foreclose.[16]

One must come to terms with how the subject and its agency are constituted and framed by specific regimes of power. But this is not the end of human agency. Quite to the contrary. Butler argues persuasively that "the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency."[17] To appreciate the practical relevance of this claim one must investigate the possibilities for agency that arise out of existing webs of power and discourse. One must scrutinize how social change can be brought about by a reworking of the power regimes that constitute our subjectivity.[18]

It is in this constantly shifting mesh of power, discourse and dissent that I ground my own attempt to rethink human agency. What happens if we try to grasp our elusive subject status, build a notion of human agency upon contingent foundations? How to deal with the urge to order and control our lives? How to avoid superimposing preconceived ideas, inadequate as they are, upon a set of highly complex and maybe incomprehensible social phenomena? How to act on the Wittgensteinean warning "to say no more than we know"? [19]

VII

I anchor my rethinking of human agency not in a systematic theory, but in a specification of what Michel de Certeau called "operational schemes."[20]

Attempts to establish a systematic theory of human action will always run the risk of reifying the elusive subject they are trying to capture. A theory is a method of delineation. It objectifies what should be understood in its fluidity.

An approach that specifies operational schemes recognizes these limits to cognition. Instead of establishing a new and better theory of agency, I am content with formulating a framework that facilitates understanding of how human agency is incessantly reconstituted. I seek to comprehend forms of action in the context of their regulatory environment. Such an approach departs not only from the positivist practices identified in my genealogical critique of popular dissent, but also from the

[16] Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in J. Butler and J.W. Scott (eds), Feminists Theorize the Political (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-7. See also Connolly, Political Theory and Modernity, esp. pp. 138-40.

[17] Ibid., pp. 12-14.

[18] Ibid., p. 13.

[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations' (New York: Harper Torchbooks 1964), p. 45.

[20] De Certeau, Arts de Faire, Vol. I of L'Invention du Quotidien (Paris: Gallimard, 1990/1980), p. 51.

ways in which traditional philosophy has framed the understanding of human action. This framing process has revolved around three ways of explaining action: teleological, causal and intentional.[21] I break with all of them: I do not assume that agency can be assessed only by establishing links between means and ends; I do not assume that every form of agency needs an identifiable agent that causes an identifiable outcome; I do not assume that agency occurs only if it stands in a relationship with a declared intention.

What is left of the concept of human agency if one no longer relies upon teleological, causal or intentional explanations? The Interlude situated between chapter 7 and 8 deals with this question at a conceptual level. The objective is to outline a framework that facilitates a discursive understanding of human agency. From this vantage point, dissent operates in tactical, rather than strategic ways. It moves along an indeterminate trajectory, transgresses places, slowly transforms values. It becomes visible and effective only through maturation over time.

A further deconstruction of the notion of discourse is necessary to appreciate this unfolding of dissent through tactic and temporality. Despite their power to frame the world, discourses are not monolithic forces that crush everything in sight. They are often thin, unstable, fragmented. They contain cracks. By moving from epistemological to ontological levels of inquiry, I explore the ways in which people can resist discursive domination (chapter 7). Human beings have hyphenated identities. Furthermore, these identities are not frozen in time, but part of a constantly unfolding process of becoming. By tapping into these multiple and shifting dimensions of Being, individuals are able to think and act beyond the narrow confines of the established discursive order. They engage in everyday forms of resistance that allow them to reshape the social context in which they are embedded. Such forms of discursive dissent can be found in countless seemingly insignificant daily acts of defiance. They engender transformations of values that may promote social change far more effectively than the so-called great events of history.

VIII

I illustrate the power of discursive dissent by scrutinizing the forces of domination and resistance entailed in one of our most daily activities, speaking and writing (chapter 8). Language is in many ways the most representative everyday form of resistance. Whatever we think and do is framed by the language within which these acts are carried out. Hence, an engagement with the philosophy of language must be part of an adequate approach to the question of human agency, especially if this

---

[21] See Rüdiger Bubner, Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft: Grundbegriffe praktischer Philosophie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982/1976), pp. 125-156.

approach rests upon a post-Heideggerean view of human life as constituted by self-understanding.[22]

My attempt to elucidate everyday forms of resistance embedded in language draws in particular on Ludwig Wittgenstein's later work, which views language no longer as a way of objectively representing the world, but as "part of an activity, a way of life."[23] Such a position has far-reaching consequences. If language expresses a particular way of life it is also responsible, at least in part, for the constitution of this way of life. Human agency cannot take place outside language, in some pre- or extra-linguistic realm. It can only take place through language. Indeed, languages are not just frameworks to assess actions. They are themselves forms of action. This is why an inquiry into the links between human agency and language must observe how words are used in the concrete context of everyday life. The repressive and enabling aspects of languages can be revealed only at this level of practice, for outside this realm there is no authentic link between words and what they represent.

I focus on poetry to illustrate how a specific discursive/linguistic practice of dissent works in practice (chapter 9). Poetry is not necessarily representative for all everyday forms of resistance. But it is particularly suited to demonstrate how language and human agency are intrinsically linked, how the content of speech is inseparable from the form through which it is expressed. Poetry is discursive dissent because it creates thinking space by deliberately and self-consciously stretching, even violating existing linguistic practices. In doing so, poetry gains potential to engender human agency - not by directly causing particular events, but by transforming values, by creating a language that provides us with different eyes, with the opportunity to reassess anew what has always been taken for granted. It creates possibilities to think and act in more inclusive ways.

Poetry, and discursive dissent in general, unleash their power only through a long process, a process that entails digging, slowly, underneath the foundations of authority. Poetic dissent works through a gradual and largely inaudible transformation of values. It acknowledges that there are no quick and miraculous forms of resistance to discursive domination. It resists the temptation to provide 'concrete' answers to 'concrete' questions. It does not bring certainty. In fact, poetry generates more questions, creates ambivalence and doubt. And in doing so poetry comes to terms with the death of God, makes room for a more tolerant politics, recognizes that a society is oppressive and closed if all major questions either have an answer or are considered irrational, absurd, taboo.[24] Could it even be

---

[22] See Charles Taylor, Human Agency and Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995/1985), pp. 3-4, 9.

[23] Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, in Werkausgabe Band 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993/1952), p. 250, § 23.

[24] Cornelius Castoriadis, "Ontologie et Antropologie," seminar presented at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris, 26.10.1996.

that the poetic imagination, by abandoning the search for foundational truth and certainty, leaps towards the impossible, towards a fragmented and momentary glimpse of subjective 'authenticity'? Paul Celan, in one of his poems that stretches the limits of linguistic forms of expression:

> Eroded by
> the beamwind of your speech
> the gaudy chatter of the pseudo-
> experienced - my hundred-
> tongued perjury-
> poem, the noem.
>
> Hollow-
> whirled,
> free
> the path through the men-
> shaped snow,
> the penitent's snow, to
> the hospitable
> glacier-parlors and -tables.
>
> Deep
> in the timecrevasse,
> in the
> honeycomb-ice,
> waits a breathcrystal,
> your unalterable
> testimony.[25]

I analyze in detail the form and social impact of Paul Celan's poetry. His work exemplifies the potential and limits of poetic dissent, of exerting human agency through the linkage of (aesthetic) form and (political) substance. Writing in the immediate post-war period, Celan tried to open up thinking space by dissociating the German language from its Nazi past. Mixed success characterized this poetic rethinking of the Holocaust, the search for voices and perspectives that had gone missing in dominant discursive practices. Celan's early poetry stands today as an important critical engagement with the Nazi period and its aftermath, a way of coming to terms with this problematic historical burden. His reworking of linguistic practices played an influential part in a larger societal process of struggling for a more inclusive and tolerant politics in post-war Germany. Celan's later and far less accessible poetry, however, has not yet been able to influence social dynamics with equal success. Their influence has been confined largely to small intellectual audiences.

---

[25] Celan, "Weggebeizt" tr. P. Joris in <u>Breathturn</u> (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995/1967), p. 215.

Celan's later poems, of which the above is an example, illustrate the difficulties and dangers of working at the edge of language games. One step before the edge and the poetic message is sucked back into dominant discursive practices - one step beyond and it plunges into obscurity and drowns in irrelevance. Because Celan's later poems explore the outer limits of this dangerous ground, they are still too difficult to exert widespread influence. Their potential for human agency still drifts somewhere on a desolate ocean, waiting to be washed ashore and embraced by a discursive practice that embodies dialogue, openness, transformability.

IX

Inevitable problems arise with a move that links human agency with language. If human agency can only be understood in the context of language, then this understanding is never absolute. It never escapes language. If form is substance, then the language through which a rethinking of human agency takes place is itself linked to a particular representation of human agency. This dilemma cannot be avoided. It can only be recognized. And it engenders the long needed modesty to engage in less ambitious and more tolerant forms of theorizing.

The dilemma of language and human agency becomes further accentuated by the fact that the nature of my research requires constant negotiating between German, French and English forms of expression. Poetry, again, highlights this problematique. Comparable to the above Wittgensteinean transformation of linguistic philosophy, the work of Stephan Mallarmé marked a turning point in poetics. Henceforth poetry was perceived to be about words, rather than about ideas or meaning. This is to say that the poetic imagination does not search for motives exterior to language, for some authentic link between words and what they signify. Instead, poetry engages with the internal logic of specific linguistic practices. Its method of dissent takes the form of a conscious protest against social exclusions embedded in language.

Does this mean that poetic dissent is a mere play with words? An intellectual game void of social significance? No. Quite to the contrary. Language is always already politics. The links between words and what they signify may not be authentic, but they are constituted as real through the language in which they are embedded. And the ensuing forms of representation, partial and subjective as they are, become our social and political realities. Hence, to engage with language is to engage directly in social struggle. In this sense, poetic dissent is as real as the practices of *Realpolitik*.

The poetic search for spaces to think and act creates major problems for a critically inquiring mind. The unity of form and substance that characterizes the poetic imagination is particularly difficult to translate. If poetry engages in discursive dissent by transgressing the boundaries of specific linguistic practices, then

its main message is, by definition, untranslatable. Each language has its own grammatically and syntactically entrenched systems of exclusion and each must be addressed on its own terms. This is why poetry, for Celan, is "the fateful uniqueness of language."[26] But there is also room for optimism. Michael Bakhtin, for example, reminds us that translation, broadly perceived, is the essence of all human communication. We are always crossing language boundaries, not just among different national languages, but between language games that exist within a single culture, a single speaking community.[27]

How can we preserve as much substance as possible in this process of crossing language boundaries? Walter Benjamin has carved out a convincing and well used path. I have pursued it as faithfully as possible in this thesis. For Benjamin, translation is a provisional way of grappling with the foreignness of a language. A translation must reproduce the echo of the original. It does so by focusing not primarily on meaning and sense, but on the original's way of representing and signifying. It approximates, as closely as possible, the syntax of the original. A translation should not try to produce a smooth and stylistically flawless English text. Instead, it should be as syntactically literal as possible and retain, at the risk of sounding awkward, the spirit of the foreign language.[28]

I drew the following practical consequences from this insight: If possible, I based my research on original texts, not to unveil some authentic meaning in them, but to acknowledge the links between form and substance. When directly citing foreign language passages, I use official translations, unless they are not available or depart too drastically from the above Benjaminean principles. In the latter case, I either present my own translation or alter the official one while indicating that I am doing so. The original text of all important citations can be found in an appendix to this thesis, providing the reader with the opportunity to retrace my journey within and across linguistic boundaries.

X

One more preliminary account needs to be settled before heading into the first research task of this thesis. Do we really need one more treatise on human agency? Or, more specifically, can the present *tour d'horizon* of discourse and dissent advance any new insights? Most of what I have mapped out so far is not uncharted terrain. Where can we still reach further, dig deeper, stretch wider?

---

[26] Celan, "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker, Paris, 1961," in Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 175.

[27] Caryl Emerson, "Editor's Preface" to Bakhtin's Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xxxi.

[28] Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," in Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995/1923), pp. 50-62.

I see the main contribution of my research in the process of drawing together insights advanced by fields of knowledge that have so far existed in relative isolation from each other. Distinct boundaries, often hermetically sealed, separate many of the academic disciplines I draw upon. Among them are political theory, history, comparative politics, sociology, international relations, literary criticism, feminist theory, philosophy, linguistics and poetics. Few observers gaze across these multiple fences. But academic disciplines discipline the formation of discourses. They are powerful tools to direct and control the production and diffusion of knowledge. They establish rules of intellectual exchange and define the methods, techniques and instruments that are considered proper for this purpose. Such conventions not only suggest on what ground things can be studied legitimately, but also decide what issues are worthwhile to be assessed in the first place. Thus, as soon as one addresses academic disciplines on their own terms, one has to play according to the rules of a discursive "police" which is reactivated each time one speaks.[29] In this case, one cuts off a whole range of innovative thinking spaces that exist on the other side of this margin. It is within these largely unexplored spaces that this thesis seeks to make its innovative contribution to discussions of human agency.

Relying upon an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human agency entails making a number of deliberate choices. Insight between disciplines can be carved out only to the detriment of a detailed engagement with specialized and often highly complex debates. The disadvantage that such a lack of 'expertise' may entail is more than compensated by the benefits derived from escaping the entrenched and constraining intellectual rules of conduct established by academic disciplines.

An approach that focuses on linkages between debates is able to deal more adequately with the interaction between revealing and concealing. Every process of revealing is at the same time a process of concealing. Even the most convincing position cannot provide a form of insight that does not at the same time conceal other perspectives. Revealing occurs within a frame. Framing is a way of ordering. And ordering banishes all other forms of revealing. This is, grossly simplified, a position that resonates throughout much of Heidegger's work.[30] I have taken this argument to heart in the sense that I refuse to rely upon one specific form of revealing. My theoretical position is informed by various authors, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Adorno, Foucault and Celan are among them. I am aware that their positions differ, that their work has given rise to intensive debates. I purposely glance over these differences and open up thinking space by moving back and forth between various positions - not to end up with a grand synthesis, but to make most out of each specific form of revealing.

---

[29] Foucault, L'Ordre du Discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 37.

[30] Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in Vorträge und Aufsätze (Pfullingen: Günter Neske, 1954), p. 35.

The structure of this thesis is influenced by my engagement with circles of revealing and concealing. A structure is like a straitjacket. It is another form of framing. It protects a coherent and bounded whole. It paralyzes thoughts. It squeezes them, against their natural inclination, into particular directions. Or so at least claims Wittgenstein when justifying his preference for unstructured aphorisms.[31] I have nevertheless retained a conventional structure and outlined its logic throughout this introduction. But I am aware that many of my most central puzzles cannot be contained in water-tight compartments. They cannot be tackled chapter after chapter and be put to rest in proper order, one after the other. Some key dilemmas, like the search for a middle ground between essentialism and relativism, will cyclically reappear, penetrating the core of virtually every topic I address. Each chapter will have to deal with the death of God. Each will have to discover anew this fine line between suffocating in the narrow grip of totalizing knowledge claims and blindly roaming in a nihilistic world of absences. Hence, what follows is to be seen less as a linear progression towards a peak, but more as a circular journey around a cluster of pivotal problematiques.

---

[31] Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, p. 231.

PART ONE

A GENEALOGY
OF
POPULAR DISSENT

The first part of this thesis investigates how the question of human agency has arisen during the modern period. I scrutinize how it has been framed and imbued with meaning, and how his framing and rendering meaningful is part of what human agency is today.

To limit the scope of this genealogical endeavor, I focus my inquiry on the theory and practice of popular dissent. My starting point is a sixteenth century French text, Étienne de la Boétie's Contr'un, or Anti-One. Despite its relative obscurity today, this text has played an important role in shaping modern approaches to dissent. Its legacy has given rise to a powerful tradition of radical resistance to authoritarian rule. I retrace the evolution of this tradition by focusing on images of human agency that it espouses at several historic turning points, the Renaissance (chapter 1), the Enlightenment and Romanticism (chapter 2), and the contemporary period (chapter 3).

A short qualifying remark is necessary before heading into the details of my genealogical inquiry. Most of my analysis deals with popular dissent in modern Europe. In this sense, my inquiry is historically and geographically specific. Yet, many ideas and modes of life that initially emerged in modern Europe have subsequently achieved worldwide influence. In the wake of this phenomenon, Eurocentric perceptions of human agency have acquired significance on a global scale. This is why the present genealogical inquiry into the framing of modern popular dissent is not only a historical analysis, but also an engagement with the political consequences that issue from the spread of European cultural hegemony.

Chapter One

RHETORICS OF DISSENT
IN
RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

Quoniam Dominus excelsus, terribilis:
rex magnus super omnem terram.
Subiecit populos nobis:
et gentes sub pedibus nostris.

[For the Lord is high, terrible;
a great king over all the earth.
He hath subdued the people under us;
and the nations under our feet]

Psalm 46, 11th-12th century version

After a celebratory spree in ancient Greece, particularly among the Sophists, the concept of human agency all but vanished in the Middle Ages. Life was said to be governed by laws that lie beyond human influence. The medieval world-view revolved around an undisputed theological core that left little room for privileges associated with subjecthood. Common people were reduced to spectators, impotent onlookers in a unfolding human drama. They were caught in an immense mesh of fate and sacrifice, spun by the hands of God and his quasi-divine earthly embodiments.

Or so at least resonates a common image of the medieval period. Somewhat correct, but oversimplified. Black and white, with black prevailing most of the time. But there was, of course, much more to the Middle Ages than an omnipotent God. The theocentric vision was only the frame within which a whole range of complex and highly diverse dynamics took place. Even in the pre-modern period strong ideas about popular sovereignty existed.[1] The transition from the medieval to the early modern period is equally complex. It is a long and gradual evolution that cannot be grasped satisfactorily by rehearsing a few key events deemed crucial by subsequent historical interpretations. Indeed, some argue that the respect for and interest in the individual, a key theme of modern thought, had its origin as far back as the second half of the twelfth century.[2]

Despite this blurring image one can identify a number of shifts that occurred in the transition from the medieval to the modern period. With the rise of Humanism during the Italian Renaissance, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the prevalent theocentric vision of the world came under increasing challenge. A good century later, the new humanist message gradually penetrated the remaining parts of Europe. It resurrected the notion of human agency and challenged God's monopoly to anchor all aspects of human existence. Humanism placed the subject at the center of history and expressed a profound belief in peoples' dignity, in their own ability to solve problems.

The present chapter demonstrates how these emerging humanist ideas provided the foundations for a tradition of popular dissent that espouses a strong belief in human agency. For this purpose I turn the clock back to 1552. We are in early modern France. Writing is Étienne de la Boétie, a young student who expresses profound disgust with all forms of governing that entail some people dominating others. He protests against divine authority, against royal absolutism and, maybe most importantly, against the deprivation of subjecthood:

> Is this a happy life? Can this be called living?... What condition is more miserable than to live such that nothing is one's own, such that one derives from someone else one's entire well-being, one's freedom, ones body & one's life?[3]

La Boétie's work first lingered in obscurity. But the rhetorical reflections that followed his initial fury eventually gave rise to a powerful tradition of dissent that deals with radical resistance to authoritarianism. This chapter takes the first step in retracing this tradition. It engages in a reading of la Boétie's work and examines its influence on ideas and political practices in sixteenth century France. Placing la Boétie in the context of larger discursive trends entails searching for unpronounced

---

[1] See Walter Ullmann, A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 200-228.

[2] Colin Morris, The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200 (London: SPCK, 1972).

[3] Étienne de la Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, ed. P. Bonnefon in Oeuvres Complètes (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967/1552), p. 49.

assumptions that are entailed in his work, assumptions about society, power, the subject and, above all, human agency. But analyses of social dynamics, especially if they date as far back as the sixteenth century, can never be authentic representations of events. My reconstruction of the context within which la Boétie's work unfolded is inevitably colored by my views of history, by the sources I have chosen to investigate, and by the motivations that lie behind my effort to come to terms with them. Hence, a reconstruction of historical dynamics must be sensitive to multiple voices from the past and compare various subsequent interpretations of them.

FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH: THE NEW HUMANIST VISION

Étienne de la Boétie was born in 1530 in Sarlat, a small town in the south-west of France. He grew up in a well-placed aristocratic family.[4] La Boétie wrote his main political text as a student at the University of Orléans. It is a relatively short polemical treatise, officially entitled Discours de la Servitude Volontaire. I will refer to its widely used alternative title Contr'un, or Anti-One.[5]

La Boétie addresses his main theme without hesitation. The Anti-One's opening lines reveal the author's profound abhorrence of all forms of governing that are based on some people ruling over others:

> [I]t must be said that the domination of several could not be good for the power of one alone, as soon as he acquires the title of master, is harsh & unreasonable... it is extremely unfortunate to be subjected to one master, whose kindness one can never be assured of, since it is always in his power to be cruel whenever he desires; & as for having several masters, the more one has, the more extremely unfortunate it is.[6]

---

[4] The text that comes closest to a serious biography of la Boétie remains Paul Bonnefon's introduction to the 1892 edition of la Boétie's Oeuvres complètes, pp. xi-lxxxv. In researching the context of la Boétie's life I also drew upon Jacques Joseph Desplat, La Boétie: le magistrat aux nombreux mistères (Le Bugue: PLB Editeur, 1992); Jean-Michel Delacompté, Et q'un seul-soit l'ami: la Boétie (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) and several introductions to French and English editions of la Boétie's writings, especially Simon Goyard-Fabre, "Introduction," Discours de la Servitude Volontaire (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), pp. 17-127; Nadia Gontarbert, "Présentation," De la Servitude Volontaire ou Contr'un (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), pp. 12-45); and Murray N. Rothbard, "The Political Thought of Étienne de la Boétie," The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude, tr. H. Kurz (New York: Free Life Editions, 1975), pp. 9-35.

[5] For a non-specialist in medieval French language, the subtleties of this sixteenth century text are not easy to decipher. Besides using specialized dictionaries, I contrasted the original text (or what comes closest to it, the so-called manuscript of de Mesmes), with various versions transcribed into modern French. I also compared my translations with the ones by Harry Kurz in la Boétie, The Politics of Obedience.

[6] La Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, pp. 1-2. My translation and comments throughout part one of this thesis concur with the common practice of using male gendered nouns and pronouns to denote human beings in general. I am concurring with this practice not to sanction its semantic form of exclusion, but to emphasize that the tradition of dissent I am analyzing is by and large a story of men talking about men. Subsequent parts of this thesis, especially chapter 5, will then further problematize the gender dimensions of popular dissent.

What precisely is the object of la Boétie's rage? Where are we? What is happening? We are, as mentioned, in the south-west of France, in the middle of a century that is characterized by rapid change, radical turmoil, and bloody civil wars. All power is claimed by the King, but he does not have the ability to enforce it. The regional gentry is seeking to profit from the power vacuum, the Catholic church desperately attempts to hold on to at least some of its fading strength, peasants rebel, and religious strife is soon to bring the entire country to a standstill.

As he was writing, la Boétie may have had the rebellion of Guyenne in mind, which dominated politics in the region at the time.[7] In 1548, when la Boétie was eighteen years old, thousands of repressed peasants of the Guyenne region opposed the gabelle, a salt tax, and started to rebel. In August the insurgents entered Bordeaux. Meeting up with sympathetic commoners, they soon took control of the city. Its authorities first entered into a dialogue with the protesting population and actually revoked the gabelle, but this conciliatory approach was soon replaced by an extremely brutal crackdown. Local authorities called upon Henri II, the King of France, whose army then crushed the rebellion and established an extended reign of terror. The leaders of the uprising were executed in various tortuous ways - decapitated, burned, broken, impaled, or torn apart by horses - as part of a carefully orchestrated public display of vengeance and intimidation that lasted for weeks.

If la Boétie indeed wrote about the 1548 uprising, the first of a series of big peasant revolts in France, then he did it without direct reference to the events. But even in its abstraction the message of the Anti-One was clear. Its description of servitude, violence, and suffering under a tyrant reflected the frustrations of a whole generation of commoners and captured the spirit of popular protest that soon was to take hold of Renaissance France.[8]

With or without the repressive regime of King Henri II in mind, la Boétie's essay was a devastating critique of existing practices of governance. Its condemnation of one man rule fundamentally opposed the prevailing absolutist theory of monarchy, which rested on the idea of a princeps, a ruler who has a divine mission and to whom unlimited obedience is due. The very term monarch is a combination of the Greek words *monos* (alone) and *archein* (to rule). Charles de Grassaille's Regalium Franciae, published in 1538, is representative of the prevalent position. It portrays the King of France as "imperator in suo regno," as "quidem corporalis Deus": a prince of divine appointment, a ruler whose power extends to virtually all domains

---

[7] See Juleps Jolly, Histoire du Mouvement Intellectuel au XVIe Sciècle, Vol. 1. (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), pp. 35-6.

[8] Henry Heller, Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p. 40.

except the law of his own succession. He reigns as an earthly embodiment of God, entirely independent of popular consent.[9]

La Boétie attacked the very core of these doctrinal foundations of royal absolutism. He dared to problematize the links between power and consent:

> The one who controls you so much has only two eyes, has only two hands, has only one body & has nothing more than what the large and infinite number of men in your villages have. All he has is the means that you give him to destroy you. From where does he get all these eyes to spy upon you, if you do not give them to him? How can he have so many hands to hit you with if he does not take them from you? The feet that trample down your cities, where does he get them if not from among you? How can he have any power over you except through you?[10]

La Boétie's contention that any form of rule is dependent upon popular consent is both radical and subversive in the context of sixteenth century France. A clear concept of human agency is implied in these lines, for la Boétie dares to speak of subjects and, even more courageously, of subjects who act independently of a divine will. Justifying this radical stance purely on secular grounds, particularly on the power of reason, logic and a natural right to freedom, he argues that sovereignty belongs to the people, and not to the King or to God. But before discussing the consequences of these claims in more detail it is necessary to place the Anti-One again in the context of larger discursive struggles that were waged at the time.

Some elements of la Boétie's writings reflect the ideas and assumptions of the humanist movement that started to take hold of France at the time. Humanism was anticipated by several medieval poets - Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch among them - and it reached its heyday in fifteenth century Italy. In its broadest meaning, Humanism refers to an "interest in Latin and Greek literature which sets a high value on the lessons to be drawn from it."[11] It is the gaze back to the classical period, the attempt to revive a long past culture, that gave the corresponding period, the Renaissance, its name. The revival of classical culture took on a specific form. Some commentators emphasize that the rereading of Hellenistic philosophy via Cicero, which was the most popular approach at the time, amounted to a revival of skepticism - the belief that 'man' is caught in a web of illusory perceptions, unable to gain secure knowledge of the physical world.[12] Hence, instead of searching for a Platonic truth, humanists were usually more concerned with rhetoric, with practicing the art of convincing others by drawing on the power of persuasion. It is in the

---

[9] J.W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (London: Methuen, 1941/1928), p. 283-4, xiii-xxii.

[10] La Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, pp. 12-13.

[11] George Holmes, "Humanism in Italy," in A. Goodman and A. MacKay (eds), The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe (London: Longman, 1990), p. 118.

[12] Richard Tuck, "Humanism and Political Thought," in The Impact of Humanism, pp. 43-4.

passion for rhetoric that they grounded their basic intellectual identity.[13] But the society at the time did not easily lend itself easily to such endeavors. Humanists first needed to carve out institutional and political spaces that allowed them to engage in rhetorical interactions. Universities provided these spaces. It is through them that Humanism gradually moved north and penetrated France towards the end of the fifteenth century.

When la Boétie commenced his studies, in the late 1540s, Humanism had already spread throughout most of Western Europe. The University of Orléans, one of the most prestigious universities in France, enjoyed an unusually wide range of intellectual freedom. Students read classical philosophy and waged debates about it. Criticism was encouraged. Within the confines of university life, a general atmosphere of free inquiry and discussion prevailed. Not surprisingly, la Boétie's Anti-One, composed during his student days in Orléans, bore the mark of this humanist environment. His opening argument, the condemnation of all tyranny, is presented as a critical dialogue with Ulysses, as narrated in Homer's Iliad. He continues to draw upon Greek philosophy, ruminates about the politics of Brutus or Nero, and illustrates his points by reference to ancient history and mythology. His style is abstract, theoretical, polemical. This is why many portray la Boétie's work as a typical Renaissance exercise in classical rhetoric.[14]

There was, of course, more to Renaissance Humanism than rhetoric, a spirit of free inquiry, and an interest in classical literature. Rhetoric was only the mean to a much more ambitious political end: Humanism was a revolt against a long tradition of grounding truth and authority in religion. It fundamentally restructured the relationship among the individual, the Church and the emerging State. A glimpse back to the Italian Renaissance illustrates this point. As early as 1484, Pico della Mirandola dared to reinterpret the Biblical creation myth. He argued that by the time God finished his creation, no archetypes remained with which to create 'man'. Hence, God gave his last piece of work the following advice:

> You, who are confined by no limits, shall determine for yourself your own nature, in accordance with your own free will, in whose hand I have placed you. I have set you at the center of the world, so that from there you may more easily survey whatever is in the world.[15]

Pico reveals here the overwhelming vortex of humanist philosophy, its *pièce de résistance*: 'man'. The focus of attention moved from heaven to earth, from the

---

[13] Jerrold E Seigel, Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[14] C.A. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du Lundi (Paris: Gernier Frères, 1858/1856), Vol. XI, p. 144; Paul Bonnefon, Montaigne et ses Amis (Paris: Armand Colin: 1898), vol. I, p. 150; Pierre Mesnard, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Siècle (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951/1935), p. 405.

[15] Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man, cited in Richard Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind (New York: Ballatine Books, 1991), p. 215.

truth prescribed by the holy scripts to the power of reason and persuasion, from the Church's doctrinal morality to a loosening of norms and a secularization of values.

La Boétie's <u>Anti-One</u> was deeply embedded in this humanist attempt to create a vision for the future, a vision that rested upon human dignity, to be fought for with rhetorical means. At the center of this tradition was Renaissance 'man', penetrating nature's secrets, venturing out into the sea to discover new worlds, producing stunning works of art that celebrate the human body. An unprecedented sense of optimism arose. People, unchained from the confines of God's will, became masters of their own destiny. Nothing seemed out of their reach. There was no hesitation. The subject was born and took responsibility. With it appeared an unlimited faith in human agency and in the ability to solve the world's problems. Paradoxically, like so much in the Renaissance, this process of secularization was accompanied by a new glorification of the church, a last resurrection before this institution faced the Reformation and embarked upon a journey that led towards what Nietzsche later called nihilism, or the death of God.

THE RHETORICAL ORIGINS OF POPULAR DISSENT

The particular way in which la Boétie sought to confront the problem of freedom and human agency made the <u>Anti-One</u> a much-quoted and combated essay in the centuries to come. His idea of freedom entails that no government can survive without the support of the population. He argues that there is not even a need to fight a tyrant, for 'he' is defeated as soon as the population refuses to consent to its enslavement.[16] Numerous passages in the <u>Anti-One</u> deal with this possibility of withdrawing consent. They later became the conceptual foundations of an entire literature on popular dissent. Here are its Renaissance roots, expressed in la Boétie's rhetorical Humanism:

> If one concedes nothing to them [the tyrants], if one refuses to obey them, then without fighting, without striking, they become naked & defeated & are no more, just as when the root is deprived of water and nourishment, the branch withers and dies.[17]

> Be resolved to serve no more & you will be free. I do not want you to hurt or unsettle the tyrant, but simply that you serve him no more, & you will see how he collapses under his own weight and brakes into pieces, just like a large Colossus whose base has been snatched away.[18]

By linking any form of government to popular consent and ruminating about the possibilities that could arise when this consent is withdrawn, la Boétie advances a

---

[16] La Boétie, <u>Discours de la Servitude Volontaire</u>, p. 9.

[17] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 10-11.

[18] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 14.

fundamental proposition about the nature of power. Contrary to the prevalent view of the time, he does not perceive power as something stable and restraining, a privilege that some have and others don't. Power emerges from popular consent. Maybe even more importantly, it is enabling, it provides people with the chance to create opportunities for social change. Power is relational, a constantly changing force field located in the interactive dynamics between ruler and ruled.

La Boétie was, of course, not the only early modern voice that opposed domination. François Rabelais' famous novels Gargantua and Pantagruel, published two decades before the composition of the Anti-One, described the traditions of laughter in sixteenth century France. This popular culture of humor was deeply subversive, for it ridiculed the official feudal culture and thus revealed its hypocrisy. Laughter was freedom, because "it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions."[19] Not much of this subversive style can be found in la Boétie's writings. His rhetoric was as humorless as the practices of domination he opposed. But his critique was also more direct than Rabelais', it went straight to the core of the problem, the issue of popular consent.

Other antecedents are more closely related to la Boétie's rhetorical assertion of popular dissent. Already in the early Italian Renaissance, various authors, such as Marsiglio of Padua and Bartolus of Saxoferrato, had openly condemned tyranny and advocated government by the people. But most of these and subsequent writers did not question the foundations of existing regimes. Instead, they were concerned with the proper functioning of the machinery of government. Out of this concern emerged a long lasting humanist tradition of giving advice to princes, kings, and magistrates. Humanists from Niccolò Machiavelli to Justus Lipsius counseled their rulers how to be virtuous, how to govern best, or how to retain a position of power in adverse circumstances.

La Boétie's writings clearly went further than these concerns with proper government, political stability and the functioning of power politics. What was more radical in his position was not the claim that any form of rule is or should be dependent upon popular consent. This relational perspective on power was implied in most of the advice given to the princes of Renaissance Italy and France. Where the Anti-One differed sharply from the advice-book tradition was in its claim that popular consent can be withdrawn at any time and that this act disempowers even the most ruthless dictator. It was this identification with the people and their claim to sovereignty that made the Anti-One stand apart from more immediate contemporary concerns with the machinery of the newly emerging modern State.

The Anti-One's radicalism is best exemplified in its opposition to Machiavelli's The Prince, which was published in Rome two decades before la Boétie's student days in Orléans. It is likely that la Boétie knew The Prince since it was available in

---

[19] Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, tr. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), p. 10.

France at that time and constituted normal reading material for students. Parallels between la Boétie and Machiavelli are clearly visible, albeit not at first sight. Both situate power in the relationship between ruler and ruled, an idea that was alien to the preceding medieval period. Pierre Mesnard, in his classical study of Renaissance political theory, detects this common humanist trait but also draws attention to the above mentioned important difference:

> For la Boétie as well as for Machiavelli, authority can only emerge through acceptance by the subjects: except that one teaches the prince how to enforce their acquiescence while the other reveals to the people the power entailed in refusing it. In other words, the remedy of the Anti-One, whose political effectiveness we know today, is passive resistance, civil disobedience, the refusal to collaborate with an order one disapproves of.[20]

Mesnard's summary makes clear that Machiavelli, at least in his best known passages, was primarily operating within a framework of realist power politics. Viewing the world as a place where the struggle for power and the survival of the fittest determines the outcome of events, he advised the prince to abandon all precepts of morality if he is to retain his position. La Boétie, of course, positioned himself at the other side of the social spectrum. His focus on withdrawing popular consent suggests that the Anti-One was written for the people and their quest for freedom, rather than for the prince and his attempts to cement authoritarian rule.

La Boétie's work represents the radical element of the emerging humanist movement. He dares to speak of a subject, places 'man' at the center of attention, and displays an unbounded optimism in 'his' ability to exert human agency and change the course of history. But the Anti-One has other faces too, faces that cannot be classified easily, faces that do not fit neatly into preconceived intellectual spaces, at least not the ones that existed in Renaissance France. These are the aspects of the Anti-One that most subsequent interpretations neglect. They are the pluralities of a text, the faces that grimace, mock, provoke, the ones that contradict, disturb and rebel. A short elucidation of them is necessary at this point.

La Boétie tried to open up possibilities to resist tyranny. But he was equally if not more concerned with explaining the puzzling lack of such resistance. Why is it that so many people serve a tyrant who, if the premises of the Anti-One are correct, they need not fear at all? Exclaims a perplexed la Boétie:

> If two, if three, if four do not defend themselves against one, this is strange but nevertheless conceivable;... but a thousand, but a million, but a thousand cities, if they do not defend themselves against one, then this is not cowardice, for cowardice does not sink to such a low point.... What monstrous vice is this then that does not even deserve to be called cowardice?[21]

---

[20] Mesnard, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Siècle, p. 400.

[21] La Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, pp. 5-6.

The vice has a name: voluntary servitude. La Boétie explains its existence in two ways, one deals with the force of customs, the other with a system of positive and negative privileges. Both of them entail, in essence, clear limits to human agency. The first is linked to a tyrant's ability to deprive his subjects of their memory of freedom:

> It is this, that men born under the yoke & thereafter nourished & brought up in servitude are content, without searching any further, to live like they are used to, & not being aware at all of any other situation or right than the one they know, they accept as natural the condition into which they were born.[22]

La Boétie's argument that the emergence of a quest for freedom requires a prior experience of it departs quite radically from his earlier polemics about a natural right to freedom. Facing the political reality of the time, he now admits that nature has less power over us than customs do. No matter how benevolent nature wanted us to be, our environment shapes us to the point that, against our own disposition, we learn "how to swallow, & not find bitter at all, the venom of servitude."[23]

There are three sorts of tyrants, la Boétie argues, the ones who achieve power by force of arms, the ones who have inherited their position, and, last but not least, the ones who are elected by the people.[24] In today's parlance we would call these three forms of tyranny dictatorships, monarchies and democracies. They are all equally ruthless and despotic, la Boétie shockingly proclaims. The ruler who is elected by the people may have come to power through more legitimate means and may appear more bearable at first sight. Yet, as soon as he consumes the authority people have bestowed upon 'him', 'he' rises above them and does everything possible not to relinquish 'his' position. Since depriving the people of their longing for liberty is the only way to secure this newly acquired form of power, the elected ruler and 'his' successors often surpass other tyrants in various vices, even in cruelty.[25]

La Boétie also illustrates how the population can be misled and driven into submission. When Cyrus took the Lydian city of Sardis, the example goes, its citizens rebelled against the occupation. Instead of simply repressing the uprising, which would have entailed the problematic and continuous employment of an expensive army, Cyrus opted for a much more subtle and powerful form of domination: he established brothels, taverns, public games and then encouraged the people to go and enjoy them. This kind of garrison proved to be so effective that Cyrus henceforth could subjugate the Lydians without the least use of force.[26]

---

[22] Ibid., p. 22.

[23] Ibid, p. 23.

[24] Ibid, p. 19.

[25] Ibid, p. 20.

[26] Ibid., pp. 35-6.

La Boétie mentions a second reason for the existence of voluntary servitude. It revolves around pyramidically structured systems of threats and privileges. Indeed, this is the secret of domination, he claims. The key to such a system lies in a tyrant's ability to corrupt his people, particularly those who strive for power and wealth. La Boétie explains how each ruler is dependent on his closest advisers, a half a dozen men, at most. They are accomplices in 'his' cruelties and share the profits of 'his' plundering sprees. In this way, the system replicates itself endlessly, because:

> Those six have six hundred who profit under them & they proceed with these six hundred as they do with the tyrant. These six hundred have six thousand under them, they promote them in rank and give them the provinces to govern or the finances to manage, so that they too become entangled in avarice and cruelty... Devastating are the consequences of all this, & whoever is willing to follow this trace will realize that not six thousand, but hundred thousand, even millions are tied to the tyrant by this one cord.[27]

Implied in these lines is the suggestion that a ruler can only maintain 'his' position if a large number of people profit from the existing system and thus have an interest in maintaining the status quo. The tyrant, who lacks independent foundational sources of power, is able to subjugate the people only through them. 'He' is protected by those who could easily end the charade if they had the courage to resist.

Despite its multiple faces, the Anti-One never loses sight of its radical humanist message. Even while elaborating on subtle systems of exclusion, la Boétie's main interest is not analyzing domination as such, but demonstrating how it can be overcome. In perfect humanist rhetoric, he reasserts his faith in agency, practices the art of persuasion, tries to incite people to overcome voluntary servitude. He constantly reminds the reader that systems of domination are fragile and dependent upon popular consent. As long as there are thinking subjects a tyrant's position is in danger. And there will always be thinking minds, people who cannot be fooled easily, who sense the weight of the yoke, people who open their eyes and reclaim their natural right to freedom.[28]

Renaissance 'man' looms around the corner, able to see it all, equipped with the vision, the will, and the strength to change the world. Will 'he' succeed?

PROTESTANTISM AND THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL

I now move to the task of examining the impact of la Boétie's writings. How were they received? How did they influence practices of dissent? How did they shape perceptions of human agency?

---

[27] Ibid., p. 45-6.

[28] Ibid., p. 30.

It is important to distinguish between la Boétie as an author and the <u>Anti-One</u> as a text. After its composition, a text takes off in multiple directions and becomes an object of appropriation over which the author inevitably loses control. In Michel Foucault's words, "writing unfolds like a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits."[29] One must then locate and explore the spaces that are left by the author's disappearance. A text is read in many different ways, it becomes a political tool that continuously changes shape and content. A reader of a text is, as Roland Barthes notes, an active producer, rather than simply a passive consumer.[30] Readers constantly reinvent texts, view them in light of particular experiences, note some passages and neglect others. Reading becomes appropriation. Appropriation becomes politics. Politics shapes our lives.

Viewing the <u>Anti-One</u> as an object of appropriation is necessary to understand how its intellectual legacy has given rise to a tradition of popular dissent. Not long after its composition in the 1550s, the <u>Anti-One</u> and its author parted company. La Boétie turned into a conservative diplomat concerned with law and order while his text became part of a long crusade to promote the humanist concept of free will. The remaining sections of this chapter join the <u>Anti-One</u>'s journey in its initial phase, the second half of the sixteenth century.

We are in a period that is dominated by one key phenomenon, the Reformation. Like Humanism, the Reformation is a complex set of ideas and events, susceptible to many different interpretations. At its most uncontested site, the Reformation was a movement that questioned the Pope's monopoly over the interpretation of the Bible. It tried to liberate Christianity from corrupt practices that the Roman Catholic Church had superimposed on it. It was a return to what was claimed to be the only authentic source of knowledge, the Bible. The Reformation was a second Renaissance, directed not at reviving classical Greek philosophy, but at reasserting the original faith, at halting the decay of Christianity. The Reformation's protagonist was the Augustinian monk Martin Luther, preaching and writing in the Saxon city of Wittenberg. Luther's famous posting of ninety-five theses to the door of his church, on the eve of All Saints in 1517, marked the beginning of a turbulent period that undermined most of the Catholic Church's spiritual, jurisdictional, and political power.

But the Reformation was more than just a fight against the corruption of the Catholic church. At its core, the Reformation was, as one commentator puts it, "a life-or-death attack on Humanism."[31] From this perspective, the main battle was waged in 1524/5 between Luther and Erasmus, a Christian humanist writing in Basel.

---

[29] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," tr. J.V. Harari, in P. Rabinow (ed), <u>The Foucault Reader</u> (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 102.

[30] Roland Barthes, <u>S/Z</u> (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), pp. 9-23.

[31] John Carroll, <u>Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture</u> (London: Fontana Press, 1993), p. 47.

The focus of attack was not the Papacy, but Renaissance 'man', the secularization of life, the faith in reason and free will, the very concept of human agency. Luther opposed Erasmus by arguing that true freedom cannot be reached by asserting human independence. Our own actions cannot lead to freedom or salvation because we are corrupt, helpless and entirely dependent upon God's grace. Luther's concern reflects a key dilemma that permeated Renaissance thought. Ever since Pico della Mirandola's celebration of the dignity of 'man,' a double-edged message haunted the rising humanist movement. It was double-edged, "for to be uniquely privileged man was also uniquely burdened."[32] There was no longer an omnipotent God that could take over the responsibility for humanity's fate. Renaissance 'man' had put 'himself' into a state of suspense, having taken over command, but not yet assumed responsibility for it. Luther recognized this dilemma. Free will, for him, was an illusion that robed us of all foundations for life. 'Man' was left with nothing to stand on, no fixed world-view, no certainty, only despair and sin. True freedom, he hailed, can only arise from faith, from obedience to God's will.

The tensions surrounding this dispute over religion and free will started to take hold of France at about the time when la Boétie ruminated about withdrawing consent at the University of Orléans. Protestant reformers, the Huguenots, were trying to practice their subversive form of Christianity. The Catholic church and its secular representative, the deified French monarch, increasingly saw their authority undermined and started to adopt more hostile positions. France was about to turn into a battle ground between adherents of the Catholic status quo and its Huguenots opponents.

La Boétie finished his studies and was admitted to the Parliament of Bordeaux in 1554. By then religious strife had already come to dominate political issues. Six years later, in the midst of various controversies triggered by the persecution of Protestants, la Boétie was entrusted with a delicate diplomatic mission. He was asked to mediate between his own parliament in Bordeaux and the court of King Charles IX, who had just succeeded his father Henry II. Catherine de Médicis, who had taken over the regency for her ten year old son Charles IX, initiated a politics of appeasement and gave la Boétie the task of returning to his Parliament, known for an inflexible Catholic stance, to explain this new, more tolerant approach towards the Huguenots. De Médicis' first attempt at appeasement failed. Violent confrontations between Catholics and Protestants increased and in 1562 she signed the Edit de Janvier, which was intended to protect the Huguenots from persecution.

A long report, a Mémoire, that la Boétie wrote about this edict reveals how much his opinions changed in comparison to the Anti-One, composed a decade earlier in his student days. La Boétie's rhetoric is gone, and so is the quest for freedom beyond the confines of the newly emerging State. His language is no longer one of anger, of defiance. It is the language of order, of discipline and of diplomatic

---

[32] John Hale, The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance (London: Fontana Press, 1993), p. 208.

maneuvering. La Boétie defends the King and sanctions the use of force to restore peace and order. While the Anti-One aimed at unchaining the people, the Mémoire provided instructions about how to further enslave them.[33] La Boétie the student angrily and passionately condemned the forces of Henry II that crushed the revolt against the Gabelle, whereas la Boétie the diplomat defended and revered these very same instruments of repression. But la Boétie could not control the fate of his earlier, radical text. The Anti-One was to take a different route. Somewhat like Foucault describes the evolution of madness since the classical age,[34] the Anti-One came to force at the end of the sixteenth century and turned into an instrument of rebellion. Henceforth it was treated as ill, hostile and threatening.

RAGE, REBELLION AND THE VOICE OF THE SKEPTIC

After la Boétie's death at the age of thirty-two (most likely of the plague), his intellectual legacy, including the radical Anti-One, was entrusted to his close friend, the famous essayist Michel de Montaigne.[35] Without Montaigne's protection and leverage, the Anti-One may have remained an unknown and obscure Renaissance text. La Boétie never saw his rhetorical treatise published. It only circulated as a manuscript among a small group of personal friends. In August 1570, seven years after la Boétie's death, Montaigne traveled to Paris to arrange the publication of some of his friend's writings, particularly poems and translations of classical Latin texts. But he decided against publishing la Boétie's more political Anti-One. Montaigne defended his editorial choice by arguing that this piece of writing was simply "too delicate and subtle to be abandoned to the rough and dense climate of such a mischievous season."[36]

The early 1570s was indeed a 'mischievous season,' and this even by the standards of a century that is dominated by insecurity, civil wars, revolts and brutal repression. The tension between the entrenched, defensive Catholicism and the new, dissident Protestantism was at its peak. Reacting to a number of intricate domestic and foreign policy issues, King Charles IX was persuaded that the Huguenots were trying to overthrow him. On Saint Bartholomew's Day 1572 he ordered the execution of Protestant leaders. Events escalated dramatically when the Parisian militia precipitated a grand scale massacre of Protestants, a slaughter that lasted for

---

[33] Étienne de La Boétie, Mémoire touchant l'Edit de Janvier 1562 (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1922), pp. 103-180.

[34] Foucault, Folie et Deraison: Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique (Paris: Gallimard, 1976/1965).

[35] On the relationship between la Boétie and Montaigne see Bonnefon, Montaigne et ses Amis, vol. I, pp. 210-224 and Gérald Allard, La Boétie et Montaigne sur les liens humains (Québec: Le Griffon d'Argile, 1994).

[36] Montaigne, "Advertissement av Lectevr," in la Boétie, Oeuvres complètes, p. 62.

six days in Paris and even longer in some provincial towns. An estimated 16,000 Protestants were slain.[37]

The Saint Bartholomew massacre, publicly celebrated by Pope Gregory XIII, was an important turning point in terms of both political struggles and the history of ideas.[38] The civil war in France intensified again. Catherine de Médicis, who had argued strongly for an empathetic politics of religious compromise, sanctioned the killing of Protestant leaders and adapted a much more combative stance. Huguenot activists too abandoned tolerance and moved towards an uncompromising defiance of all Royal authority. This constituted a dramatic shift away from earlier Protestant positions that advocated a strict doctrine of non-resistance to tyranny. The old position claimed that since God instituted princes, political authority was unquestionable and obedience to it was due as an act of religious faith. Calvin summarized this position perfectly when claiming that "there can be no tyranny which in some respect is not a defense to conserve the society of men."[39] But Luther had already abandoned this doctrine of non-resistance and argued that it is moral and lawful to oppose forcibly a ruler who turns tyrant.[40] The Saint Bartholomew massacre clearly fueled this more subversive and radical strand of Protestantism, which eventually turned it into a revolutionary political ideology. Pamphlets advocating radical forms of resistance started to emerge all over France: François Hotman's Franco-Gallia (1573), Théodore de Bèze's De iure magistratuum in subditos (1574), and Du Plessis-Mornay's Vindiciae contra Tyrannos (1579).

The Reformation, initially a conservative religious reaction, now began to look like a radical political movement. While trying to reassert Christian faith, it undermined the only theological authority and thus contributed to a further secularization of Europe, to the ultimate death of God. The most paradoxical aspect of this evolution was that Luther's doctrines, which were primarily aimed at undermining the humanist concepts of free will, turned out to be Humanism's most important catalyst. The Reformation became the ultimate affirmation of rebellious individualism. Liberated from the dogmatism of the Catholic church, 'man' now stood alone in front of God. Out of these theoretical foundations emerged an unprecedented revolutionary movement that transformed the entire continent. The

---

[37] See J.H.M. Salmon, Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century (London: Ernest Benn, 1975), pp. 183-195.

[38] Benedict Anderson, for example, argues that the selective forgetting and mythical representation of the Saint Bartholomew massacre played an important role in the creation of French national identity: Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1991/1983), pp. 199-201.

[39] Calvin cited in Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics (New York: Athenum, 1968/1965, p. 37.

[40] Quentin Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), Vol. II, pp. 16-9, 74.

concept of human agency was no longer simply a rhetorical positions. It was by now a radical political practice.[41]

La Boétie's political writings made their public début in the context of this emerging Huguenot radicalism. The Anti-One was first published in 1574, in French and in a Latin translation. Both were anonymous and ruthlessly mutilated versions of the original text. The pirated extracts were published as part of a militant Protestant pamphlet, the Réveille-Matin des François. It contained a detailed account of the Saint Bartholomew massacre and, directed personally against the King and his Regent, Catherine de Médicis, called for the "revolt of the many against the tyranny of one-man rule."[42] The actual text of the Anti-One was reduced to a dozen pages that included all rhetorical condemnations of tyranny, but none of the more subtle discussions on systems of domination and the engineering of consent. Two years later, the Anti-One was printed again in a similarly combative collection of essays, Les Mémoirs de l'Estat de France sous Charles Neufiesme, edited by Simon Goulart, a Protestant pastor from Geneva. This publication, reprinted twice in Holland, not only condemned one man rule and feudal hierarchy, but also provided a much more sweeping criticism of contemporary society in general.[43]

By the mid 1570s the Anti-One was relatively widely known and associated with radical Huguenot positions. However, this originally complex rhetorical text was by now reduced to an anonymous and impoverished political pamphlet, a mere battle cry for radical political action, a dogmatic assertion of human agency. Thus, the concept of human agency, which had emerged only recently in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, was helplessly entangled in the religious strife of the Reformation.

Montaigne was clearly upset by this myopic usage of la Boétie's work. He initially intended to give the Anti-One a prominent place in his own Essais, but given its entanglement in political battles this was not to happen. When the first edition of the Essais appeared, in 1580, Montaigne again refused to publish la Boétie's controversial text.[44]

To protect the Anti-One from being misused as a tool for radical political action, Montaigne downplayed its importance. He claimed that la Boétie wrote this essay "in his infancy, by way of exercise, as a common subject that had already been

---

[41] See Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints, pp. 1-21 and Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind, pp. 237-43.

[42] Réveille-Matin des François, with comments by P. Bonnefon in la Boétie, Oeuvres complètes, pp. 402-7.

[43] Heller, Iron and Blood, p. 75-6.

[44] See Montaigne, Essais (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), book I, chapter XXVIII, pp. 231-2.

treated in a thousand books."[45]   Is Montaigne's attempt to moderate the appropriation of the Anti-One a mere expression of conservatism?   Not likely. Montaigne was concerned with more than just hostility towards change.   His work embodies the skeptical element of Renaissance Humanism.   For him, the world is a place of diversities and idiosyncrasies, of unique events that cannot be assessed through a Platonic search for truth.   There have never been two opinions alike, he claims, not any more than two hairs or two grains are alike.   "Their most universal quality is diversity."[46]   Knowledge of the world can never be absolute.   People are deceived by appearances and hence cannot judge things objectively.   Montaigne's philosophical skepticism is not to be equated with a simple relativism.[47]   But it questions people's abilities to reach a consensus about what is good for them.   It raises suspicion about a dogmatic belief in human agency.

The dispute between Montaigne and radical Huguenots over the interpretation of the Anti-One set the framework for many subsequent debates about human agency.   Huguenots employed la Boétie's message as a battle cry to support their rebellious individualism.   Montaigne, by contrast, drew attention to the authoritarian aspects of the Huguenot revolution.   His view implies that dogmatic political actions, even if they seek more freedom, are likely to create new forms of oppression. Hindsight clearly vindicated Montaigne.   But in the late sixteenth century his critical voice drowned in the roaring of myopic political battles.

SUMMARY

In a world where the subject and the very notion of human agency barely existed, Étienne de la Boétie's Anti-One was a radical text.   The prevailing sense of authority at the time consisted of "a right to demand obedience as a duty to God."[48]   La Boétie broke radically with this deeply entrenched discourse.   He condemned unequivocally all forms of governing that entail some people dominating others.   The Anti-One claimed that people hold the key to social change, that any form of government, no matter how despotic, is dependent upon popular consent.   Because people can withdraw this consent, they can precipitate the downfall of even the most tyrannical ruler.

---

[45] Ibid, pp. 219, 231-2. For further comments on Montaigne's strategy to trivialize the Anti-One see Bonnefon, Montaigne et ses Amis, Vol. I, pp. 143-5; Mesnard, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Siècle, pp. 390-1.

[46] Montaigne, Essais, book II, chapter XXXVII, p. 881. Chapter XII (pp. 481-683), which is entitled "Apology of Raymond Sebond," contains Montaigne's most explicit engagement with skepticism. See also Max Horkheimer, "Montaigne und die Funktion der Skepsis," in Kritische Theorie, Vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1968/1938), pp. 201-259; and Paul de Man, "Montaigne and Transcendence," in Critical Writings, 1953-1978 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[47] Or so at least argues Zachary Sayre Schiffmann, On the Threshold of Modernity: Relativism in the French Renaissance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. xii, 53-77.

[48] Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, pp. xiv-xv.

La Boétie's rhetorical position was part of an emerging humanist challenge that symbolized the transition from the medieval to the modern period. Humanism defied the prevalence of God and placed humanity at the center of attention. With it reemerged the long lost notion of human agency, the idea that people are their own masters, equipped with the ability to change both the world and themselves.

The Anti-One's subversive message entered the public realm in the context of the civil war between rebellious Huguenots and defensive Catholic authorities. But la Boétie's text was immediately appropriated. It was bent, cut, mutilated. Virtually all of its rhetorical complexities vanished. Left were only the passionate condemnations of tyranny, which were then used to promote popular uprisings against the King of France. The Anti-One had turned into a political weapon for radical Huguenots, an instrument of resistance and revolution, an object of contempt and abhorrence. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Anti-One was reduced to a mere political pamphlet that did little more than inflate and dogmatize the concept of human agency.

The public appropriation of the Anti-One symbolizes how human agency was constituted at the time. The Reformation, which challenged the newly emerging humanist concept of free will, paradoxically provided it with unprecedented momentum. Luther passionately believed that freedom can only arise out of obedience to God's will. If humanity is deprived of this foundation, it will inevitably plunge into a moral and spiritual abyss. But by trying to purify Christian doctrines, the Protestant reformers undermined the only theological authority, the Papacy. The Reformation became an expression of rebellious individualism that eventually led to a secularization of Europe. Humanism emerged victorious. So victorious that it was to transform the entire Western world in the centuries to come. But one of Humanism's key components, the concept of human agency, had become impoverished to a narrow and dogmatic political tool, a dangerously repressive affirmation of the newly gained independence from God and 'his' earthly embodiments.

Chapter Two

THE
ROMANTIC RADICALIZATION
OF
POLITICAL PROTEST

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE
That you were God's voice: I believed it once,
In my sacred youth - yes and I say it still!
Heedless of our wisdom though
The rivers too thunder on and yet,....

Friedrich Hölderlin, "Stimme des Volkes"
tr. R.G. Eisenhauer

The previous chapter has shown how Renaissance humanists stepped out of the theocentric medieval discourse and placed 'man' at the center of the world. By focusing on Étienne de la Boétie's Anti-One, I demonstrated how the notion of popular dissent reemerged, first as a rhetorical argument, and then as a practice of political protest. The present chapter examines how this early and often tentative articulation of resistance turned into a radical tradition of popular dissent - one that started to influence social dynamics far beyond the boundaries of Europe. I observe the maturation of this tradition as a way of continuing my genealogical inquiry into the framing of human agency. The focus now lies on the period between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century. La Boétie remains central, or at least the dancing shadows of his quill.

Just as Machiavelli's work served as a catalyst for the burgeoning literature on the art of governing the State, la Boétie's intellectual legacy played a crucial role in precipitating the emergence of a body of knowledge that deals with radical resistance to government. But before this was to happen, the Anti-One and its more eminent Renaissance rival, The Prince, plunged into relative anonymity. In my attempt to come to terms with this phenomenon, I will brush over broad discursive trends, particularly the Enlightenment, to then examine more carefully how the Anti-One reemerged in the context of nineteenth century Romanticism.

The intertwinement of popular dissent with romantic ideas is important because the ensuing characterization of human agency has contributed substantially to how we today perceive the interaction between domination and resistance. Romanticism is more than simply an historical epoch. It is, as Paul de Man noted, a powerful source for our own contemporary consciousness,[1] a source that often does not receive sufficient attention, especially among social scientists. The same can be said of the tradition of dissent that emerged in the wake of the Anti-One. Most of the time it lingered in the margins of dominant discourses. Yet, because it has waged a constant struggle, both in theory and practice, with mainstream societal positions, the Anti-One's intellectual legacy shaped the representation of modern popular dissent.

ENLIGHTENED AND ANNIHILATED: THE SCIENTIFIC EROSION OF THE SUBJECT

Before la Boétie's intellectual legacy could unfold, French history entered calmer waters and the Anti-One disappeared from the stage of political struggles. The coronation of Henri IV signified the advent of a more tolerant phase, albeit a short-lived one. The Edict of Nantes, pronounced in 1598, guaranteed freedom of worship and ended almost four decades of bloody religious wars.

A combative text like the Anti-One found few interested readers in such a period of healing. It is unlikely that a marginal comment to an Anti-One manuscript, which reads "seditious against the monarchy" and is dated 22 February 1602, reflected popular opinions at the time.[2] Devastated by decades of religious and political conflicts, Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century was not looking for radical dissident ideas. People longed for a practical philosophy that could secure order and tranquillity. Neostoicism was among the emerging movements that provided such a stable framework though which people could orient themselves and deal with the problems of everyday life. Political Neostoicism, championed in

---

[1] Paul de Man, Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), esp. pp. vii-24, 95-100.

[2] Simone Goyard-Fabre, "Introduction" to la Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), pp. 34-5.

particular by Justus Lipsius, a professor at Leiden University, stressed that order was needed for the development of the individual. People were expected to obey a ruler who could provide the discipline necessary for the maintenance of stability. The ruler, in turn, was supposed to honor this commitment and govern fairly.[3]

The concept of popular dissent vanished even more when the recently gained tolerance gave way to another wave of absolutism. The new authoritarian practices were epitomized by the governing style of cardinal Richelieu and the subsequent reign of Louis XIV. After the Catholic Church had lost most of its power during the Reformation, the king, as the remaining established authority, was able to profit from the power vacuum and further extend his rule. Jean Bodin had already provided the conceptual foundations for this new authoritarianism. His Six Livres de la République granted the sovereign - now installed within a modernized absolutist State - the unlimited power of making law for itself.[4] The Anti-One literally drowned in a dominant societal discourse that once more elevated absolutism to the center of political practice. On rare occasions some obscure intellectual still tried to get hold of the Anti-One, suggesting that its subversive flame was not entirely extinguished. A text by the cardinal of Retz, written in 1633 and anonymously published in 1665, is said to be influenced by a reading of la Boétie.[5] And no lesser than Richelieu, who had read Montaigne's praise of la Boétie, gave orders to search all libraries and book stores on rue Saint-Jacques in Paris for this obscure text. Yet, when Richelieu was finally able to get a hold of the Anti-One, his grip on power was most likely secure enough that he could easily be amused by la Boétie's utopian rhetoric.[6]

While political practices were confined within the parameters of seventeenth century royal absolutism, the world of thought entered a highly innovative period. Expanding upon the propositions that Copernicus had advanced in the previous century, curious minds such as Newton, Kepler and Galileo ushered Europe into an unprecedented scientific revolution. Philosophers soon started to borrow the methods with which the spectacular scientific discoveries became possible. René Descartes occupies a pivotal role in this attempt to locate ahistoric and universal laws that govern both nature and 'man.' His much-rehearsed 'cogito, ergo sum' symbolizes the search for irrefutable knowledge. Although Descartes agrees with Montaigne that much is uncertain in the world, he asserts that the actual process of thinking cannot be doubted. 'I think, therefore I am.' The awareness of the thinker is a fact and 'his' capacity to reason opens up possibilities to understand the world.

---

[3] John Hale, The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance (London: Fontana Press, 1993), pp. 212-3. See also Gerhard Oestreich, Neostoicism and the early modern state (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[4] See Pierre Mesnard, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Siècle (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951/1935), pp. 473-546.

[5] Paul Bonnefon, Montaigne et ses Amis (Armand Colin: Paris, 1898), Vol. I, pp. 167-8.

[6] Ibid, pp. 168-9.

The quest for objectivity culminated in the following century, the so-called Enlightenment. In an influential essay, first published in 1784, Immanuel Kant portrays the this époque as "a way out," a process of emancipation, the liberation of humanity from a self-imposed state of immaturity.[7] Its is not my intention to engage with the various complex debates that characterize the Enlightenment - a period that exerted a monumental influence on science and the history of ideas. My objective is merely to provide a rudimentary, and consequently somewhat stereotypical, image of this époque, so that I can then analyze more carefully how la Boétie's intellectual legacy reemerged in the subsequent romantic era. Both the seventeenth and the eighteenth century produced a range of enigmatic political philosophers (Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hume and Kant, among others, spring to mind) whose work not only shaped, but also defied the mainstream discursive patterns that I am painting here with broad and slightly rushed strokes.

The dominant strains of Enlightenment thought embody the victory of reason over superstition, science over mythology, progress over tradition, and human kind over nature. They capture the death of God in the language and logic of physics, mathematics and modern rationality. But humanity now faced the problem Luther had anticipated one and a half centuries earlier: there was nothing left to stand on. Humanism had dismantled the theocentric universe and replaced it with rather shaky foundations, based upon honor and the dignity of man, upon what Machiavelli called virtue. The Enlightenment used a different strategy to regain the certainty that had existed during the medieval period. It now focused the word around an unbounded confidence in man's ability to reason. Science replaced Christianity as Europe's principal religion. Mainstream Enlightenment thought discovered the Archimedean foundation that modern 'man' had long searched for: an objectified Humanism, stripped of Renaissance rhetoric and skepticism.

La Boétie's radical portrayal of popular dissent stands in an ambivalent relationship with Enlightenment thought. Some of his ideas fit well into the new context, others contradict its most fundamental tenets. La Boétie's emphasis on natural rights, his belief in the power of logos and emancipation, clearly had some appeal to an audience who increasingly became captured by themes of reason, progress and the search for a secular autonomy of the Self. Not surprisingly, la Boétie's rhetoric slowly started to reemerge. Several new editions of Montaigne's Essais, appearing between 1727 and 1745, now included the text of the Anti-One.[8] This brought la Boétian rhetoric to an ever wider circle of readers. In the revolutionary period, between 1789 and 1792, the Anti-One was reprinted several

---

[7] Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Auflkärung?" in Werke, Vol IV (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), p. 169. This essay is often considered an extraordinary attempt to analyze critically an intellectual and social movement that had not even fully emerged at the time. See Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," tr. C. Porter in P. Rabinow (ed), The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 32-50.

[8] See Goyard-Fabre, "Introduction," pp. 45-6.

times on its own. But as radical Huguenots had done two centuries earlier, revolutionaries now appropriated the Anti-One to promote an activist celebration of human agency. The text appeared in various forms, alone or in annexes to other texts, prefaced and postscripted with combative introductions and comments. There is even good reason to believe that J.P. Marat's influential 1790 edition of Les Chaînes de l'Esclavage contains passages that are plagiarized from la Boétie.[9]

Despite this renewed interest in popular dissent, the Anti-One was unable to escape from the margins of Enlightenment thought, at least in part because la Boétie's rhetorical defense of human agency was incompatible with a quest for scientific objectivity. In a world of pure reason there was little scope for Renaissance skepticism, for ruminations about limits to cognition. Paradoxically, the Enlightenment became increasingly incompatible with the crux of Humanism, the concept of free will. In this sense Enlightenment and Humanism were, as Foucault notes, "in a state of tension rather than identity."[10] Expressed in a crass and simplified manner: if 'man' was still autonomous, then only as an observer, not as an agent. There was no place for human agency in a world that allegedly worked according to a set of fixed, universal and ahistoric principles. 'Man' was alienated, depersonalized - a small and irrelevant part of a much larger, automatically functioning machine driven and controlled by rigid scientific laws.

ROMANTICISM AND THE AESTHETIC REVIVAL OF HUMAN AGENCY

Romanticism was, amongst other things, a reaction against Enlightenment determinism. It penetrated France towards the end of the eighteenth century and took hold of a disintegrating world characterized by Napoleonic wars and turmoil. One of the key assumptions of the Enlightenment, the idea that the spread of reason and science would inevitably lead towards progress, towards a better world, had not materialized. With the failure of the French revolution, the belief in linear progress was shattered. Disillusioned with their predecessors' trust in reason, some romantics were now looking for suppressed voices in their cultural heritage. Rousseau was remembered, or at least the passages in which he defies his contemporaries and portrays the achievements of civil society as leading humanity to nothing but further enslavement. Reason, Rousseau claimed, alienates 'man' from nature, engenders egocentrism (*amour propre*), and turns humanity against itself.[11]

---

[9] J.P. Marat, Les Chaînes de l'Esclavage (Paris: Imprimerie de Marat, 1790), esp. the section on pp. 286-295, entitled "how people enslave themselves." See also Bonnefon, Montaigne et ses Amis, Vol. I, pp. 169-171.

[10] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," p. 44.

[11] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes (Paris: Gallimard, 1985/1755), p. 79.

Joining Rousseau in his philosophical journey back to the peaceful state of nature, romantics tried to escape the deterministic and suffocating world of scientific laws by creating space for self-expression and imagination. The focus now shifted from the realm of objectivity to the subjective, the unconscious and the mystical, from reason to emotion, passion and spontaneity. Truth no longer lay in science, but in aesthetics - which then comprised not just art or music or literature, but all aspects of human sensation and cognition. With this aesthetic move, predated by Kant, the whole register of human experiences suddenly appeared less marginal than before. The world centered again around the human subject.[12] Modern thought increasingly recognized, as Wolfgang Welsch points out, that the foundations of what we call reality are primary fictional. This is to say that our perceptions of the world are not authentic, but part of specific forms of life. "Reality," in this sense, was acknowledge as being "aesthetically constituted."[13]

Being skeptical of universalized norms, romantics generally refused to rely upon rational and abstract notions of the subject - they opposed the Enlightenment themes of *liberté, egalité, fraternité*. Instead, romantics celebrated the diversities of the human drama, its destructive and creative moments, the idiosyncrasies of the individual mind. Although Romanticism is often considered to be Europe's last common cultural approach, it embraced a different mantle in each of the various countries, walks of life and academic disciplines it penetrated. One would be hard pressed to find a lowest common denominator that unites French Romanticism with German romantic pioneers like Goethe, Herder, Hölderlin, Schiller, Schlegel, Schelling and Schleimermacher, or with the Anglo-Saxon literary Romanticism of a Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelly and Yeats.

Because romantic ideas are characterized above all by heterogeneity, it is not my task here to search for a set of common beliefs. Neither can it be my ambition to give a coherent account of the highly complex romantic movement. Instead, I focus on a specific form of Romanticism, the one that shaped the emergence of a coherent tradition of popular dissent: an activist form that often lacks some of the more subtle nuances that were articulated in philosophical, literary and poetic circles.

In the realm of politics, this activist form of Romanticism signified above all a strong reemergence of the concept of human agency. The subject was no longer simply a perceiver in the world, but again an agent. History was once more open to be shaped by the will and actions of people.

Which text could be better suited for this romantic celebration of human agency than the <u>Anti-One</u>? In 1835, against the backdrop of an emerging proletarian struggle and a radical insurrection that stretched from Paris to Lyon, the Abbot Félicité de Lamennais revived some of la Boétie's ideas. Initially one of the Catholic

---

[12] Terry Eagleton, <u>The Ideology of the Aesthetic</u> (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 102.

[13] Wolfgang Welsch, <u>Ästhetisches Denken</u> (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993), p. 7.

defenders of the Bourbons, Lamennais became one of the period's most outspoken critics. He refused a cardinal's position, was repudiated by the Pope, and subsequently turned into a militant advocate of proletarian rights.[14] His journal L'Avenir, founded during the revolution of 1830, was a well-known protest voice against the bourgeois monarchy and all forms of state intervention and repression. Lamennais published a new version of the Anti-One, hoping that is rhetoric would engender popular dissent and terminate the terror and despotism that had dominated Europe in the preceding forty years.

Lamennais' emotional and combative preface to the new publication of the Anti-One signifies Romanticism at its peak. We are in world of turmoil, struggle and darkness, a world in which the subject heroically strives for freedom:

> You who have faith in the destiny of the human kind, summon up your courage, the future will be yours. You will be persecuted and tortured, but you will never be defeated. Each great cause requires great sacrifices to become triumphant.[15]

In the wake of this romantic passion for revolt, interest in the Anti-One surged. The same year, 1835, two more editions emerged and the following year Charles Teste, exiled from France for his subversive activities, published a version transcribed into modern and thus more widely accessible French. The Anti-One became increasingly prominent, especially in the context of protest movements that followed the December 1853 *coup d'état* by Napoleon II. La Boétie's essay was reprinted numerous times, read in ever wider circles, and discussed in various forums, such as the prominent Journal des Débats.[16] By the 1860s the Anti-One had escaped from the shadows of Montaigne's protective Essais. Although still stripped of its rhetorical complexities, a more popular Anti-One was gradually able to lay the foundations for a tradition of dissent that espouses a strong notion of human agency. It is now my task to observe how this tradition spread beyond the boundaries of France.

THE DEIFIED SELF AS ROMANTIC HERO, GOING INTERNATIONAL

My first gaze at the internationalization of la Boétie's legacy is directed towards the American romantic Henry David Thoreau. Some have argued that his ideas were directly influenced by la Boétie.[17] This claim is at best speculative. Thoreau's close

---

[14] See Jean-René Derré, Lamennais, ses Amis, et le Mouvement des Idées à l'Époque Romantique (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1962).

[15] Félicité de Lamennais, "Préface de 1835," in la Boétie, Le Discours de la Servitude Volontaire (Paris: Payot, 1978), p. 39.

[16] See Goyard-Fabre, "Introduction," pp. 53-9, 123-124,

[17] Bart de Ligt, The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution (London: George Routledge, 1937), p. 104.

friend, the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, was certainly aware of la Boétie. The title of a poem and a notebook entry from early 1843 suggest that Emerson knew him, at least via a reading of Montaigne's Essais.[18] Thoreau's writings, however, are silent about the Anti-One, and so are most of his biographers.[19]

With or without knowing the Anti-One, Thoreau rearticulated many of its key claims and then embedded them into a romantic world-view. His writings imply, like la Boétie's, that any form of government rests upon popular consent, and if this consent is withdrawn, even the most authoritarian regime will crumble like a house of cards. Passive withdrawal, so called civil disobedience, is enough to trigger this active progress. Writing in protest against slavery and the war with Mexico, Thoreau argues in 1848:

> [I]f one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name, - if ten *honest* men only, - aye, if one HONEST man, in this State of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America... A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose.[20]

Thoreau's concept of withdrawing consent is embedded in a theory of power that could have come right out of the Anti-One. Yet, his main focus does not lie with the masses and their ability to overthrow a ruler. It is almost exclusively geared towards fighting for and protecting the autonomy of the individual.

Thoreau exemplifies the crux of political Romanticism, a Self that is entirely autonomous and has priority over everything else. It cannot interfere with the exertion of human agency. This tendency to deify the individual has been interpreted in various ways. Carl Schmitt called it subjectified occasionalism, a situation in which the romantic ego, embedding the final authority, relegates the world and everything else into a mere occasion.[21] René Girard, a structuralist literary critic, somewhat overstates the issue by talking of "romantic lies" - illusions that consider the subject as the center of everything and endow 'him' with quasi divine powers.[22] While Enlightenment thought had employed science and reason to restore certainty in the world, Romanticism anchored its world-view in a sovereign subject and an

---

[18] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Etienne de la Boéce," in The Complete Works, Vol. IX (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), p. 82; The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, Vol. IX, 1843-1847 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 28.

[19] Note, for example, la Boétie's absence in Robert Sattelmeyer's Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[20] Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," in Walden and Civil Disobedience (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966/1848), p. 232-3.

[21] Carl Schmitt, Politische Romantik (München: Duncker & Humblot, 1925), p. 24.

[22] René Girard, Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1961), p. 30.

unbounded trust in the power of human agency. The overall quest, however, remained the same: to fill the vacuum that opened up after the death of God.

Thoreau argues that the State may have superior physical strength, but it can never interfere with an individual's intellectual or moral senses. The State, "timid" and "half-witted," can inflict punishment upon one's body, but this strategy is of no match to a Thoreau who proclaims that "I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest."[23] While reconstructing the night he spent in jail for refusing to pay taxes, Thoreau romanticizes his experience in every possible way. The thick walls of solid stone, the iron door and grating, indeed, the entire power of the State's repressive apparatus could not reach his ego at all - a foolishness to treat him as if he were mere flesh and bones. His mind uninfluenced by all these pressures, Thoreau did not for a moment feel confined by these thick walls - a great waste of stone and mortar they were.[24]

Awoke the romantic hero: the individual who rises to the occasion and challenges the repressive forces around 'him,' the one who "stands resolutely and incorruptly against decadence, evil and deceit, until they are exposed for what they are."[25] Although he spent no more than one single night behind bars, Thoreau presented his imprisonment as the ultimate assault against an immoral government. In a State that supports slavery, he hails, the prison is the only ground where a just 'man' can live in freedom and honor.[26] From such a principled romantic perspective, earthly matters, even one's own life, are to be submitted to the more important fight against all institutions that repress individuality and free will. For romantics, nothing can touch the autonomous Self, not the prison, not the repressive State, not even the subtle power of societal customs. The romantic subject can rise above the corrupt society, 'he' can escape and criticize its decadence from a standpoint of authentic individuality. Elements of Berkeley and idealism resonate in this position. Things, like stone walls and iron gates, only exist because they are perceived by our mind. Even if objects outside this mental sphere exist by themselves, they cannot have qualities of their own. Their appearance is constructed by and subjected to the individual's free will. Nothing exists outside the mind.

It is important to remember that the speculative idealism and the strong notion of human agency that is entailed in this deification of the Self was an important but not uncontested position within romantic thought. Other forms of Romanticism flourished at the same time. Consider, for example, the feminist Romanticism that evolved parallel to the canonical masculine one. This body of literature shared some of the above mentioned themes, such as the hostility towards authority, a sense of identification with the victim, or a focus on emotions and the construction of

---

[23] Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," p. 236.

[24] Ibid., pp. 236-9.

[25] David Morse, Perspectives on Romanticism (London: MacMillan, 1981), p. 37.

[26] Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," p. 233.

subjectivities.[27] But feminine forms of Romanticism also differed in various crucial aspects. Most women writers, such as Mary Shelly, Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft, or Dorothy Wordsworth did not pursue the search for boundless creative imagination or a visionary freedom beyond the confines of the state. Instead, they were concerned with the social constraints that had been imposed upon them. They employed the novel as a site of contestation, expressing the manner in which their female subjectivity was intertwined with and confined by concrete daily concerns, linked to such issues as family, community, or female bodies.[28] This contrast is well reflected in the work of Margaret Fuller, Thoreau's contemporary and fellow Bostonian. Fuller clearly rejects the sense of autonomy and unboundedness that prevails in Thoreau's Romanticism. For her, the discursive prison walls are much thicker than they are for Thoreau. She draws attention to the social construction of femininity and masculinity, to the ways in which men are unable to think truly emancipatory thoughts because they are "under the slavery of habit."[29] Later parts of this thesis will return in detail to the themes opened up by Fuller. For the moment, however, I focus primarily on the dominant, masculine and activist heritage of Romanticism. This is not to suggest that this strain is more insightful or authentic than others, but to recognize that through its hegemonic status it has played a crucial role in shaping the formation of our contemporary consciousness.

The right to refuse allegiance to a government that engages in acts of tyranny is a theme that resonates not just in romantic, but also in liberal discourses. Nancy Rosenblum, for example, interprets Thoreau's Romanticism as a combination of heroic individualism and liberal democracy. She argues that Thoreau advances a libertarian agenda that constantly oscillates between a liberal concern for the public sphere and a radical romantic detachment from it.[30] There are indeed parallels between liberalism and the la Boétian tradition. The importance of the individual and a deep distrust towards government provides both of these strains of thought with an inherent anti-authoritarian core, at least in theory. But Thoreau also displays very strong anarchist traits. Disgusted with a State that endorses slavery and war, he wants to disengage altogether from this repressive institution, "withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually."[31] His two year stay at Walden pond is, of course, the embodiment of this withdrawal, the classical Rousseauean return to nature, the

---

[27] Julia Ellison, Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 11.

[28] See, for example, Meena Alexander, Women in Romanticism (London: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 1-17; and Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 2-11.

[29] Margaret Fuller, "Women in the Nineteenth Century," in The Essential Margaret Fuller, ed. J. Steele (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 312.

[30] Nancy L. Rosenblum, Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 103-4.

[31] Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," p. 239.

romantic search for what Olaf Hansen called the "essential paradoxes of selfhood."[32] Implied in this withdrawal, and at times explicitly articulated, is a much deeper distrust towards the State, indeed, towards every societal organization that controls the individual and 'his' mind. For Thoreau injustice is a necessary product of the machinery of government. An individual cannot be free as long as 'he' operates within the confines of the State. In some of his more combative moments, Thoreau assumes a passionate anarchist stance, declares war against the State and portrays government as a demonic force, a monster, "a semi-human tiger or ox, stalking over the earth with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot away."[33] It is this anarchist element that sucks Thoreau right into the vortex of la Boétie's legacy.

There are, however, still several missing links between an individualistic anarchist revival of la Boétie and a theory of collective resistance. Romantic dissent focuses on the primacy of the perceiver and the poetization of political practice. This pushes romantics, at least according to the influential opinion of Carl Schmitt, towards a situation in which conflicts are not addressed, but deferred, subjectified, transplanted into a higher realm of aesthetic imagination.[34] One can argue with such an interpretation, and I shall do so later. What matters at this point, however, is that the anarchist romantic generally does not seek power, but despises and circumvents it. Thoreau engaged in the political struggle around slavery by withdrawing from the State that endorses this repressive practice. He returned to the woods, to Walden Pond, retreating into the ultimate source of the romantic world-view, the Self. This anarchist form of individualism was subversive on many accounts, but it lacked the element of immediate and direct social engagement.

FROM ANARCHICAL INDIVIDUALISM TO A TRADITION OF POPULAR DISSENT

Some of the later Romantics tried to add a radical and more direct political dimension to the already subversive Thoreauean foundations. They shifted the practice of withdrawing consent from detachment to engagement, and from individualism to collective action. With this move arose a coherent and powerful tradition of popular dissent and an equally powerful assertion of human agency.

The more la Boétie's legacy spread, the more it became intertwined with the emerging anarchist movement. By the end of the nineteenth century leading anarchist historians, such as Max Nettlau and Ernst Victor Zenker, portrayed la Boétie as an important intellectual precursor to the likes of Pierre Joseph Proudhon,

---

[32] Olaf Hansen, <u>Aesthetic Individualism and Practical Intellect</u> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 131.

[33] Thoreau cited in Rosenblum, <u>Another Liberalism</u>, p. 109.

[34] Schmitt, <u>Politische Romantik</u>, esp. pp. 115-152, 222-228.

Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Max Stirner or Emma Goldman.[35] One can, indeed, hear la Boétie's voice resonating in Stirner's claim that if the laborer acts upon the insight that 'his' power is 'his' property, the State simply crumbles.[36] By the early twentieth century several anarchists started to draw directly upon la Boétie. Gustav Landauer, one of the key figures in the German anarchist movement, constructed his central arguments around a discussion of the Anti-One. Bart de Ligt, a prominent Dutch anarcho-pacifist relied upon la Boétie, and so did Simon Weil in her unusual fusion of Anarchism, Marxism, Stoicism, and Christian mysticism.[37] Weil, who was in many ways skeptical about the potential for social change, epitomized how the la Boétian legacy had acquired a new collective and practical dimension. The concept of popular dissent now contained clear revolutionary potential: "at certain moments in history a strong inspiration takes hold of the masses; then their breathing, their words, and their movements merge to the point that nothing can resist them."[38] To understand how the practice of popular dissent achieved this new collective dimension, we need to reach further back and observe what precisely occurred when la Boétie's intellectual legacy came of age at the intersection of the nineteenth and the twentieth century.

Various authors played a crucial role in transforming romantic individualism into a coherent tradition of popular dissent. I will focus primarily upon two of them, Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Gandhi. Both operated within anarchist and neo-romantic frameworks. Both played a crucial role in bringing the la Boétian legacy to a worldwide audience. Both were instrumental in transforming the concept of withdrawing consent into a mass phenomenon of far-reaching political significance. And, finally, both espouse a strong notion of human agency.

Tolstoy draws directly and extensively upon la Boétie's work. Violence can never be enough to keep a ruler in place. Domination over the populace, he claims, can only be sustained because people are being deceived, or because they sacrifice their freedom for small gains and benefits. To underline this point, Tolstoy inserts a long quote from the Anti-One, followed by commentaries that could have emanated straight out of a la Boétian cookbook:

> One would have thought that just the working people, who derive no kind of profit from the violence done them, would at last see through the deception in which they are entangled, and having seen the fraud, would free themselves from it in the

---

[35] Ernst Victor Zenker, Anarchism: A Criticism and History of the Anarchist Theory (London: Methuen, 1898), pp. 15-6; Max Nettlau, Bibliographie de l'Anarchie (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968/1897), p. 2.

[36] Max Stirner, Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (Leipzig: Verlag Otto Wigard, 1845), esp. pp. 244-248.

[37] Simone Weil, "Méditation sur l'obéissance et la liberté," in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1991/1934-7), vol. II, pp. 128-33; Gustav Landauer, Die Revolution (Frankfurt, 1907); Bart de Ligt, The Conquest of Violence, pp. 104-6.

[38] Weil, "Méditation sur l'obéissance et la liberté," p. 131.

simplest and easiest way: by ceasing to take part in the violence which can only be perpetrated upon them thanks to their participation in it.[39]

La Boétie also plays a central role in Gandhi's thought, primarily via the influence of Tolstoy. Gandhi incessantly stressed how "deeply impressed" and "overwhelmed" he was by Tolstoy. Thoreau, likewise, was acknowledged as an important source.[40] Not surprisingly, Gandhi ended up with a distinctive la Boétian approach to popular dissent. He theorized from the perspective of the masses and viewed social dynamics through the eyes of the ruled, rather than the rulers. Gandhi too argued that power is dependent upon popular consent:

> I believe, and everybody must grant, that no Government can exist for a single moment without the co-operation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their co-operation in every detail, the Government will come to a stand-still.[41]

Various romantic voices resonate in Gandhi's and Tolstoy's reading of la Boétie. But neither of them is a romantic in the strict sense of the term. Romanticism as a self-conscious and coherent cultural movement disintegrated by the middle of the nineteenth century, some would even say it ended with the death of Hegel in 1831.[42] Yet, romantic ideas endured far beyond the historical époque that is associated with them. Tolstoy's prime medium of expression, the novel, embodies the romantic suspicion towards scientific objectivity. It celebrates diversity, life's emotional and individualistic features. Many of Gandhi's more subtle arguments are constructed around a frontal assault at the core of mainstream Western thought, the concept of instrumental rationality. For both Tolstoy and Gandhi opposition to rationalism amounted to a return of the sacred, a prominent romantic theme. Tolstoy could only overcome the decay of his time, nihilism, through an affirmation of Christian faith and morality.[43] Likewise, Gandhi's political philosophy is rooted in a strong moral framework. All of his writings, he stresses, have a spiritual end.[44]

The two most distinctly romantic elements in Tolstoy and Gandhi are the belief in an autonomous Self and the refusal to cooperate with a State that violates the dignity and rights of its subject. Both express a strong belief in an individualistic

---

[39] Leo Tolstoy, The Law of Violence and the Law of Love (London: Unicorn Press, 1959), pp. 38-40.

[40] Mohandas Gandhi, The Story of my Experiments With Truth, tr. M. Desai (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959/1927-1929, pp. 90, 137/8, 160; Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, tr. M. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1984/1938, p. 105.

[41] Gandhi, Satyagraha, tr. V.G. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958), p. 157.

[42] Robert A. Caponigri, A History of Western Philosophy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963-71), Vol. III, p. 471.

[43] Tolstoy, The Law of Violence, esp. pp. 15-17, 21-24.

[44] Gandhi, The Story of my Experiments with Truth, p. 272. Among the ones who explicitly acknowledge the romantic dimensions of Gandhi's thought is Paratha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World (London: Zed Books, 1986), pp. 97-8.

form of human agency. Tolstoy was constantly drawn back and forth between engaging with society and renouncing it. Symptomatic for this are the final days of his life, when he decided, at the age of 82, to withdraw for good from society. He secretly left his family just to perish of pneumonia, a few days later, at the railway station of Astapovo: tragic and dramatic, the typical death of a romantic hero. The same romantic oscillation between social being and outcast is present in Gandhi's life. His activism and practice of self-reliance constantly subverted the power of the State. Indeed, Gandhi's very life, mythologized as it has become, represents the ideal autonomous subject: a skinny Indian lawyer who, transformed into a romantic hero, was able to defy the might of the entire British Empire.

Gandhi's writings on human agency and dissent were primarily intended to promote immediate social change. The vortex of this approach was satyagraha, a term coined in 1906, in the early days of Gandhi's involvement with the struggle that Indian immigrant workers waged against the South African regime. Satyagraha encapsulates a great variety of methods, including strikes, demonstrations, refusal to serve the State, or non-payment of fines and taxes. In this political context, the romantic hero, the satyagrahi, does not simply withdraw to Walden pond. 'He' boldly abandons 'his' mundane life, is willing to "sacrifice his property and even his family", and "suffers unto death" to fight for justice and a better world.[45] Satyagraha demands, Gandhi argues, total dedication from an activist. Sacrifice of the self is indispensable for a successful campaign of non-cooperation. Besides adhering to the principle of ahimsa, of nonviolence as an ethical principle, this practice demands from a satyagrahi to renounce all possessions, live in poverty, and take the vow of brachmacharya, of chastity. Gandhi's romantic hero must be willing to endure abuse, live in deprivation, fast as a sign of protest, or, as Thoreau had already advocated, freely submit to imprisonment:

> Our triumph consists in thousands being led to the prisons like lambs to the slaughter house. If the lambs of the world had been willingly led, they would have long ago saved themselves from the butcher's knife... The greater our innocence, the greater our strength and the swifter our victory.[46]

There are, in Gandhi's view, pragmatic political reasons for these rather extreme positions on personal sacrifice and self-reliance. A true satyagrahi could hardly be coopted or bribed by a government. 'He' is always ready to make any sacrifice necessary to push non-cooperation to its limits. Furthermore, a sustained effort of nonviolent resistance, conducted by self-sacrificing satyagrahis, has a profound psychological effect. It engages in a conversation with the consciousness of the

---

[45] Gandhi, Satyagraha, pp. 67, 314

[46] Gandhi, Satyagraha, p. 172. For further discussions see Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 35-104 and Raghavan Narashimhan Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 251-344.

opponent. It evokes pity, Gandhi claims, which may convert the opponent and lead 'him' to accommodate the protesters.

Before moving on to deal with the practical application of Gandhi's ideas, it is necessary to pause for a brief moment and draw attention to some of the contentious aspects of his positions. There is, for example, the masculinist dimension of his thought, which confirms the earlier mentioned recurrent gendered theme in canonical Romanticism. Many of the romantic images evoked by Gandhi, such as the male hero who boldly abandons his wife and children to fight for freedom and justice, are problematic. Such practices may uproot some forms of domination, but they also entrench patriarchal systems of exclusion. As a result, problems arise at the core of seemingly incontestable sights, as for example with the link between pity and power, the crux of a satyagrahi's attempt to draw popular support for 'his' activism. A Nietzschean interpretation would rethink this moral celebration of self-denial and self-sacrifice. It was precisely in these apparently unegoistic actions that Nietzsche detected a will to power, a thirst for triumph, a desire to subjugate.[47]

Notwithstanding these problematic aspects, the shift from radical individualism to collective action marked the beginning of a coherent tradition of popular dissent. The fact that authors of the stature of Tolstoy or Gandhi advocated this move was instrumental for its dissemination. Gandhi, in particular, added a truly global dimension to the theory and practice of popular dissent. He provided unprecedented political momentum to a notion of human agency that before existed primarily on a rhetorical level. His thoughts and deeds informed countless civil disobedience campaigns. Independently of whether or not we agree with the premises that underlie them, our perceptions of popular dissent have been influenced substantially by the ideas and practices that ensued from Gandhi's application of la Boétian rhetoric.

THE PROBLEM WITH ACTIVIST CELEBRATIONS OF HUMAN AGENCY

With the shift from radical individualism to collective action, the notion of human agency became intertwined with political activism. Far-reaching consequences arose from this fusion.

Tolstoy lectured workers on exploitation, encouraged peasants to stop obeying their landlords, and advised conscripts to refuse military service - and all this against the backdrop of the la Boétian idea that suffering is caused by one's own enslavement, that if one desires it, one can be free.[48] Gandhi's entire life consisted of

---

[47] Friedrich Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1991/1887), pp. 9-47.

[48] Tolstoy, The Law of Violence, pp. 37-42, 55-59, 98-99.

activism. His political engagement began when he was a lawyer in South Africa. Appalled by various race related discriminations against Indian immigrants, Gandhi became increasingly active in acts of social non-cooperation. Between 1906 and 1914 he led countless satyagrahi campaigns, including refusals of registration, strikes, protest marches, and fasts. Back in his native India, Gandhi and his increasingly numerous followers used the same political techniques to fight British colonial rule. Mass civil disobedience became a powerful tool in the struggle for independence.

Gandhi's activism demonstrated the practical implications of withdrawing popular consent. He was able to establish the dialectical link between intellectuals and the masses that Gramsci so convincingly portrayed as the key to successful resistance.[49] Representative for Gandhi's various campaigns of non-cooperation is the famous salt march of 1930. The production of salt, an indispensable product for every Indian, was a government monopoly and levied with exorbitant taxes. As a protest against this practice, Gandhi and some eighty fellow satyagrahis embarked upon a 240 mile walk to the Gujarat coast where they intended to extract their own salt from the sea. The immediate objective of this symbolic and carefully planned public defiance was the annulment of the salt tax. On a more fundamental level, the salt march was intended to undermine the legality of the colonial government as such. The satyagrahis tried to attract as much public attention as possible. They walked through many villages, where they paused, informed the people of their cause, and encouraged them to defy the law and manufacture their own salt. In some towns their appearance drew as many as 30,000 eager listeners. The satyagrahis also incited village headmen to resign and stop cooperating with the colonial authorities, an appeal that had considerable success. Although the British salt monopoly was never threatened, the salt march had a dramatic impact. It was the prelude of a powerful nation-wide campaign of mass civil disobedience. By mid-1930, Judith Brown argues, civil disobedience posed a severe challenge to British colonial rule in India.[50] Knowledge of the Gandhian technique of resistance had spread and non-cooperation was practiced in every province. Throughout the one year long campaign an estimated 60,000 people were arrested and many more participated in one way or another in acts of non-cooperation, for example by boycotting foreign cloth.[51]

The campaign that followed the salt march was one of the first cases of carefully planned and coordinated mass civil disobedience, a manifestation of massive popular dissent. Although the campaign did not uproot the British colonial empire, it demonstrated that the notion of withdrawing consent could no longer be dismissed

---

[49] Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, tr. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1985/1929-1935), pp. 5-24, 334.

[50] Judith Brown, Gandhi and Civil Disobedience (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 123.

[51] Ibid., p. 124.

as a mere utopian dream, an irrelevant rhetorical exercise. La Boétie had stepped out of his long shadow and entered the realm of practice - but with what consequences?

To demonstrate the practical relevance of the la Boétian idea of popular dissent, Gandhi reduced complex rhetorical arguments to a few parsimonious propositions. This narrowing down of the concept of human agency occurred whenever activists appropriated the Anti-One to promote a particular political cause. It happened when radical Huguenots mutilated the Anti-One during the Reformation and when Lamennais plunged it, with his own combative preface, into the anarcho-socialist struggle of the mid-nineteenth century. Michel de Montaigne, as mentioned before, vehemently opposed this imprudent appropriation, and so did the famous literary critic C.A. Sainte-Beuve two centuries later. Writing in November 1853, he noted that in past and present times the Anti-One, a brilliant exercise in classical rhetoric, had always been misused by short-sighted trouble makers who transformed it into a "torch and firebrand."[52]

Notwithstanding Montaigne's and Sainte-Beuve's criticism, a reduction of rhetorical complexities to a few parsimonious propositions may have a number of distinct advantages, especially in the realm of political practice. A simple slogan, like "people power," "long live the revolution," or "we are the people" can provide a movement of popular dissent with a sense of unity and with the momentum necessary to unleash its potential of resistance. But this activist promotion of human agency is a double-edged sword. Gandhi's political engagement demonstrates why. His celebration of human agency led, paradoxically, to an annihilation of the subject. Much like some describe the changing nature of Romanticism in general,[53] Gandhi's activism relocated human agency from rebellious individualism to an almost functionalist position that reduced the role of individuals to the logic of societal totality. During Gandhi's salt march, for example, it was always assumed that everyone would agree with the direction and desirability of the particular change that was intended. Minorities within the protesting population were irrelevant. All that mattered were the masses and the uniform function that was superimposed on often diversely motivated individuals.

Neo-romanticism had moved full circle and returned to the determinism it initially reacted against. Gandhi's totalizing conception of human agency is a far cry from Thoreau's warning that "there is but little virtue in the action of masses of men."[54] For Gandhi the protesting population is a coherent and homogeneous element which, like the subject in Hegel's philosophy of history, becomes conscious of itself and dialectically proceed to unify humanity. This approach implies that a

---

[52] C.A. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du Lundi (Paris: Genier Frères, 1858), Vol. XI, p. 144-7.

[53] Nader Saiedi, The Birth of Social Theory (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 64-98.

[54] Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," p. 229.

great number of individuals can reach a consensus about what kind of action is desirable for what purpose. Some elements of Gandhi' thought suggest that he may have been aware of the dangers entailed in a totalizing approach to dissent. Faithful to his neo-romantic frame of reference, he acknowledges that there cannot be authentic knowledge, that everything "can be seen from no less than seven points of view, all of which are probably correct by themselves."[55] Indeed, his overarching focus on nonviolence is precisely an expression of this uncertainty, an admission that since truth cannot be known, nobody should possess the ultimate right to punish. But there is nevertheless truth in Gandhi's world. It is not factual in the Cartesian sense. It is spiritual, not "the relative truth of our perception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God."[56] Discovering this truth requires arranging one's life such that one is striving incessantly for spiritual perfection. Activism is part of this endless quest, it is its essence, as the very meaning of the term satyagraha - truth force - suggests.[57]

Gandhi's fusion of religion, morality, and activism is highly problematic. Even on a purely personal level, the Gandhian notion of truth projects a strong image of moral righteousness. The romantic deified Self, speaking from a privileged and influential societal position, assumes that what is good for 'him' is necessarily also good for everyone else. Nietzsche would remind us that such a position mistakenly assumes that the highest values must have some origin of their own. Gandhi ignores that there is a will to truth, that there is value in truth, and that it is always the 'moral' ones themselves who define the parameters of morality. He elevates one particular form of truth to the status of spirituality and by doing so excludes a multitude of other ideas and practices from reaching this moral sanctuary. A Nietzschean position would, instead, recognize untruth as a condition of life and explore issues of inclusion and exclusion by investigating the subjective origins of all moral values.[58] But this does not mean that Gandhi's theory and practice of dissent is irrelevant. Civil disobedience campaigns can undoubtedly promote spectacular social change. Yet, if they are embedded in a totalizing and moralizing framework, they fail to take issue with more entrenched forms of domination. Maybe Karl Mannheim was not too far off the mark when he claimed, somewhat dramatically, that all romantic thought has an inherent conservative core.[59]

---

[55] Gandhi, The Story of my Experiments with Truth, p. 271.

[56] Ibid., p. xiii.

[57] Gandhi, Satyagraha, p. 3. On absolute versus relative truth in Gandhi see Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 149-176.

[58] Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, pp. 19-20; and Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1988/1886), pp. 8-10.

[59] Karl Mannheim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1953), pp. 74-164.

SUMMARY

This chapter has continued a genealogical inquiry into the framing of human agency during the modern period. The focus now rested on the constitution of the theory and practice of popular dissent from the end of the Renaissance to the nineteenth century.

The humanist discourse that replaced the medieval world view clearly survived the death of Renaissance 'man.' Humanism, which placed the subject at the center of history, successfully dealt with various onslaughts - constantly changing appearance and focus, it gradually turned into the vortex of Western thought.

The tradition of dissent that grew out of la Boétie's work became entangled in these superseding humanist interpretations. After having achieved prominence in radical Huguenot circles during the Reformation, the Anti-One returned to the realm of anonymity. La Boétie's notion of human agency was overpowered by the scientific revolution that dominated the subsequent two centuries. The skeptical Humanism of the Renaissance gave way to an Enlightenment celebration of reason and science. While this secular objectivism ensured the final transition from the medieval to the modern world, it also annihilated the agent. Or so at least resonate some of the dominant intellectual trends of the period. In a universe that was perceived to function according to a set of predetermined and scientifically assessable principles, the notion of human agency became largely irrelevant. The world was still interpreted in a humanist way, but the central position that 'man' occupied was primarily one of rational observer, rather than agent.

Romanticism reacted against the rationalism and determinism of mainstream Enlightenment thought. It reintroduced the subject as agent by shifting the focus from the realm of detached objectivity to the one of emotion, passion and individual autonomy. Aesthetics became central. While the Enlightenment had grounded its world view in science and reason, Romanticism constructed its Archimedean point around an autonomous Self. This meant, above all, that history was again open to be shaped by human agency. The Anti-One reemerged in the wake of this discursive shift. Its popularity surged in the context of the labor unrest that dominated France in the 1830s. It became an object of scholarly attention, was reprinted numerous times and gradually spread beyond French national borders.

Thoreau was among the ones who popularized many of the Anti-One's themes and embedded them in a romantic framework. Although his theory of power was virtually identical with the Anti-One's claim that any form of government depends upon popular consent, Thoreau's main focus rested with issues of individual autonomy rather than with the promotion of social change. He strove for the highest romantic aspiration, a Self that is autonomous and has priority over everything else. The embodiment of this canonical masculine version of Romanticism is the bold hero who successfully defies all forces around 'him' and withdraws altogether from the

State, which is perceived to be the main obstacle to freedom and self-fulfillment. This practice of anarchical individualism may have lacked an element of direct political engagement, but it provided a crucial theoretical stepping stone for the creation of a coherent tradition of popular dissent.

Romantic Humanism achieved political momentum when Tolstoy and Gandhi rearticulated and implemented la Boétie's and Thoreau's theoretical claims. They shifted foci from individual to collective action and from rejecting society to engaging with it. Human agency once more acquired a new dimension. Popular dissent became a mass phenomenon of far-reaching political significance. Gandhi in particular was instrumental in demonstrating the practical relevance of la Boétie's rhetorical links between power and consent. There are many problematic aspects in Gandhi's activist approach to human agency. Yet, the world-wide attention he received not only helped to establish a coherent tradition of popular dissent, but also influenced considerably how we today perceive the interaction between domination and resistance.

Chapter Three

LATE MODERN LEGACIES

OF

POPULAR DISSENT

> How this world suffers from being crushed between the four walls of a book in order to become the world of men! If it is then placed in the hands of speculators and madmen who force it to advance faster than it should go, isn't this more than mere bad luck? Fighting - come what may - against this doom with the help of its magic, opening up insatiable walks in the replacement-road's wing: this is the task of the Dawnbreakers.
>
> René Char, "Rougeur des Matinaux"
> tr. M. Worton

The previous two chapters traced the modern idea of popular dissent back to its Renaissance origins and then observed its radicalization during the romantic period. The present chapter concludes my genealogical inquiry by analyzing how the legacy of this humanist tradition has evolved in the twentieth century. I examine how late modern notions of popular dissent have shaped and delineated our understanding of human agency. This delineation has far-reaching consequences, for our perceptions of what human agency is and how it functions determine to a considerable extent its practical applicability.

The dancing shadows of La Boétie's quill remain central to my inquiry. I focus in particular on two contemporary manifestations of popular dissent that operate in the broad conceptual wake of the Anti-One. The first one - civil disobedience - is

associated with liberal ideas. The second - direct action - is embedded in anarchist and libertarian frameworks. These are, of course, not the only late modern practices of popular dissent. There are countless other forms of resistance that espouse different ideas about human agency and social change. My continuous focus on the la Boétian legacy is not to deny the existence of diversity. Rather, it is to use the advantage of a relatively unknown representation of dissent to draw attention to the emergence of more familiar contemporary narratives about human agency.

Outlining the framing of the familiar through unfamiliar images entails, of course, a number of paradoxes. This is particularly the case with la Boétie's intellectual legacy. By the early twentieth century this legacy had left the realm of obscurity. Through the writings and activism of Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi the ideas first expressed in the Anti-One became diffused to large audiences and formed the theoretical vortex of an important tradition of dissent. One could now recognize the practical significance of la Boétie's rhetorical claim that any form of rule is dependent upon popular consent and that even the most ruthless dictatorship crumbles if this consent is withdrawn. Paradoxical about this evolution is the fact that while the Anti-One's arguments were now discussed and applied on a global scale, the actual text that provided much of the initial intellectual momentum became blurred, effaced and all but vanished from the memory of most who either feared or thrived upon its ideas. A few rare authors still go back and read the original sixteenth century text, some are aware of it via references from secondary sources, but for most who maneuver within the context of its ideas, the Anti-One is at best an obscure essay from a far distant dark age. Drawing attention to this aspect is not to essentialize la Boétie's writings, but to point out that my task now is to navigate in this blurred context, to locate the shadows of the Anti-One, the spaces that are left by the disappearance of not only the author, but also of the text.

The diffusion of la Boétian practices of dissent has not necessarily widened the scope of human agency. The intellectual legacy of the Anti-One became channeled into the discursive confines of late modern life. Much of this contemporary sensibility has ensued, to simplify matters, from the interaction between the romantic attachment to an autonomous Self and the Enlightenment's quest for certainty in an age of turmoil and constant flux. The resulting fusion of reason and free will squeezed the notion of human agency into a narrow, positivist view of the world.

Grand theoretical approaches became one of the dominant intellectual efforts to understand contemporary dissent. But the positivist assumptions that lie at the heart of such approaches uphold and freeze one specific image of dissent to the detriment of others. They crush the world, in René Char's imagery, between 'four walls of a book in order to become the world of men.' To appreciate the far-reaching consequences that issue from this phenomenon, this chapter first grapples with the discursive foundations of late modern life, with the underlying assumptions we have inherited and which continuously shape the interactions between domination and resistance. The remaining sections scrutinize civil disobedience and direct action as

specific manifestations of contemporary popular dissent. Once this last genealogical task is fulfilled, I will embark on the Dawnbreakers' task of 'opening up insatiable walks in the replacement-road's wing,' - walks that lead towards alternative understandings of human agency and dissent.

SUBSTITUTING GOD: MODERNITY AND THE QUEST FOR CERTAINTY

What cognitive frameworks have we inherited from half a millennium of modern discursive practices? What are the underlying assumptions that frame the interaction between domination and resistance in the late twentieth century? What actually is modernity? A highly ambiguous concept. An elusive set of complexities that defy single meanings.

Modernity has no clear beginning and end. While its roots reach back somewhere to the early days of Renaissance Humanism, scholars today are engaging in relentless disputes about whether we find ourselves in a late modern age or whether we have already taken the first steps into a beyond, some kind of postmodernity. I tend to side with the former. This entails consequences. The recognition that we have not yet transgressed modernity means that we cannot look at it from the outside. A self-critical look at modern discursive practices can never be detached from the eye of the viewer. It is more like a look in a mirror - an incomplete image of reflections and distortions, a mixture of vanity and self-doubt. But if we are to explore and stretch the dimensions of human agency in the late modern age we must nevertheless grapple with the contours of life reflected in the mirror, even if we know that they will always remain distorted images.

Modernity is often defined in opposition to previous époques. It is seen as a reaction, a discontinuity. It is portrayed, somewhat like Kant characterized the Enlightenment, as a way out, an "exit" from the traditionalism of the preceding feudal period.[1] The modern world is then juxtaposed to the values of the medieval and classical periods. Anthony Giddens is among many authors who build sophisticated discussions of modernity from an analysis of its discontinuities with pre-modern institutions and modes of behavior.[2] Countless dynamics started to unfold during the modern period. They are linked to such features as industrialization, globalization and advances in technology and weapons of mass destruction. The State, with all its disciplinary practices, emerged as one of the dominant actors in this rapidly changing world. It is not my task here to search for a synthesis, a few parsimonious features that could reduce these complex dynamics to a common denominator. Such a task would be doomed to fail from the start.

---

[1] Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Auflkärung?" in Werke, Vol IV (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), p. 169.

[2] Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

Instead of looking at modernity as a historical period or a set of institutions, I follow Foucault's advice and treat it primarily as an attitude, "a way of thinking and feeling", "a mode of relating to contemporary reality."[3] Modernity, then, is the broad common theme that runs through a set of diverse discursive practices which, superseding and intersecting with each other, have come to constitute our contemporary consciousness.

The dominant frame of late modern consciousness ensued to a considerable extent from the tension between Romanticism and the Enlightenment. What has been retained from the romantic ideal is the autonomy of the Self, the quest for independence and self-determination, the belief that the subject can shape history. This form of modern idealism was then supplemented with the scientific heritage of the Enlightenment, the desire to systematize, to search for rational foundations and certainty in a world of turmoil and constant flux.

The romantic element of our contemporary consciousness is epitomized in Hegel. He was, according to Habermas, the "first philosopher to develop a clear concept of modernity."[4] What makes modernity different in Hegel's view is its attempt at self-understanding, the desire to establish normativity out of itself rather than by way of borrowing from or rejecting the ideas of a surpassed epoch. The keystone of this process of self-grounding is the principle of subjectivity, which, at least in Habermas' reading of Hegel, is linked to a perception of freedom that recognizes an individual's autonomy and responsibility in the realms of action and reflection.[5] The Enlightenment's contribution was to provide this subjectivity oriented approach with stable and scientific foundations. Jean Baudelaire, in a much-cited passage, draws attention to the recurring quest for certainty in a world of turbulence and chaos. While describing modernity as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent," Baudelaire points towards the constant attempts to discover underlying patterns behind these ephemeral features. He describes the recurring quest for essences as a desire to "extract the eternal out of the transient."[6] With the fusion of romantic idealism and Enlightenment rationalism, Humanism reached its peak, at least in theory. The subject now possesses both the privilege of free will and the capacity to assess 'his' environment in a detached and objective way.

Within the modern attempt to fuse subjectivity and science, free will and reason, there is ample room for discussion and diversity, more than in any preceding period. Indeed, Hegel considers the right to criticism as one of modernity's key

---

[3] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," tr. C. Porter in P. Rabinow (ed), <u>The Foucault Reader</u> (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 39.

[4] Jürgen Habermas, <u>Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</u> (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 13.

[5] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 13-30, 34-58.

[6] Jean Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne," in <u>Oeuvres Complètes</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 1163.

characteristics.[7] The breathing space necessary for criticism was provided by the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Such a public sphere, or civil society, is the realm within which pluralistic interests and ideas compete with each other without being directly controlled by the Church or the State's coercive apparatus.[8] Within this space provided for public discussion, passionate debates are waged about all aspects of modern life. Virtually every opinion, every thought, every theory is attacked, refuted or at least submitted to intense and sustained scrutiny. The debate about human agency is one of these various sights of contestation. There are, as mentioned before, many narratives of modern dissent, accounts that tell different stories about human agency, resistance, emancipation and potentials for social change.

However, while the waging of fierce intellectual debates emerged as a key feature of modernity, the range of these debates is not as boundless as it appears at first sight. William Connolly leads us right to the core of this paradoxical issue. He emphasizes that modern debates all have a distinctive character: "We think restlessly within familiar frameworks to avoid thought about how our thinking is framed. Perhaps this is the ground of *modern* thoughtlessness."[9]

The contours of this modern framing process have to a large extent been drawn by the recurring unwillingness to deal with the death of God. The refusal to accept the contingency of foundations has been a constant modern theme ever since la Boétie and his fellow Renaissance humanists disenchanted the world and placed 'man' at its center. When the old theocentric world crumbled, when the one and only commonly accepted point of reference vanished, the death of God became the key dilemma around which modern debates were waged. Yet, instead of accepting the absence of stable foundations and dealing with the new burden of responsibility, many prominent modern approaches embarked upon desperate evasive attempts to find replacements for the fallen God. Connolly once more:

> Modern necessity is lodged in the earlier Christian demand to have a single, omnipotent God, in love with humanity, offering hope of salvation, and demanding universal obedience to his will. When that God is weakened, when the faith of individual believers must be intensified to compensate for the contraction of cultural space for a common faith, the advent of nihilism occurs. For now attempts to find a substitute for the common faith run into grave difficulties while the insistence that such a substitute must be found remains intact.[10]

The previous two genealogical chapters have pointed out how this quest for certainty took different shapes in various stages of the modern project. For

---

[7] Habermas, <u>Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</u>, p. 27.

[8] See Jürgen Habermas, <u>Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit</u> (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990/1962).

[9] William E. Connolly, <u>Political Theory and Modernity</u> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993/1988), p. 4.

[10] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 13.

Renaissance humanists it centered around a skeptical and rhetorical belief in human agency and the virtue of 'men.' During the Enlightenment it was trust in science and universal reason. For romantics it was the belief in a deified Self, and for Marxists, one could add, it consisted of faith in history's teleological dimension.

This search for essences and certainty has remained one of the prominent themes in the twentieth century, a period haunted by rapid change, uncertainty and devastating global conflicts. The contemporary quest for a foundational authority manifests itself primarily in a desire to control, to take charge of the world. Max Weber famously described how attempts at rationalization resulted in the modern bureaucratic State. Other authors, such as Jean-François Lyotard, point out that modern discursive practices ground and legitimize themselves in reference to a grand narrative, a universalizing framework that aims at emancipating the individual by mastering the conditions of life.[11]

With the modern desire for control emerged the compulsion to systematize and categorize the world, such that all its various features can be understood and held scientifically accountable to one generally accepted frame of reference. Everything that does not fit into this frame is then treated as suspicious and dangerous: "Absolutely nothing ought to remain outside because the mere idea of outsideness is the actual source of fear."[12] Or so at least argued Horkheimer and Adorno, somewhat polemically, almost half a century ago. Many of their claims are highly controversial. It is debatable whether, as they profess, the modern quest for order and the mythical belief in instrumental rationality was the very source for our relapse into world wars and barbarianism.[13] But many related critiques of modernity stand on firm ground. Less contestable, for instance, is that the very attempt to fight ambiguity, through ever more rigid classificatory schemes, can only increase ambiguity, for it creates more categories that relegate non-fitting aspects to the realm of otherness and suspicion.[14]

Modernity is not the only bounded discourse. Every discourse has limits, revolves around a set of underlying assumptions, advances propositions that banish others to conceptual exiles. Neither can modernity be reduced to the recurring repression of ambiguity. Of course not. But the search for certainty and the desire to control are important and widely applied modern themes. Instead of theorizing them further I now examine some of their specific manifestations by analyzing two practices of popular dissent that operate in the broad wake of la Boétie's legacy. The first, civil disobedience, organizes its core around liberal inspirations. The

---

[11] Jean-François Lyotard, <u>La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir</u> (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979), pp. 7-9.

[12] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, <u>Dialektik der Auflkärung</u> (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1991/1944), p. 22.

[13] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 3.

[14] See Zygmunt Bauman, <u>Modernity and Ambivalence</u> (Oxford: Polity, 1991), pp. 1-17.

second, direct action, is more associated with anarchist and libertarian tendencies. Both forms of dissent have been practiced extensively in diverse parts of the world and, as a result, left a lasting mark on contemporary perceptions of human agency.

LIBERAL ORDER THROUGH CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

My earlier elaborations on Thoreau's Romanticism alluded to the ways in which la Boétie's intellectual legacy intersected with nineteenth century liberalism. Government by consent is a key theme that runs through all stages of liberal thought. Contract theories, in both liberal and non-liberal forms, articulated by such authors as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau or Kant, derive the general principles of government from a founding agreement reached between ruler and ruled. In its Lockean version, contract theory stipulates that resistance to illegitimate rule, to one that is not based upon popular consent, becomes a fundamental liberal right. The principles of withdrawing consent thus seem well suited to provide liberalism with the tools necessary to resist tyranny in the form of both government and majority rule. Indeed, la Boétie's claims appear ideal for securing liberalism's prime objectives: to fight whatever interferes with the exercise of personal freedom and to establish the political conditions under which life could be arranged such that "over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."[15]

One of the most influential contemporary intersection between liberalism and the la Boétian legacy of popular dissent occurred in the work of the American philosopher John Rawls. In a major attempt to update liberal thought, he expanded its traditional agenda by including issues such as distributive justice. In doing so, Rawls shifted foci from utilitarian concerns to a neo-Kantean resurrection of contract theory. His Theory of Justice, which appeared in 1971, is widely considered to be the most significant philosophical contribution to the reworking of liberalism.[16] In the context of this rethinking, Rawls also articulated a theory of civil disobedience. Here too, Rawls' contribution is deemed path-breaking. Hugo Adam Bedau considers Theory of Justice "the most influential contemporary philosophical discussion on civil disobedience," a text which has, through its hegemonic position, framed much of the subsequent discussion on the subject.[17] And discussions about civil disobedience were abundant in the United States in the wake of rising racial tensions and domestic opposition to the Vietnam war.

---

[15] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in Three Essays (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984/1859), p. 15.

[16] Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed), Liberalism and the Moral Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 1; Michael Sandel (ed), Liberalism and its Critics (New York: New York University Press, 1984), p. 8.

[17] Hugo Adam Bedau (ed), Civil Disobedience in Focus (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 4.

The links between Rawls' influential articulation of civil disobedience and the tradition of dissent that emerged in the wake of la Boétie's rhetoric are visible but implicit. And they are, as I will demonstrate, problematic. But it is precisely these problematic linkages that open up fruitful possibilities to compare visions of human agency and scrutinize the potential and limits of late modern approaches to popular dissent.

How does Rawls deal with dissent? What is human agency for him? Rawls defines civil disobedience as "a public, non-violent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government."[18] The most illuminating antecedent to Rawls' approach can be found not in Thoreau's concept of civil disobedience or the la Boétian legacy in general, but in ancient Greek philosophy. Directly relevant, although not explicitly acknowledged by Rawls, is the trial of Socrates, as reconstructed by Plato. Socrates was accused of corrupting the youth, of using his abilities to pervert their loyalties to the rulers. Faced with the charge that he "makes the weaker argument defeat the stronger, and teaches others to follow his example," Socrates pleaded innocence and refused to cease his practice, even if the court were to decide against him.[19] Adhering to his moral duty to resist what he perceived as unjust practices, he proclaimed that "I owe a greater obedience to God than to you; and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone that I meet".[20] The court sentenced Socrates to death. Against the urging of Crito, Socrates refused to escape and explicitly submitted himself to the judgment that was reached by the duly established authority. Socrates hence provided the precedent for a tradition of dissent that aims at resisting a specific authority, law, or policy that is considered unjust, while at the same time recognizing the rulemaking prerogative of the existing political system as legitimate and generally binding.[21]

Rawls clearly operates in this Socratic tradition that accepts the existing system as the framework within which civil disobedience takes place. The target is a change in particular laws or policies, rather than an uprooting of the system as such. Rawls:

> [A theory of civil disobedience] attempts to formulate the grounds upon which legitimate democratic authority may be dissented from in ways that while admittedly contrary to law nevertheless express a fidelity to law and appeal to the fundamental political principles of a democratic regime.[22]

---

[18] John Rawls, <u>A Theory of Justice</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 364.

[19] Plato, <u>The Last Days of Socrates</u>, tr. H. Tredennick (London: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 46-47.

[20] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 61.

[21] Ernest van den Haag, <u>Political Violence and Civil Disobedience</u> (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), pp. 7-8.

[22] Rawls, <u>A Theory of Justice</u>, pp. 385-6.

To do justice to Rawls, we need to consider briefly the context within which he articulates his approach to civil disobedience. Unlike la Boétie, Rawls is not concerned with resistance to authoritarian rule. His model of civil disobedience is applicable only in very specific circumstances, namely in a "nearly just society, one that is well-ordered for the most part but in which some serious violations of justice nevertheless do occur."[23] He speaks of dissent only in the context of a democratic state in which citizens accept the overall legitimacy of the constitution. But Rawls is also more ambitious and tries to transcend the parameters of a specific societal context. In his reformulation of liberalism and social contract theory, he starts off from a hypothetical situation in which the members of a society agree, prior to entering this society, on the fundamental principles of justice that are to govern their subsequent interactions. A crucial aspect of this hypothetical original position is that no one knows 'his' particular place in society. Behind this so called veil of ignorance, free, equal and rational 'men' establish the fundamental principles that are to become the framework within which societal interactions are regulated.[24] How hypothetical is this Rawlsean idea of justice as fairness? What are the limits of dissent within this arrangement among free 'men'?

The injustice of a law does in itself not provide enough reason to engage in justified resistance. Rawls reminds the overenthusiastic activist that "when the basic structure of society is reasonably just, as estimated by what the current state of things allows, we are to recognize unjust laws as binding provided that they do not exceed certain limits of injustice."[25] Civil disobedience only becomes an option when violations of justice exceed these limits. It then is an act through which a minority appeals to a majority to reconsider a particular issue within the limited context of an existing constitution and a commonly shared perception of rights and duties.

Unpronounced questions abound in this approach to civil disobedience. When do violations of justice exceed the limits that legitimize acts of civil disobedience? Who is to judge? Why is it that in Rawls' hypothetical world, all the neutral and supposedly value-free individuals that negotiate behind the veil of ignorance are male gendered? And what precisely are these hypothetical and commonly shared assumptions that are to provide the framework within which claims expressed through civil disobedience are settled? Rawls' concept of justice as fairness is not quite as hypothetical as the veil of ignorance first suggests. He reveals his political agenda at various points. Civil disobedience, Rawls argues, becomes necessary when "the conditions of free cooperation are being violated" and its application expresses the fidelity to "the fundamental political principles of a democratic regime."[26]

---

[23] Ibid., p. 363.

[24] See Ibid., pp. 3-53.

[25] Ibid., p. 351.

[26] Ibid., pp. 382-3, 385-6.

Rawls' hypothetically derived and commonly shared assumptions are liberal assumptions. His facts are liberal facts. The boundaries of human agency he draws are liberal boundaries. Not even the veil of ignorance can cover the underlying political agenda of the original position. Two decades after the appearance of Theory of Justice, Rawls himself acknowledges its hidden political dimension. In recent writings on political liberalism, he readily admits that the ambiguity of his earlier text "is now removed and justice as fairness is presented from the outset as a political conception of justice."[27]

The practice of civil disobedience is intrinsically linked to this often unpronounced political agenda. But the liberal framework within which all these dynamics take place is in itself a sight of political contestation. Cracks are being spotted at various pillars of the liberal edifice. Susan Mendus discovers them in the limitations imposed on the important liberal concept of toleration,[28] Isaiah Berlin in the often antagonistic relationship between passive and active liberty,[29] and Noberto Bobbio in the problematic interaction between liberalism and democracy.[30] More radical critique is, of course, equally abundant. We know of Nietzsche's remark that liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are established, that, as a result, "there is nothing more wicked and harmful to freedom than liberal institutions."[31] Herbert Marcuse talked of the "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom [that] prevails in advanced industrial civilization."[32] And Foucault went to great length in an attempt to demonstrate that on a subtle and silent level, liberal societies are more repressive than authoritarian ones.[33] It is not my task here to weigh these often polemical accusations against the liberal ideas and practices that have given rise to them. Suspending a value judgment on the actual content of liberal thought, I merely want to point out that liberalism is a contested discourse and in constant need of legitimization.

Much of the burgeoning literature that emerged parallel to and in the wake of Rawls' influential contribution to civil disobedience is part of a self-defensive creation of liberal legitimacy. The notion of human agency that is embedded in this tradition is clearly limited to the task of promoting change within a clearly delineated societal framework. Civil disobedience can undoubtedly resist some forms of domination. It may be powerful enough to destabilize or even bring down a

---

[27] John Rawls, Political Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. xvii.

[28] Susan Mendus, Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism (London: MacMillan, 1989).

[29] Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-172.

[30] Noberto Bobbio, Liberalism and Democracy, tr. M. Ryle and K. Soper (London: Verso, 1990/1988).

[31] Friedrich Nietzsche, Götzen-Dämmerung (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969/1889), p. 133.

[32] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969/1964), p. 1.

[33] Michel Foucault, Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

government. But in the end civil disobedience is bound to entrench the larger liberal status quo. This implied task is clearly recognizable in the relevant literature. Michael Walzer, for example, describes civil disobedience as "a nonrevolutionary encounter with the state" which does not challenge the legitimacy of the existing order.[34] For Hannah Arendt "the civil disobedient accepts, while the revolutionary rejects, the frame of established authority and the general legitimacy of the system of laws."[35]

While giving the appearance of radical dissent, civil disobedience is a reformist practice that often strengthens the existing societal order. In being tolerated only as long as the liberal constitutional framework is not disputed, civil disobedience refuses to question the values of its own political foundations. In this sense, civil disobedience has lost most of the meaning that Thoreau's famous essay originally bestowed upon the term. This narrowing down of dissent also demonstrates that in a liberal-democratic context, granting and withdrawing popular consent only works in a very restricted way. The allocation of consent is usually given periodically to the legislative element of the state, leaving largely untouched its vast remaining components, such as the bureaucracy, the police, the army, and the more subtle discursive mechanisms that provide what Gramsci called hegemonic leadership. Likewise, the withdrawal of consent via civil disobedience is limited to a mere challenge of individual laws or policies that may not be compatible with the generally recognized leitmotifs of the existing legal system. The overwhelming rest of the State apparatus remains unchallenged by this liberal version of withdrawing consent.

The image of human agency entailed in liberal civil disobedience incarnates the modern obsession with control, the desire for order, for certainty, for essences that provide a stable background against which moral norms can be established and idiosyncrasies of life can be assessed. The vacuum that occurred with the death of God is now filled by an unbounded trust in the liberal edifice and the universalizing narrative upon which it is based. Hence, all claims to social change have to be evaluated in relation to this new Archimedean point. The modern quest for certainty and stable foundations is still alive and has, if anything, intensified in the post-Cold War period. Francis Fukuyama's influential voice professes that now, with the demise not only of Fascism, but also of Communism, liberal democracy is once and for all the superior and universally recognized ideology. History came to an end, he hails, for there are no more fundamental contradictions that cannot be solved within the liberal framework.[36] One could easily take issue with Fukuyama's teleology or with his distorted use of Hegel. Yet, one must acknowledge that his polemical remarks express a widespread and powerful attitude within the Western world. If

---

[34] Michael Walzer, <u>Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 24.

[35] Hannah Arendt, <u>Crises of the Republic</u> (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 77.

[36] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" in <u>The National Interest</u>, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18.

liberalism has indeed emerged victorious from the Cold War, what precisely is it and how does it deal with popular dissent?

With the slightest scratch beneath the surface, one discovers that Fukuyama's new liberalism is less a political and economic doctrine that optimizes the sphere of individual freedom, but more a governmental practice that actively promotes and defends a very specific "form of life" to the detriment of other social practices. Or so claim an increasing number of scholars that conduct research, convincingly one should add, in the wake of Foucault's work on governmentality.[37] Liberalism, for them, is a method of discursive domination and active governmental intervention, designed to defend existing political practices (constructed around such key values as individual autonomy and free market competition) against possible threats from subversive alternatives (stemming, for example, from perceptions of rights that are active, collective or linked to radical economic redistribution).

The concept of civil disobedience is highly useful to uphold this modern practice of control, for its appearance of dissent provides the liberal system with more legitimacy. While it may challenge some laws, policies or even bring down a government, liberal civil disobedience does by definition not threaten to erode the foundations of the liberal order. But the illusion of radical dissent that it evokes gives the impression that a real challenge to the system was subsequently overcome by the superiority of the status quo.

Dissent is tolerated in direct relation to a liberal society's capacity to absorb it. If a subversive idea poses a threat to the existing order, it is classified as Other and treated as irrelevant, dangerous or in need of being exterminated. This is the case, for example, when Fukuyama elevates liberalism to the one and only source of legitimacy and argues that "it matters very little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso, for we are interested in what one could in some sense call the common ideological heritage of mankind."[38] There is only limited scope for dissent within such a presupposed universal frame of reference. Rawls' theory of civil disobedience was within this scope. Its was quickly elevated to a liberal piece of wisdom, for its controllable notion of dissent was compatible with generally accepted ideas of freedom and justice. But hostility arises as soon as practices of dissent transgress existing levels of tolerance and start to challenge the foundations of the established political and social order. I now explore some of these more radical forms of resistance and their perceptions of human agency.

---

[37] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in G. Burchell et al. (eds), The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1978/1991), pp. 1-52, 87-104. For elaborations see, for example, Mitchell Dean, The Constitution of Poverty: Towards a Genealogy of Liberal Governance (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 11-15; and Barry Hindess, "Liberalism, Socialism and Democracy," in Economy and Society, Vol. 22, No 2, August 1993, pp. 300-313.

[38] Fukuyama, "The End of History?," p. 9.

FRAMING RADICAL RESISTANCE: THE MODERNIZATION OF DIRECT ACTION

At the same time as Rawls and others articulated liberal models of civil disobedience, more radical approaches to popular dissent came to the fore as well. I refer to them as direct action approaches. This term is problematic and not uniformly sanctioned. I use it nevertheless, primarily to draw a clear distinction from the above liberal methods of withdrawing consent. The concept of direct action dates back to Georges Sorel, who employed it in the context of revolutionary syndicalism during the early days of this century.[39] After Sorel's death in 1922, the term was appropriated by the Italian fascist movement and then served to describe a whole range of violent revolutionary movements, on both the extreme right and the extreme left. Parallel to these violent practices, direct action also became embedded in nonviolent forms of activism. I am concerned only with this nonviolent tradition, which operates directly in the wake of la Boétie's legacy.

In refusing to take the parameters of the existing legal system as given, direct action fundamentally assaults the legitimacy of the status quo. It is employed when the official channels for political action, such as elections, referenda, petitions or lobbying do not exist or are considered inadequate for the resolution of the conflict in question. Direct action empowers those who do not have access to these conventional forms of political influence. It opens up possibilities for social change that are absent within the context of the established legal system. April Carter illustrates the radical nature of direct action by underlining that it is waged not only to bring about reform within the established constitutional framework, but also to "repudiate the entire political system."[40] But how radical is direct action really? What are its conceptual assumptions? Where is its frame? I now explore these questions. To do so as thoroughly as possible, I turn back the clock once more and observe how the theory and practice of direct action came of age as it grew out of romantic notions of dissent.

Gandhi's monumental influence provided much of the conceptual foundation for the literature on nonviolent direct action. The previous chapter analyzed how Gandhi transformed la Boétian rhetoric into a practice of popular dissent that contains direct political implications. Various authors built upon this insight and developed radical approaches to direct action. But what happened to Gandhian (and la Boétian) ideas in this process. What was taken on board? What was left out or added on? And how do these changes reflect perceptions of human agency? Gandhi's work was characterized by a profound distrust towards Western ideas and practices, including imperialism, market economics, scientific reasoning and instrumental rationality. He not only criticized Western culture or religion, but also

---

[39] Georges Sorel, <u>Réflexions sur la Violence</u> (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1972/1908).

[40] April Carter, <u>Direct Action and Liberal Democracy</u> (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 3, 139-159.

attacked the modern values upon which they are based. It is in the various processes of modernization that Gandhi detected, according to Partha Chatterjee, the prime reason for India's oppression and its submissive acceptance of voluntary servitude.[41]

Gandhi's skeptical attitude was largely brushed aside as his ideas gave rise to a systematic theory of nonviolent direct action. Early interpretations of Gandhi's work perfectly illustrate how the modern obsession with control forced interpretations of popular dissent into modern discursive boundaries. Gandhi's anti-modern core and his romantic idealism were dropped in a quest to establish a grand theory of modern nonviolent resistance, a globally applicable assessment of human agency. With this move, nonviolence is no longer perceived as a way of life or an ethical imperative, but as a strategic and pragmatic practice of dissent, a policy option that can be pursued independently of how much people believe in its moral or spiritual value.

Clarence Marsh Case and Richard B. Gregg, two Americans writing during the 1920s and 1930s, played an important role in directing the Gandhian legacy on this modern course. A brief look at their work is necessary at this point. The writings of Case initiated the transformation of Gandhian strategy into a grand theory that aims at providing the sole objective measuring device with which one could assess, plan and predict a great variety of nonviolent forms of radical dissent. Case followed Gandhi in claiming that the persuasive power of direct action works by way of producing a change of mental attitude in the mind of those against whom the action is directed. [42] Case, however, adds an element of coercion to this position. He argues that the withdrawal of popular consent can force an opponent to act against 'his' initial will or judgment. In a labor strike, for example, non nonviolent protest actions interfere with the dynamics between employer and worker. The subject against whom pressure is being exerted has basically two choices. 'He' can suffer the interruption of the productive activities caused by the strike or accommodate those who have withdrawn the supply of their labor. Either option is unappealing and the result of an act of coercion - not one that involves violence, but nevertheless an act of coercion.[43]

The concept of nonviolent coercion is already far removed from the romantic celebration of diversity and self-expression. It evokes, rather, the Enlightenment's quest for factual evidence and objectivity. Case almost literally restates la Boétie's core concept of voluntary servitude. But the argument is no longer a rhetorical defense of human agency. The assessment of popular dissent is now embedded in a search for objective, stable and universal foundations around which the turbulent late modern world can revolve:

---

[41] Paratha Chatterjee, <u>Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World</u> (London: Zed Books, 1986), pp. 85-130.

[42] Clarence Marsh Case, <u>Nonviolent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure</u> (New York: Century, 1923), p. 397-414.

[43] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 401-2.

> One and the same principle underlies all these various manifestations [the strike, the boycott, and non-cooperation], and that is the strategic recognition of the fundamental and indispensable importance of coöperation in every form and phase of associated life. More vital even than this is its recognition that this coöperation is necessarily more or less voluntary in every social situation and process, not excepting the grossest forms of exploitation, oppression, and tyranny. In the last analysis the victims always gild their own chains, even where they do not help to forge them.[44]

Richard B. Gregg built upon Case's work and further systematized the study and practice of Gandhian nonviolent resistance. He too considered the choice of nonviolent over violent methods of social change not so much a moral, but primarily a tactical and strategic matter, a decision for the more sound and efficient form of struggle. For this purpose Gregg appropriated the methods through which traditional German military tacticians, especially von Clausewitz and von Caemmerer, portray war as a constant process of reciprocal actions. Extending their line of thought Gregg emphasized the similarities between strategies of nonviolent resistance and strategies of war, namely, "to demoralize the opponent, to break his will, to destroy his confidence, enthusiasm and hope."[45] Nonviolent resistance is more effective than violence because it causes emotional and moral perturbations that trigger processes of social change. It is a manipulative activity, a psychological weapon that is based upon an understanding of balance and how to disturb this balance. If pursued in a determined, fearless and consistent way, nonviolent resistance employs the strength and weight of the opponent to disturb 'his' psychological balance. The opponent then loses the moral support that violent forms of resistance would render him, "he plunges forward, as it were, into a new world of values."[46] Gregg emphasized, as both Case and Gandhi did before him, that the success of this form of dissent depends largely on the ability to maintain a strict adherence to nonviolence.[47]

Much of the conceptual framework that informs present practices of direct action was established by the time Case and Gregg had systematized and modernized Gandhi's ideas. A few decades later, in the 1950s and 1960s, Martin Luther King further consolidated this from of popular dissent and once more demonstrated its practical relevance. King clearly operated within the la Boétian legacy. He drew upon the writings of Thoreau, Gandhi, Case and Gregg. They stamped an unmistakable mark upon King's approach. Not surprisingly, the concept of voluntary servitude is again the starting point. King claims that "he who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who

---

[44] Ibid., p. 401.

[45] Richard B. Gregg, The Power of Nonviolence (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1934), p. 89.

[46] Ibid., p. 43.

[47] Ibid., p. 112; Case, Nonviolent Coercion, pp. 406-7

accepts evil without protesting against it is really coöperating with it."[48] The refusal to cooperate, by contrast, unleashes forms of dissent that can break chains of domination. Direct action is able to succeed in this enterprise because it interferes with and paralyzes the very power structures against which it is directed.[49] Elements of nonviolent coercion are clearly visible in King's approach to nonviolent dissent. Reads his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," initially scribbled into the margins of an old newspaper:

> Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored... We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.[50]

King was, of course, best known for the practical application of his ideas. As a young Baptist minister in the southern part of the United States, he played a crucial role in what became famous as the Montgomery bus boycott. These events were triggered when, in 1955, a Black female passenger was arrested for having refused to vacate her seat in the front section of a local bus, a section reserved for whites. Henceforth, King and a number of other Black community leaders organized a boycott against the bus company. Although the immediate aim of the Montgomery boycott was to repeal segregationist seating arrangements on buses, it reached much further. King recalls that "I came to see that what we were really doing was withdrawing our coöperation from an evil system, rather than merely withdrawing our economic support form the bus company."[51] The success of the boycott was astonishing. For a whole year, 17.500 Black Americans who previously relied on two daily bus rides, systematically boycotted all public transport. This sustained practice of non-cooperation attracted nation-wide attention. It did not uproot the existing political system or eradicate racial discrimination, but it led to an increased discussion of civil liberties and a Supreme Court decision that declared segregational seating on inter-state buses illegal.

The spirit of King's activism was preserved and further systematized when, in the late 1960s, a burgeoning literature on direct action started to emerge. Numerous authors now pushed popular dissent beyond the boundaries of the liberal edifice within which civil disobedience took place. I have already mentioned April Carter's work on radical direct action. Howard Zinn, likewise, refused to accept the liberal system as the framework for action. Questioning whether the law has some intrinsic value on its own, he rejected the commonly held Socratic position that civil disobedients must submit to the punishment pronounced by the duly established

---

[48] Martin Luther King, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (San Francisco: Harper, 1986/1958), pp. 51, 84-5, 91.

[49] Martin Luther King, Why We Can't Wait (New York: Penguin, 1964), p. 39

[50] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[51] King, Stride Toward Freedom, p. 51.

authority.[52] Joan Bundurant explored radical forms of dissent that deal with the what she considered a key weakness of liberal democratic thought, namely "the failure to provide techniques of action for those critical occasions when the machinery of democratic government no longer functions to resolve large-scale, overt conflict."[53] Other authors pushed the spatial boundaries of popular dissent. George Lakey, for example, paid attention to acts of non-cooperation that take place in transnational and non-Western contexts. Lakey also illustrated, once more, how the practice of direct action is built upon la Boétie's concept of voluntary servitude. Freedom is never given, he argued. People must claim it themselves: "Mass civil disobedience, tax-refusal, boycott of elections, and draft resistance help people to unlearn their submissiveness."[54]

Numerous other authors pushed the boundaries of dissent in different directions. It is not my intention here to provide a coherent and complete account of the various approaches to direct action that emerged since the late 1960s. Such a synthesis would forcibly have to simplify a whole range of complex issues. Instead of brushing in such broad strokes, I scrutinize the workings and underlying assumptions of direct action by focusing, representatively, one of the most influential contributors to the subject: Gene Sharp. His work cannot speak for all approaches to direct action. But it represents some of the most basic features that characterize this practice of popular dissent and its ensuing image of human agency.

THE FALLACIES OF A GRAND THEORY OF POPULAR DISSENT

Gene Sharp's The Politics of Nonviolent Action, which appeared in 1973, has been highly influential in shaping the theory and practice of direct action. Particularly among activists, Sharp is recognized as "one of the most important theorists," even the "patron theorists."[55] His theoretical contribution, however, is hardly innovative. There is nothing in Sharp's work that could not be derived from a reading of la Boétie, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Case and Gregg. Sharp deserves analytical attention not because of his alleged theoretical leadership, but because he has popularized the practice of direct action. His work was translated into more than a dozen languages. It has been largely used as a handbook that provides precise instructions about when and how to use what type or method of popular resistance.

---

[52] Howard Zinn, Disobedience and Democracy (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 8-31.

[53] Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/1958), p. x.

[54] George Lakey, Strategy for a Living Revolution (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), p. 127.

[55] Brian Martin, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power," in Journal of Peace Research, vol. 26, no. 2, 1989, p. 213-4; Kate McGuinness, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power: A Feminist Critique of Consent," in Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1993, p. 102; Peter Ackerman Christopher Kruegler, Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1994), pp. 213-4.

Hence, a look at Sharp's approach is fruitful because it stands as an important testimony for how late modern practices of dissent reflect images of human agency.

Disguised in an apparent anarchist rejection of authority, direct action expresses modernity's quest for certainty and control, the desire to ground our existence in an external source - if not in God, then in something else that could take over his stabilizing position.

The romantic heritage permeates much of Sharp's work. One of his main targets is the determinism of structural and functional scholarship. He strongly opposes arguments that present power as given, static and self-perpetuating, as being vested in governments and derived from structural conditions or the exercise of physical threats and violence. Instead, he argues for a view from below, one that locates power in the people and in societal dynamics. In doing so, Sharp is among the few contemporary authors who still reaches back to the Anti-One. La Boétie is given the same importance as Machiavelli or the social contract theories of Rousseau and Hobbes. Yet, Sharp's reading of la Boétie is superficial and one-sided. He ignores most of la Boétie's subtle arguments about the engineering of popular consent. Instead, he singles out and explores fully the Anti-One's rhetorical claims about human agency and voluntary servitude:

> The most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects. Obedience is at the heart of political power.[56]

> The rulers of governments and political systems are not omnipotent, nor do they posses self-generating power. All dominating elites and rulers depend for their sources of power upon the cooperation of the population and of the institutions of the society they would rule.[57]

Sharp's next logical step is also taken from the Anti-One. He rehearses the argument that if consent is given by the people and necessary to rule, it can also be withdrawn. Hence, Sharp defines power as "the capacity to control the behavior of others" and locates its functioning in the dualistic interactions between ruler and ruled, between command and obedience.[58]

Human agency takes central stage. The romantic vision of a deified subject permeates Sharp's unbounded confidence in people's ability to recognize and defy domination:

---

[56] Gene Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), Vol. I, p. 16.

[57] Gene Sharp, The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle (Cambridge, Ma: The Albert Einstein Institution, 1990), p. 3.

[58] Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. I, p. 10-16.

> Popular empowerment will enable people to revitalize freedom, to make it more durable and genuine. It will make it possible for them to end social oppression by direct popular efforts which turn helpless victims into masters of their own destinies.[59]

Sharp clearly leaps into what Adorno called subjectivism, an idealist position that endows the subject with an unlimited ability to shape the world. The concept of direct action leaves little or no room for dealing with the complex and far-reaching consequences that emerge from the interactive relationship between agency and structure or between subject and object. Even la Boétie's hesitant acknowledgment of these links is obliterated. The resulting idealist celebration of human agency is not nearly as unbounded as it proclaims, at least not in Adorno's opinion. For him the absolute subject that results from such an idealist position "cannot escape from its entanglement for the chains it attempts to break, those of domination, are at one with the principle of absolute subjectivity."[60]

Sharp, like many of his contemporaries, integrates a selective romantic notion of human agency with an equally selective Enlightenment form of rationalism. Most of the more complex elements of romantic thought are dropped, such as the speculative idealism and the irrationalism that Karl Mannheim considered key characteristics of Romanticism.[61] Consequently, Gandhi's critique of instrumental rationality is replaced by practices of ordering and classifying. Factual evidence is gathered in an attempt to discover underlying patterns of dissent, to construct a scientific and globally applicable model of direct action.

The prime objective now becomes the establishment of a grand theory of nonviolent resistance, a systematic model for the global assessment of popular dissent. Complex social dynamics are reduced to mere dualistic interactions between ruler and ruled. Parsimony replaces complexity in the attempt to discover a lowest common denominator that can provide a recognizable image of human agency. Thomas Schelling, when introducing Sharp's work, perfectly captures this theme, albeit without noticing its irony:

> The original idea was to subject the entire theory of nonviolent political action, together with a full history of its practice in all parts of the world since the time of Christ, to the same cool, detailed scrutiny that military strategy and tactics are supposed to invite.[62]

In Sharp's world, the foundations that disappeared with the death of God are now replaced not with trust in the liberal edifice, but with an equally strong confidence in

---

[59] Gene Sharp, Social Power and Political Freedom (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980), p. 376.

[60] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966), p. 60.

[61] Karl Mannheim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1953), pp. 89-90, 124.

[62] Schelling in Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. I, p. xix.

having discovered the essence of domination and resistance, the underlying and objective foundations that determine social dynamics. The metanarrative that Sharp builds from this position revolves around the premise, introduced by Case and Gregg, that nonviolent resistance is the most effective way of wielding power. It is a strategic form of combat just like war. It requires courage, discipline sacrifice. It involves the waging of battles. It is "a technique used to control, combat and destroy the opponent's power by nonviolent means of wielding power."[63]

In his ambition to develop a grand theory of popular dissent, Sharp engages in a typically modern attempt to repress ambiguity. He precisely defines how mechanisms of change operate and carefully lists almost two hundred different ways of waging nonviolent conflict. Neatly divided into three main categories, non-cooperation, intervention and protest / persuasion, these methods of nonviolent action cover such diverse activities as speeches, marches, protest emigration, strikes, election boycotts, conscientious objections, refusals to pay taxes, hunger strikes, lockouts, walkouts, quickie walkouts, sit-downs, sit-ins, teach-ins, stand-ins, ride-ins, wade-ins, mill-ins, stall-ins, speak-ins, sick-ins and pray-ins.[64] Everything needs to have its proper place. Nothing ought to remain outside, for, as we have seen above, the mere idea of outsideness constitutes a source of ambivalence and fear. But the very act of classifying creates even more ambivalence by relegating everything that does not fit into the sphere of otherness. Zygmunt Bauman:

> Ambivalence may be fought only with a naming that is yet more exact, and classes that are yet more precisely defined: that is, with such operations as will set still tougher demands on the discreteness and transparency of the world and thus give yet more occasion for ambiguity. The struggle against ambivalence is, therefore, both self-destructive and self-propelling.[65]

Why are these effects of classifying so problematic? Could one not simply engage in this ordering exercise with caution, knowing that there are clear limits to it, knowing that no category or typology will ever be exhaustive or definitive? Can one escape classificatory urges altogether? I certainly did not - having divided contemporary manifestations of popular dissent into liberal forms of civil disobedience and anarchist practices of direct action. The point is not to avoid all forms of classifying, but to be aware of the dangers that such practices entail. This requires, above all, sensitivity to the process of reification, the tendency to endow subjective mental concepts with objective, thing-like properties. Sharp fails to pay attention to this process. He imposes his classificatory schemes by embedding them in a grand theory of popular dissent.

---

[63] Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. I, pp. 4, 67, Vol. II, pp. 451-4; The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle, pp. 1-3.

[64] Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. II, pp. 109-445.

[65] Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence, p. 3.

Positivist assumptions underlie Sharp's project. This is why direct action, a seemingly radical anarchist practice of dissent, may in some aspects contribute to the reinforcement of the status quo. Positivism is, of course, an important tradition in Western social science. Its conceptual and etymological roots go back to the work of August Compte. Positivism culminated during the so-called behavioral revolution, which swept through North American academia during the 1950s and 1960s. Assuming that the theories and concepts of the natural sciences could and should be applied with equal rigor in the social sciences, behavioralists argued that theoretical concepts are only relevant if they are operationably measurable, if they can be used in hypotheses that are testable against the hard evidence of empirical data. Although the heyday of behavioralism is over, the influence of positivism remains strong.[66]

Positivism is based on an (anti-)philosophical stance that argues for a radical separation of subject and object and believes that the social scientist, as detached observer, can produce value-free knowledge. In Leszek Kolakowski's view, positivism rejects the distinction between "essence" and "phenomenon." Only that which is manifested in experience, which emerges from observing reality deserves the name knowledge. All other utterances have no cognitive and empirical merit, they are mere value statements, normative claims, unprovable speculations.[67] Kolakowski then defines positivism in the broadest sense as "a collection of prohibitions concerning human knowledge, intended to confine the name of 'knowledge' to those operations that are observable in the evolution of the modern sciences of nature."[68]

A critique of positivist epistemologies is not to be equated with a dismissal of science as such. Scientific methods can be highly useful in many domains, including investigations of social dynamics and human behavior. But scientific knowledge is only one form of knowledge. Positivist approaches, whether they are based on scientific or non-scientific methods, insist that knowledge can be neutral and objective, that our comprehension of facts can be separated from our relationship with them. Yet, thinking expresses a will to truth, a desire to control and impose order upon random and idiosyncratic events. "To think," Adorno claims, "is to identify."[69] When we think we identify choices, privilege one interpretation over others, and, often without knowing it, exclude what does not fit into the way we want to see things. There is no escape from this, no possibility of extracting pure facts from observation.

---

[66] David M. Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 136-160, 229-312.

[67] Leszek Kolakowski, The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought (New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 1-10.

[68] Ibid., p. 9.

[69] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, p. 17.

The positivist separation of theory and practice, fact and value, necessarily produces a discourse that, in the name of value freedom, promotes particular values at the expense of others.[70] Challenging this order is difficult. Discourses live on and appear reasonable long after they have turned into contradictory and anachronistic relics. Positivist approaches, even if they examine practices of popular dissent, cannot address these problems. They cannot deal with subtle forms of domination that may be entailed in the existing discursive order. By accepting as stable the links between theory and practice, discourse and reality, positivist approaches to dissent are unable to explore a whole range of promising terrains of resistance. Instead, uncritical positivist references to something termed reality often strangle progressive thoughts that could initiate a long needed practical change.[71]

Sharp's treatment of direct action revolves around these problematic positivist assumptions. He, alongside many other contemporary writers who deal with popular dissent, assumes that the rational subject is capable of perceiving and evaluating reality independently of the discursive practices that provide him or her with the linguistic and conceptual means necessary for this process. Practices of popular dissent are observed in order to construct theoretical propositions about the relationship between ruler and ruled. The result of these inquiries is then presented in global and ahistoric terms - as a crowning achievement of human knowledge, as spectacular discoveries of underlying patterns that guide popular dissent in a variety of spatial and temporal settings. The ensuing grand theories are then revised, refined, complemented and reevaluated against the evidence presented by yet more observations of something termed reality.

Sharp's influential contribution to direct action illustrates how radical contemporary practices of popular dissent can be as discursively bounded as the earlier examined liberal forms of civil disobedience. But the limits of direct action are not prescribed by the existing legal and political system. They are drawn by the uncritical acceptance of dominant discourses and the social practices they support.

The image of human agency that these positivist approaches uphold becomes objectified. It is frozen in time and space. This recognition cannot but evoke a second set of questions: What specific image of dissent has been frozen in time and space? What are its features, its grins and grimaces? What does it show and what does it hide? How does it gaze at the world? How does the world gaze back? And what marks has this mutual gazing left on social practices? These are some of the puzzles with which I will grapple next.

---

[70] David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 170.

[71] See Adorno, Negative Dialektik, pp. 15-66.

SUMMARY

The first three chapters of this thesis have analyzed the theory and practice of popular dissent. A genealogical inquiry outlined how the concept of human agency has been framed during the modern period, and how this framing has delineated contemporary understandings of human agency.

I have pursued this task by way of narrating the development of a tradition of dissent that emerged from a sixteenth century humanist text, Étienne de la Boétie's Anti-One. La Boétian ideas acquired political relevance as they were diffused by such authors as Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi. But the tradition of dissent that issued in the wake of this evolution is, of course, not the only modern practice of popular resistance. The story about human agency that I have told here is only one among many, a diverse and disputed narrative of modern dissent. Analyzing its legacy, even if done carefully, cannot possibly reflect the extremely wide-ranging modern scholarship conducted on human agency and social change. Yet, the particular way in which la Boétie's intellectual legacy evolved can teach us much about the outer limits that modern discursive practices have imposed on the apparently limitless range of debates about human agency.

Mainstream modern images of human agency tend to be bounded by a widespread unwillingness to accept the responsibilities that arose from what Nietzsche called the death of God, that is, the loss of certainty which had existed in a theocentric world before Renaissance humanists elevated 'man' to the measure of all things. Recurring attempts to find replacements for the fallen God, to discover essences that could provide a stable world-view, have severely limited contemporary perceptions of human agency.

The present chapter has drawn attention to this framing of human agency by analyzing two practices of popular dissent, civil disobedience and direct action. Both are influential contemporary forms of resistance that have demonstrated a powerful ability to promote social change. But both also turned out to be not nearly as radical and unbounded as they appeared at first sight. Behind the desire for change loomed the modern obsession with control. Civil disobedience is embedded in a liberal world-view. Its proponents explicitly accept the existing political and legal system as the framework for action. This clearly circumvents the range of dissent that civil disobedience can express. It may be able to promote reform in various domains, but it ultimately entrenches the liberal status quo. Direct action has a more radical conceptual core. By refusing to confine dissent to maneuverings within liberal democracies, direct action can seriously challenge not only practices of governance, but also existing political and legal structures. But there are frames to direct action too. Its limits are drawn not by the confinement to a certain social order, but by the epistemological assumptions in which this form of dissent is embedded.

Direct action epitomizes the still widespread and influential positivist framing of human agency. Grand theories of popular dissent have been established in a quest for certainty and systematic knowledge. Scholars have searched for underlying patterns that could explain once and for all the functioning of human agency in diverse historical and cultural settings. What has emerged from these efforts is a universalized narrative that upholds a specific image of dissent - an image that becomes frozen in time and space. I alleged that the consequences of this positivist repression of ambiguity are far-reaching. While uprooting some forms of repression, a radical practice of dissent that is embedded in a positivist epistemology entrenches a whole range of other, more subtle forms of domination. The next part of this thesis now substantiates this theoretical assertion by analyzing its practical consequences in a concrete and specific political context.

PART TWO

REFRAMING
DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE

Part one of this thesis analyzed the theory and practice of popular dissent. The purpose of this genealogical inquiry was to illustrate, through an example, how modern understandings of human agency have been framed. I argued that dominant approaches to popular dissent are characterized by a recurring inability to come to terms with the death of God. Among the most noteworthy contemporary manifestations of this refusal to accept the contingent character of foundations are grand theories of dissent, approaches that search for ahistoric and universal patterns of social change.

Part two fulfills a transitional function. It reframes the above concepts of dissent to prepare the ground for the third and last part, which articulates an alternative notion of human agency by exploring discursive terrains of dissent. Two parallel shifts are necessary to prepare this task. The first one is of a methodological and epistemological nature. It entails moving away from grand theories towards an approach that recognizes the contingency of foundations, that deals with, rather than avoids, the death of God. The second shift is of a focal nature and suggest that the most potent expressions of human agency are not located in spectacular acts of dissent, such as mass demonstrations, but in the slow transformation of values that precedes them. Chapters four to six will deal with various aspects required to carry out these two parallel shifts. At this point it is necessary to draw attention to only one of these aspects. At its most basic level, dealing with the death of God means that one can no longer theorize dissent in ahistoric and universal terms. Meaningful

answers to question of social change can only be gained in a specific historical and cultural context.

The East German revolution serves as an anchoring device for my theoretical reframing of domination and resistance. The popular protests that toppled the authoritarian regime undoubtedly constitute a turning point in European history. For many the crumbling of the notorious Berlin Wall in November 1989 signified the end of the Cold War.[1] My inquiry into this important historical episode does not uphold one correct interpretation. Rather, I engage in various rereadings that explore the complex and often fragmented aspects of the events in question. Neither is my analysis in any way meant to be exhaustive or authoritative. I leave such ambitious endeavors up to experts in German politics - a status to which I lay no claim. My explorations are meant, above all, as a theoretical engagement with human agency through a rethinking and reframing of dissent, power and social change.

---

[1] For example, David W. Ziegler, <u>War, Peace, and International Politics</u> (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 70.

Chapter Four

FROM ESSENTIALIST
TO DISCURSIVE
CONCEPTIONS OF POWER

Great, glowing vault
with the
outward- and away-
burrowing black-constellation swarm:
into the silicified forehead of a ram
I burn this image, between
the horns, therein,
in the singing of the coils, the
marrow of the curdled
heartseas swells.

What
doesn't he
butt against?

The world is gone, I have to carry you.

<div align="right">

Paul Celan, "Grosse, glühende Wölbung"
tr. P. Joris

</div>

How to understand popular dissent, the power unleashed by protesting masses, the buildup of rage, resentment, passion and might, spilling into the streets, this 'outward- and away-burrowing black-constellation swarm'? How to problematize this prevalent image of human agency - an image of heroic rebellion, burnt between the horns of our dissident drive, into the forehead of late modern consciousness? How to listen to the more subtle singing of the coils, the spiraling entanglement of domination and resistance?

The present chapter grapples with these intricate questions by dealing with the issue that lies at the center of human agency, the concept of power. I begin by exploring questions of power and dissent through two readings of the East German case. The first one focuses on a key feature of the revolution of 1989, the massive acts of popular dissent that led to the downfall of the communist regime. These events represent one of the most common perceptions of contemporary human agency, an image of protesting masses that is, indeed, burnt into the forehead of late modern consciousness. The la Boétian tradition, which I analyzed in the previous part, deals precisely with such practices of dissent. It explains their functioning through a parsimonious theory of power that revolves around the assumption that any form of rule is ultimately dependent upon popular consent. Since this consent can be withdrawn, it is argued, massive efforts of popular resistance can topple even the most ruthless dictatorship.

A second reading of the East German revolution problematizes this parsimonious and essentialist understanding of power relations. My analysis suggests that power relations are far too complex to be assessed by a grand theoretical model that revolves around a universalized understanding of the interaction between rulers and ruled. The situation in East Germany, I suggest, can be understood more adequately through Michel Foucault's approach to power. There is no essence to power. It is neither stable nor can it be assessed with a grand theoretical model. Power, Foucault argues, is a complex and constantly changing relational force that depends largely on its interaction with the production and diffusion of knowledge. Drawing on this Foucaultean position I then introduce what will become the theoretical core of all subsequent chapters: a concept of power and dissent that relies on an understanding of discursive practices.

IMAGES OF DISSENT BURNT INTO LATE MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

The scenes of common citizens walking through the Berlin Wall represent a common image of dissent, an image of protesting masses, of thousands of people taking to the street and rising against the dark forces of a repressive regime. In the case of East Germany, the success of such resistance was spectacular by any measure. Within a few weeks of popular rage, Erich Honecker's notorious regime fell apart, a seemingly invincible iron fortress suddenly lay in ruins. Of course, one could have anticipated some form of social change once the Soviet Union, East Germany's key ally and protector, started to embark on an internal reform process. But nobody was prepared for the force and momentum that developed in the streets of East Germany during the autumn of 1989.

The present section scrutinizes the revolutionary events from the perspective of mass protest movements. How important were they? What form of power did they unleash? What image of human agency did they embody?

Popular dissent undoubtedly played an important role in triggering radical processes of social change. Jürgen Habermas, for example, notes that "the presence of large masses gathering in squares and mobilizing on the streets managed, astonishingly, to disempower a regime that was armed to the teeth."[1] But Habermas, and many others, emphasize that the force of street demonstration must be seen in its reinforcing combination with the impact created by the increasing number of East Germans that were leaving for the West. Albert O. Hirschmann, who termed this two protest forms "voice" and "exit," argues that their common force gradually eroded the foundations of the existing regime.[2] A brief elucidation:[3]

The practice of exit, of people leaving East Germany despite the government's desperate attempt to uphold the iron curtain and enforce a closed border policy, occurred primarily through two channels. Starting in August 1989, East German citizens used the extraterritorial status of diplomatic missions in the communist bloc to claim refugee status. Soon, the West German representations in East Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Warsaw had to be closed because they were overcrowded with thousands of East Germans determined to leave their country. An agreement between Berlin and Bonn at the end of September allowed for a transport of these refugees by special train - via East German territory - to the West. When news of

---

[1] Jürgen Habermas, "The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for new Thinking on the Left," in New Left Review, No. 183, 1990, p. 7.

[2] Albert O. Hirschmann, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic," in World Politics, No. 45, January 1993, pp. 173-202.

[3] Needless to say, the interaction of domination and resistance in East Germany is a highly complex issue that I cannot possibly represent adequately in this short summary. For analyses that focus on the country's entire life-span see Mary Fulbrook, Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and John C. Topey, Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Countless German language material has appeared about the revolution of 1989, as, for example, Hannes Bahrmann and Christoph Links, Wir sind das Volk: Die DDR zwischen 7. Oktober und 17. Dezember 1989 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990); Bärbel Bohley et al., 40 Jahre DDR...und die Bürger melden sich zu Wort (Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1989); R. Deppe, H. Dubiel and U. Rödel, Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991); Ralf Dahrendorf, Betrachtungen über die Revolution in Europa (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1990); Gert-Joachim Glaeßner, Der schwierige Weg zur Demokratie: Vom Ende der DDR zur Deutschen Einheit (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); Christiane Lemke, Die Ursachen des Umbruchs 1989 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); K. Löw (ed), Ursachen und Verlauf der deutschen Revolution von 1989 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991); Marlies Menge, "Ohne uns läuft nichts mehr": Die Revolution in der DDR (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1990). For analyses in English see, for example, Timothy Garton Ash, We the People: The Revolution of 1989 (London: Granta / Penguin, 1990); Sigrid Meuschel, "Revolution in the German Democratic Republic," in Critical Sociology, Vol. 17/3, Fall 1990, pp. 17-34; Karl-Dieter Opp et al., Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution: East Germany, 1989 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995); and the special issue of New German Critique, No. 64, winter 1994.

this evacuation spread, the regime desperately tried to prevent its citizens from jumping on the so called refugee trains that were leaving for Prague and other destinations. However, in a matter of days, the diplomatic representations were packed anew and special trains brought again 7,600 refugees to West Germany. While these spectacular occupation-evacuation procedures attracted a lot of media attention and robbed the regime of that little bit of legitimacy it had left, the numerically most damaging emigration occurred as a result of Budapest's gradual dismantling of the 'iron curtain'. On 11 September, Hungary unilaterally decided to open its borders to Austria. Within three days, 15,000 East Germans walked through the iron curtain and then settled in West Germany. This was only the beginning of the exit wave. Illegal border-crossings, for which several East Germans had been shot during the preceding decades, became a mass movement by the fall of 1989.[4]

Meanwhile, opposition activities within East Germany became more organized. Between July and September, various illegal grassroots opposition movements emerged, such as Neues Forum, Demokratischer Aufbruch and Demokratie Jetzt. Popular demonstrations now appeared at various places. For example, each Monday, after the traditional Protestant service at Leipzig's Nikolaikirche, people gathered outside the church to demand reforms. Their number continually increased week after week. On 2 October, 25,000 of them were violently dispersed by the police.

During the celebration of East Germany's fortieth anniversary, on 7 October, Erich Honecker made one last attempt to redress the balance. But his categorical refusal to acknowledge the need for change only increased the pressure from below. Street protests became a normal feature in virtually every city in the country. The Monday demonstration in Leipzig was by now a weekly event of mass protest; 70,000 people participated on 9 October and 120,000 a week later. Meanwhile, thousands of East Germans kept leaving their country every day. The young age of the emigrants and the resulting loss of future leadership and labor potential constituted an almost insurmountable obstacle for the regime's attempt to impose order. The human drain created chaotic situations throughout the country. Many spheres, such as industry, the service sector, public transportation and hospitals either totally collapsed or functioned only with great difficulty. Exit had torn holes in the East German society, to the extent that even the anachronistic leadership could no longer ignore the volatility of the situation. In a series of highly unusual public declarations, the government acknowledged the threat that exit constituted for the socialist order. On 12 October, the Politburo avowed on the front page of the official party organ that "socialism needs everybody, ...we cannot remain indifferent if people break away from our East Germany."[5]

---

[4] For statistical details on the exit wave see Thomas Ammer, "Stichwort: Flucht aus der DDR," in Deutschland-Archiv, No. 22, November 1989, p. 1207; and Hartmut Wendt, "Die deutsch-deutschen Wanderungen," in Deutschland-Archiv, No. 24, April 1991, p. 390.

[5] Neues Deutschland, 12 October 1989, p. 1.

The continuously increasing pressure from below triggered a power struggle within the Politburo. On 18 October, Honecker, the long time autocrat, and two of his closest and oldest allies, Günter Mittag and Joachim Hermann, were forced to resign. Yet, the new government, headed by another long-time Honecker confidant, Egon Krenz, could not calm the situation with the announced reforms. Too little, too late was the general consensus in the population. Demonstrations became again more frequent and dramatically increased in size. Calls for more democracy, free elections and mobility rights could be heard all over East Germany. 'We are the people' echoed day after day, hundreds of thousands of times, through the streets of Leipzig, Dresden, East Berlin, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Potsdam and may other cities. Leipzig alone witnessed several demonstrations attended by more than 200,000 people. On 4 November, over a million people took to the streets in East Berlin. The day after, an almost equal number of protesters gathered in Leipzig. Meanwhile, the lack of man- and women-power that resulted from the exodus, which continued at a rate of about 10,000 East Germans a day, further paralyzed the country. Personal accounts, published later by high-ranking party officials, reveal how decisive these migrations were in triggering processes of social change. Two key figures of the Politburo, Egon Krenz, president at the time, and Günter Schabowski, spokesperson for the government, acknowledge that mass emigration had a tremendous impact on them and other leading figures involved in the decision-making process. Members of the government believed that they could under no circumstances survive extended mass emigration, that exit created a situation against which the regime was absolutely helpless. [6]

Soon, the mounting pressure claimed its next victims. More key figures were forced to 'retire,' including Margot Honecker, Harry Tisch, Kurt Hager and Erich Mielke. On 7 November the entire government resigned. The day after, the Politburo followed suit. Then, on 9 November 1989, came the beginning of the end, the *coup de grâce* to old order: Schabowski, in his capacity as spokesperson, declared that effective immediately, all East German citizens were free to travel abroad without prior permission from state authorities. The same night, sensational pictures were seen all over the world: thousands of people climbing over, dismantling and simply walking through the meanwhile anachronistic Berlin Wall in front of puzzled and helpless East German guards. In the days to come, hundreds of thousands of East Germans took a glimpse at the West, a possibility that had been inconceivable to them for decades.

From then on it took little time for what remained of the authoritarian regime to vanish into the annals of European history. Emigration increased even more and demonstrations did not cease until all remnants of the old order were gone. Placing

---

[6] Egon Krenz, <u>Wenn Mauern Fallen</u> (Wien: Paul Neff Verlag, 1990), p. 13, 29, 61, 161-8; Günter Schabowski, <u>Das Politbüro: Ende eines Mythos</u> (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990), pp. 62, 90, 305; and <u>Der Absturz</u> (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), pp. 118, 256, 305.

Hans Modrow, a reform-oriented communist, at the head the government did not postpone the fall. In December, Egon Krenz resigned from all his functions. Under his successor, Gregor Gysi, the Communist Party virtually disintegrated. On 16 March 1990, the first free parliamentary elections took place in East Germany. The Christian Democratic Union, an ally of the West German conservative ruling party, achieved a spectacular victory.

Every demand the people had taken to the streets in the fall of 1989 was met by the spring of 1990. Within half a year utopia had turned into reality. One of the most repressive regimes of central and eastern Europe had crumbled like a house of cards under the pressure from below.

PROBING CONSENT BASED CONCEPTIONS OF POWER

The image of human agency that these sensational events evoke are not only reflective of the media infused late modern consciousness. They are also part of a much deeper entrenched modern perception of political resistance, of revolutionary masses overthrowing their tyrannical rulers. Marxist activism has substantially contributed to the prevalence of this image. And so have other traditions, including the one that originated in la Boétie's notion of voluntary servitude. Its intellectual legacy has given rise to grand theories of dissent that revolve around the assumption that power is dependent upon popular consent. The withdrawal of this consent, through practices of resistance as the above voice and exit, can allegedly topple even the most ruthless forms of oppression.

Consent oriented understandings of power have left a lasting mark on ideas and social practices. Barry Hindess, for instance, divides modern conceptions of power into two main approaches. One focuses on the capacity to act. The other understands power not only as a capacity, but also as a right to act, "with both right and capacity being seen as to rest on the consent of those over whom the power is exercised."[7] The la Boétian model clearly epitomizes this latter view, a view that has been, according to Hindess, "at the center of Western political and social thought throughout the modern period."[8]

But are consent based models of power really adequate for understanding a revolutionary event like the collapse of authoritarianism in East Germany? Can a grand theory of dissent capture such a complex set of events and the processes of social change that issued from it?

I engage with these questions by comparing and contrasting the la Boétian, consent oriented conception of power, with the writings of Michel Foucault, who is

---

[7] Barry Hindess, Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 1.

[8] Ibid, p. 10.

arguably one of the most influential contemporary voices on the subject of power. This comparison is, of course, unable to provide an overview of the complex debates that have been waged about power during the last decades. But such is not my task here. The specifically focused comparison I am about to undertake is merely intended to highlight some of the issues that are at stake in articulating links between power, dissent and human agency.

La Boétie and Foucault rely on a similar relational view of power. The la Boétian notion of withdrawing popular consent is based on the premise that power dynamics operate in the interactive relationship between ruler and ruled. If people draw upon this power source they can fundamentally alter existing political structures and practices. Thus, by engaging in street demonstration and protest migration, as East Germans did, common citizens directly interfere with power relations. Foucault shares some of these theoretical assumptions. He defines the exercise of power, somewhat like la Boétie, as "a mode of action upon the actions of others," which indicates that his object of analysis is not power itself, but power relations.[9] Foucault does not deny that institutions are crucial embodiments of power. Indeed, they are often the place where power is inscribed and crystallized. Yet, the fundamental point of anchorage of power relations, Foucault claims, is always located outside institutions, deeply entrenched within the social nexus. Hence, instead of looking at power from the vantage point of institutions, one must analyze institutions from the standpoint of power relations.[10]

The shared concern with how power functions relationally leads Foucault and la Boétie away from what most modern theorists have constituted as the key (structural) focus of power analyses, the State. From a relational perspective, the State is only one among many sites of power, a superstructural site that operates primarily on the grounds of other, already existing power networks.[11] Foucault and la Boétie also diverge from the common tendency to define power primarily as a negative, restraining and repressive force. Both imbue power with an important positive and enabling component. In the la Boétian tradition, it is the ability to overcome domination through the withdrawal of popular consent. With Foucault things are more complicated. His earlier so called archeological phase clearly privileges systemic and discursive restraints over the individual's capacity to employ power for emancipatory objectives.[12] His later work, however, revolves around an more positive core, one that sees power not just as a negative and repressive force,

[9] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (eds), <u>Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics</u> (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), pp. 219, 221.

[10] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 222.

[11] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in <u>Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings</u>, ed. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980/1972), p. 122.

[12] See especially Michel Foucault, <u>L'Archéologie du Savoir</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

but at least as much as something enabling, an opportunity, an instrument of resistance.[13]

This is where similarities between Foucault and the la Boétian tradition end. Foucault may well rely on a relational and enabling view of power, he may even endorse the la Boétian claim that "power stems from below."[14] But differences between the two approaches to power are clear and profound. Foucault strongly opposes global and ahistoric models of power relations that focus on dualistic interactions between oppressor and oppressed:

> [T]here is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix - no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavages that run through the social body as whole.[15]

Foucault clearly rejects the positivist and essentialist assumptions around which grand theories of dissent revolve. By characterizing power not as an interaction between ruler and ruled, but as a complex, stratified, interwoven and multi-dimensional phenomenon, he undermines the most fundamental theoretical foundation of the entire la Boétian tradition of dissent. In particular, he dismantles the notion of voluntary servitude, the parsimonious claim that any form of government, no matter how ruthless and oppressive, is dependent upon popular consent. Foucault argues that consent may well serve to sustain power, so may violence. Yet, neither consent nor violence form the basic nature of power. "The crucial problem of power," for Foucault, "is not that of voluntary servitude, ...but the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom."[16] Power does not work directly from people to people in a consent-oriented manner. It is a complex strategic situation, far too complex and idiosyncratic to be assessed through a grand theory, yet alone a parsimonious one. Power relations are always part of a social network. They need to be assessed in their unique spatio-temporal setting.

PROBING THE CONTEXT OF WITHDRAWING CONSENT

Is Foucault's hostility towards essentialist conceptions of power warranted? With this question in mind I now engage in a second reading of the East German

---

[13] Michel Foucault, <u>La Volonté de Savoir</u>, Volume 1 of <u>L'Histoire de la Sexualité</u> (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1976), p. 133.

[14] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 124.

[15] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 124, as translated by R. Hurley in Foucault, <u>The History of Sexuality</u> (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 94.

[16] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," pp. 219-222.

revolution. This time I try to locate some of the unique, multiple and overlapping power relations that Foucault so extensively theorized.

Power relations at the international level undoubtedly played a crucial role in the East German revolution. Social dynamics within East Germany during the late 1980s were intrinsically linked to Cold War politics and the overall crisis of the Soviet-led alliance system. Indeed, many analysts argue that changes in Moscow's foreign policy constituted an important, if not the key factor in the German revolution of 1989.[17] The survival of Honecker's authoritarian regime was directly linked to its incorporation into the internationalized structures of Cold War politics. East Germany's importance for the Soviet-led alliance system was a crucial component of domestic power relations. This remained so as long as the international system was dominated by ideological schism and a bipolar power structure. However, the situation radically changed in the mid-1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev started to restructure Soviet foreign policy. His principle of "new thinking" now recognized explicitly that each nation has the right to determine its own policies.[18] This meant that the East German regime could no longer count on Moscow's financial and military support for the suppression of domestic popular resistance. The gradual decay of the Soviet Union and the resulting dissolution of the Cold War system fundamentally altered power relationships within East Germany. These factors permitted domestic social dynamics to take a course that was far less circumscribed by Soviet geopolitical and ideological interest.

Intranational dynamics constituted another sphere in which complex and stratified power relationships operated much like Foucault's theoretical model suggests. The ethnic bonds and fierce ideological competition between the two politically distinct German States intrinsically and interactively linked their political and social dynamics. Many aspects of resistance in East Germany must be understood in the context of such intra-German dynamics. For example, the massive emigration waves would not have been able to emerge without West Germany's economic attraction and its constitutionally entrenched policy of granting citizenship to East German refugees. Ulrich Beck appropriately captures this intranational power dimension by pointing out that "Poland minus communism is still Poland. But East Germany minus communism is the Federal Republic of Germany."[19]

The domestic level displays the most complex picture of power relationships. An account of the struggle for control over the Politburo and its implication for the fall of East Germany could alone fill volumes. For instance, the regime's

---

[17] For example, Dahrendorf, Betrachtungen über die Revolution, p. 17; Deppe, Dubiel and Rödel, Demokratischer Umbruch, p. 10; and Glaeßner, Der schwierige Weg zur Demokratie, p. 25.

[18] Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: Die zweite russische Revolution, tr. Gruppe U. Mihr (München: Droemer Knaur, 1987), pp. 230-233.

[19] Ulrich Beck, "Opposition in Deutschland," in B. Giesen and C. Leggewie (ed), Experiment Vereinigung: Ein sozialer Grossversuch (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1991), p. 24-5.

commanding structure of the 1980s could be considered tripartite, consisting of Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag and Erich Mielke. Yet, Honecker had occupied the key role for such a long time that the system's functioning was to a considerable extent dependent upon his personality, on what Max Weber once called a charismatic source of power. Thus, when Honecker fell seriously ill in 1989, the Politburo was paralyzed and unable to respond to the mounting pressure from the population.

Domestic power relationships were also conditioned by the system of privileges in which East Germany's authoritarian commanding structure was embedded. Privileges were not only available to the members of the Politburo, who had access to a great array of Western consumer goods and lived in well equipped and secluded 'fortresses', first in Pankow and, from 1960 on, in Wandlitz, north of Berlin. Rather, the reward principle reached a much greater circle of citizens. For example, the notorious Stasi, the Ministry of State Security, employed a range of methods to draw people into the machinery of the oppressive state system. It is estimated that approximately 10% of the population worked in one way or another for this institution that functioned as an omnipresent surveillance system.[20] These informants, combined with the nomenclatura, the police, the army, fire-fighters, justices, teachers, post-office employees and all their families and friends and many more, comprised a substantial web of people who were in some manner intertwined with the ruling apparatus. Informants were paid according to the usefulness of the material they provided. Non-cooperation with the authorities, by contrast, could easily result in highly consequential financial, political and other disadvantages for the respective individuals and their families. This system of reward and punishment existed at all societal levels and in all geographical areas of the country. It created various systems and sub-systems of power relations that helped to sustain an authoritarian societal structure. This is why some analysts, such as Artur Meier, portray the collapse of the East German regime primarily as the obsolescence of a system of positive and negative privileges.[21]

One could easily argue with this or that aspect of the above interpretations of social dynamics in East Germany. One could elaborate on them or draw attention to a range of other spheres where power dynamics operated. To engage with the details of these debates is besides the objective of this thesis and better left to specialists in German politics. My task is the task of a political theorist who

---

[20] Ursula Jaekel, "40 Jahre Staatssicherheit - Ziele, Tätigkeit, Auswirkungen," in K. Löw, Ursachen und Verlauf der deutschen Revolution, pp. 140, 145; Tilmann Moser, Besuche bei Brüdern und Schwestern (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 56. Revelations about the Stasi are among the most intensively discussed aspects of the East German system. See, for example, Rainer Eppelmann, Wendewege (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1992); Erich Loest, Die Stasi war mein Eckermann oder: mein Leben mit der Wanze (Göttingen: Steidel Verlag, 1991); and Hans Joachim Schädlich (ed), Aktenkundig (Berlin: Rowohlt Verlag, 1992).

[21] Artur Meier , "Abschied von der sozialistischen Ständegesellschaft," in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, No 16-17, April 1990, pp. 3-14.

scrutinizes the concept of human agency - and from this vantage-point the message is clear: power relations and power structures that influenced the collapse of the East German regime were far too complex to be assessed through a parsimonious and global theoretical framework.

Foucault's notion of power is more adequate than la Boétie's to understand the complexities of the East German situation. Power relations operate in multiple terrains and can be assessed meaningfully only in a specific historical and cultural setting. No grand theory can ever capture the essence of power relations. My brief rereading of the various contexts within which the revolutionary events of 1989 were embedded confirms Foucault's claim that power, capitalized or not, concentrated or diffused, does not exist at a universal level.[22] But this is not to say that power as such does not exist.

Foucault explicitly operates within the Nietzschean premise that nothing exists outside power, that "there cannot be a society without power relations."[23] There will always be forms of domination and attempts to break free from them. "To demand of strength," Nietzsche says, "that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to thrown down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength."[24] Despite this omnipresence of relations of domination and resistance - or, rather, because of it -, one cannot speak of power and human agency in global and ahistoric terms. A theory of power, Foucault argues convincingly, cannot provide the basis for analytical work, for it assumes a prior objectification of the very power dynamics the theory is trying to assess.[25]

TOWARDS A DISCURSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF POWER RELATIONS

Since a systematic theory cannot capture the intricate functioning of power, one must explore different ways of understanding the frameworks within which domination, resistance and social change take place. One must search for more subtle foundations that could, maybe, provide momentary ground for understanding human agency. But how is one to embark upon this intricate task? In my journey I continue to rely, at least for the moment, on Foucault's guidance. He approaches power by adding an extra step to understanding it. Power, he argues, is not simply

---

[22] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 219.

[23] Ibid., p. 223.

[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989/1887), p. 45, § 13.

[25] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 209.

the relationship between individuals or groups, a type of force that one person exerts on another. It works in a more intricate, more indirect way:

> [W]hat defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future...[T]he exercise of power...is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions.[26]

Power is a complex strategic situation, something that shapes and frames the boundaries within which actions can be carried out. Such a definition inevitably raises a number of questions. What mediates the exercise of power? What is the space that lies between actions, this mesh of social forces through which actions frame the actions of others? One mediating factor is the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault, drawing once more on Nietzsche, argues that knowledge and power are intrinsically linked. There are no power relations which do not constitute corresponding fields of knowledge. And there are no forms of knowledge that do not presupposes and at the same time constitute relations of power.[27]

Power is not a stable and steady force, something that exists on its own. There is no essence to power, for its exercise is dependent upon forms of knowledge that imbue certain actions with power. This is to say that the manner in which we view and frame power also influences how it functions in practice.

"It is within discourse," Foucault claims, "that power and knowledge articulate each other."[28] Discourses are subtle mechanisms that frame our thinking process. They determine the limits of what can be thought, talked and written in a normal and rational way. In every society the production of discourses is controlled, selected, organized and diffused by certain procedures. They create systems of exclusion in which one group of discourses is elevated to a hegemonic status while others are condemned to exile. Discourses give rise to social rules about statements most people recognize as valid, as debatable or as undoubtedly false. Which utterances are remembered as important, which disappear without a trace from collective societal memories? Which propositions from previous periods or foreign culture are retained, imported, valued, which are forgotten or neglected? It is within discursive practices that such arbitrary boundaries are drawn and objectivized.[29] Although these boundaries change, at times gradually, at times abruptly, they maintain a certain unity across time, a unity that dominates and transgresses individual authors, texts or social practices.

---

[26] Ibid., p. 220.

[27] Michel Foucault, Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 32.

[28] Foucault, La Volonté de Savoir, p. 133.

[29] See Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," in G. Burchell et al. (eds), The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 59-60; L'Archéologie du Savoir; and L'Ordre du Discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

Not everything is discourse, but everything is in discourse. Things exist independently of discourses, but we can only assess them through the lenses of discourse, through the practices of knowing, perceiving and sensing which we have acquired over time. Nietzsche:

> That mountain here! That cloud there! What is 'real' in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you can! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training - all of your humanity and animality. There is no 'reality' for us - not for you either, my sober friends...[30]

Nietzsche's point, of course, is not that mountains and clouds do not exist as such. To claim such would be absurd. Mountains and clouds exist no matter what we think about them. And so do more tangible social practices. But they are not 'real' by some objective standard. Their appearance, meaning and significance is part of human experiences, part of a specific way of life. A Nietzschean position emphasizes that discourses render social practices intelligible and rational - and by doing so mask the ways in which they have been constituted and framed. Systems of domination gradually become accepted as normal and silently penetrate every aspect of society. They cling to the most remote corners of our mind, for "all things that live long are gradually so saturated with reason that their emergence out of unreason thereby becomes improbable."[31]

Discourses are more than just masking agents. They provide us with frameworks to view the world, and by doing so influence its course. Discourses express ways of life that actively shape social practices. But more is needed to demonstrate how the concept of discourse can be of use to illuminate concrete social phenomenon, such as the interaction between domination and resistance in East Germany. More is needed to draw a link between discourse and dissent. More is needed to outline a positive notion of human agency that is not based on stable foundations. This section has merely located the terrains that are to be explored. It is now up to the following chapters to introduce, step by step, the arguments and evidence necessary to develop and sustain a discursive approach to power, dissent and human agency.

SUMMARY

This chapter started to prepare the ground for the articulation of a more subtle, alternative conception of human agency. The focus has been with rethinking power, an issue that is central to an adequate understanding of human agency as capacity to act and promote social change.

---

[30] Nietzsche, The Gay Science, tr. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974/1882), p. 57, § 57.

[31] Nietzsche, Morgenröte (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1983/1881), p. 17, § 1.

A theoretical engagement with Michel Foucault and a rereading of the events in East Germany have led me to argue that power dynamics are far too complicated to be assessed through a parsimonious grand theory. The idea, espoused by the la Boétian tradition of dissent, that power is located in the interactive relationship between ruler and ruled, proved too simplistic to assess the complex events that toppled the authoritarian regime in 1989. Power penetrates various societal aspects, to the point that no theory can ever capture the stratified, interwoven and diffused manner in which it operates in practice.

Acknowledging the complexities of power is not unproblematic for a rearticulation of human agency. Many commentators have criticized Foucault for putting us in a situation in which we can do nothing but express bewilderment at an overwhelming world around us - a world in which the potential for human agency no longer seems to exist. Nancy Hartsock, for example, criticizes such a Foucaultean world as one in which systems move, not people, in which the subject becomes obliterated or reduced to an impotent passive object. She claims that in defining power as omnipresent, as ever expanding and penetrating all aspects of society, Foucault has made it very difficult to locate domination.[32] Resistance, then, becomes virtually impossible.

But Foucault can be read in more than just one way. His later work, in particular, offers ground for more optimistic interpretations. Indeed, Foucault explicitly points out that acknowledging the omnipresence of power is not to say that it is a fatality which cannot be overcome.[33] "Where there is power," he says, "there is resistance."[34] Paul Patton, extending this line of thought, convincingly argues that Foucault can be read in ways that "offer a surrogate for hope."[35] By distinguishing between power, power over and domination, Patton shows that Foucault espouses a conception of human being. Even though this conception is "thin," it can "be filled out in a manner which explains both resistance to domination and the possibility of transforming existing economies of power."[36]

I follow Patton's positive reading of Foucault and argue that one can accept the inevitability of power and still articulate a concept of human agency, even develop concrete strategies of resistance. The present chapter has taken the first step in this direction by proposing a shift away from grand theories of popular dissent towards a discursive understanding of power. This shift is not meant to replace concrete practices of resistance, but to supplement them with a more subtle understanding of the effects that they produce. Power, from this perspective, is not something fixed

---

[32] Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?", in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), Feminism/Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 1990), esp. pp. 168-170.

[33] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 223.

[34] Foucault, La Volonté de Savoir, p. 125.

[35] Paul Patton, "Foucault's Subject of Power," in Political Science Newsletter, Vol. 6, 1994, pp. 61.

[36] Ibid., p. 66

and stable, but a complex and constantly changing relational situation that is intrinsically linked to the production and diffusion of knowledge.

Accepting that there is no essence to power requires coming to terms with the death of God. In a world that no longer revolves around stable foundations, human beings must take responsibility for their own thoughts and actions. We must recognize the contingent character of foundations, the absence of an overarching world-view that unifies humanity, provides certainty and stability. 'The world is gone, I have to carry you,' Celan said at the beginning of this chapter. The prospect is frightening, to say the least. Nietzsche already knew how daring a task it is, having to affirm from denial, having to create out of negation: "Who can feel with me what it means to feel with every shred of one's being that the weight of all things must be defined anew?"[37] The following chapters engage in such a Nietzschean rethinking, but in a much less ambitious way. I do not aspire to define anew the weight of human agency. Far from such a presumptuous ambition be my task. I merely attempt to ground an understanding of human agency in nothingness.

---

[37] Nietzsche cited in Erich Heller, "Rilke and Nietzsche," in I. Howe (ed), <u>The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts</u> (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p. 270.

CONFRONTING INCOMMENSURABILITY

> [The problem] is precisely this gesture of totalized reasoning, which subsumes, or pretends to be able to subsume, everything into *one* concept, *one* theory, *one* position. The resulting philosophical 'master discourse' then turns into an intellectual domination by the Same, the One - a form of domination in which there is no room for the views of the Other, the Heterogeneous.
>
> Elisabeth List, Die Präsenz des Anderen

Before embarking on more rereadings of the East German revolution it is necessary to pause for a moment and reflect upon some of the central theoretical dilemmas that have arisen with my reframing of domination and resistance. What precisely is entailed in accepting the death of God? What does it mean to take over, rather than deflect responsibility? If one abandons the desire to understand the world in its totality, how can one deal with the ensuing proliferation of diverse and often incommensurable positions? Can we still articulate dissent, can we assert any kind of normative claim, without relying on stable foundations? Can we retain hope for articulating a viable but non-essentialist concept of human agency? And how can Foucaultean notions of power and discourse possibly offer help? Are they not, as some suggest, merely faddish concepts, destined to wax and wane with fleeting intellectual trends of the postmodern and poststructural kind?

This Interlude grapples with some of these dilemmas by engaging with the literature on postmodernism. I do so not to provide a coherent account of this complex body of knowledge, but to underline the need to embrace difference and confront incommensurability. I do so to argue that accepting the contingent character of foundations does not necessarily result in a nihilist void, a relativist abyss that renders dissent or critique impossible. Indeed, any approach that fails to take postmodern epistemological warnings seriously runs the risk of reifying systems

of exclusion by imposing inevitable cultural prejudices upon an idiosyncratic mesh of social phenomena.

Only by confronting incommensurability, by accepting its epistemological and methodological consequences, can one adequately work through the complex and often paradoxical aspects of domination and resistance in the late modern age. Searching for this difficult path is, I argue, our best hope for retaining a viable notion of human agency.

POSTMODERNISM, OR LIFE AFTER THE DEATH OF GOD

Accepting the death of God is necessary for an adequate understanding of human agency as capacity to act and promote social change. Prevalent approaches to popular dissent have, by and large, failed to take this crucial step. They have often engaged in ahistoric and universal endeavors to discover recurring patterns of social change. Such grand theories of dissent, I argued in previous chapters, sustain practices of domination. They lead to what Adorno called "identity thinking," a practice of reflection that ignores the desire for control and the will to power entailed in all thought forms. They subsume the particular under the general, force subjective and idiosyncratic identities into one unitary system of thought, one universal point of reference, one truth that silences all others.[1]

A postmodern position embraces difference and emphasizes that an understanding of human agency and dissent need not, and must not, resort to a universal and essentialist standpoint. Indeed, Foucault links the very notion of an emancipatory politics to an acceptance of difference and ensuing attempts to explore possibilities of transformation.[2] But what precisely does a postmodern position entail besides the acceptance of difference?

The postmodern has become a stretched, widely used and highly controversial term. It first achieved prominence in literary criticism and architecture, but eventually spread into virtually all realms, penetrating such fields as architecture, art, music, sociology, geography and philosophy. What the postmodern actually means is highly disputed and dependent on links with equally ambiguous concepts, such as modernism and modernity. The increasing sense of confusion in the proliferation of the postmodern leads Gianni Vattimo to note that this term is so omnipresent and faddish that it has become almost obligatory to distance oneself from it.[3] But Vattimo nevertheless holds on. He, alongside such diverse authors as Jean-François

---

[1] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966), pp. 15-86.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," in G. Burchell et.al. (eds), The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 70.

[3] Gianni Vattimo, The Transparent Society, tr. D. Webb (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 1.

Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, David Harvey and Fredric Jameson, view the postmodern as both a changing attitude and a fundamentally novel historical condition. They focus on cultural transformations that have taken place in the Western world and assume, as Andreas Huyssen summarizes, that we are witnessing "a noticeable shift in sensibility, practices and discourse formations which distinguishes a postmodern set of assumptions, experiences and propositions from that of a preceding period."[4] Such shifts are recognized in various features, including the rapid evolution and spread of mass media, computers and other communicative features, which have created a "transparent society" (Vattimo), an "ecstasy of communication" (Baudrillard) and fundamentally rearranged the relationship between time and space (Harvey); a post-industrial phase whose main feature is knowledge production (Lyotard); new technologies, the fragmentation of the subject, and the advance of a consumer democracy which, even from a Marxist perspective, provided late capitalism with an inherently new cultural logic (Jameson).

I argue for a more limited usage of the term postmodern, one that draws a clear distinction between postmodernism (an attitude, an approach to studying social phenomenon) and postmodernity (a new historical époque).[5] I adopt elements of the former position but reject the latter as premature. This is not to say that the above mentioned so-called postmodern phenomena do not exist. Indeed, I will deal with them in detail. Yet, I do not see enough evidence to suggest that these features have ushered in a fundamentally new historical period, one that has superseded modernity and deserves the label 'post.' In this sense I concur with authors like Paul de Man and Michel Foucault, for whom modernity is already such a vague and dubious historical term, that postmodernity becomes nothing but a parody of the notion of modernity.[6] Even Lyotard, in a departure from earlier terminology, now prefers to "rewrite modernity." The very concept of postmodernity, he points out, represents an effort in historical periodization, an obsession with ordering that is typically modern.[7]

---

[4] Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern." in New German Critique, Vol. 33, 1984, p. 8. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations, tr. P. Foss, P. Patton and P. Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983) and "The Ecstasy of Communication," tr. J. Johnston in Hal Foster (ed), Postmodern Culture (London: Pluto Press, 1985); Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in New Left Review, No. 146, 1984; David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989); Jean-François Lyotard, La Condition Postmoderne (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

[5] For elaborations of this distinction see Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 1989); and Barry Smart, Postmodernity (London: Routledge, 1993).

[6] Paul de Man, The Resistance to Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 120; Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," tr. C. Hubert in P. Rabinow (ed), The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 248-9; Foucault in Smart, Postmodernity, p. 5.

[7] Jean-François Lyotard, "Rewriting Modernity," in The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, tr. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991/1988), pp. 24-35.

The term postmodernism is a more useful analytical tool than postmodernity for it does not imply the end of a historical époque called modernity, but merely draws attention to the need for rethinking the concepts and categories through which this époque has been constituted. For this purpose I accept the aspects of Lyotard's work that differentiate between the modern and the postmodern by defining the former as any science that legitimates itself in reference to a grand narrative, while employing the latter term to express an incredulity towards this totalizing form of knowledge.[8] The refusal to orient oneself in relation to one 'master discourse' applies, of course, to all aspects of life. Umberto Eco, for instance, defines the postmodern, analogous to the argument I presented in chapter four, as "the orientation of anyone who has learned the lessons of Foucault, i.e., that power is not something unitary that exists outside us."[9] Vattimo's postmodernism rejects the idea of a single, unilinear notion of history, one that progresses towards an end, a telos. He considers history as "images of the past projected from different points of view."[10] Conceptualizing the postmodern along these lines of celebrating difference, Wolfgang Welsch argues, goes beyond merely rejecting and superseding modernity. It is a transition into a true form of plurality that includes past époques and modern ideas.[11]

I embrace postmodernism only as an epistemological and methodological position (to which subsequent chapters will add an ontological dimension). This position revolves around the issue of what knowledge is, how it is constructed, and how it relates to language and power. Epistemology here is not, as it was in pre-Kantean philosophy, a privileged form of insight into the human mind. The postmodern notion of episteme rejects the existence of truth beyond power, a privileged site of knowledge. It draws attention to the constituted and multiple dimensions of social practices. Postmodernists search for solutions outside the teleological and rational imperatives of Enlightenment notions of universal emancipation. Given the acceptance of epistemological fragmentation, it is almost self-evident that this search is characterized more by diversity than by a single and coherent set of positions and assumptions about life.

If there is a unifying point in postmodernism then it is precisely the acceptance of difference, the refusal to uphold one position as the correct and desirable one. "The postmodern begins," Welsch says, "where totality ends."[12] Its vision is the vision of plurality, a positive attempt to secure and explore multiple dimensions of the processes that legitimize and ground social practices. Once the end of totalitarian

[8] Lyotard, La Condition Postmoderne, p. 7.

[9] Eco cited in Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, p. 3.

[10] Vattimo, The Transparent Society, p. 3.

[11] Wolfgang Welsch, "Postmoderne: Genealogie und Bedeutung eines umstrittenen Begriffes," in P. Kemper (ed), Postmoderne oder der Kampf um die Zukunft (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988), pp. 31-2.

[12] Ibid., pp. 29-30.

thought is accepted, it becomes, of course, very difficult to talk about the postmodern without descending into clichés or doing grave injustice to individual authors who explore various terrains of difference. Jane Flax recognized this difficulty and admits that by speaking about postmodernism one already runs "the risk of violating some of its central values - heterogeneity, multiplicity, and difference."[13] With this sense of terminological caution in mind, I engage in epistemological and methodological issues deemed postmodern, but do so by and large without relying upon this stretched and abused term.

The actual term postmodernism may vanish together with current intellectual fads. The substantial issues that it brought to the forefront, however, are here to stay. They underline, and this is particularly relevant for my attempt to rethink human agency, the need to take on board Nietzsche's advice and deal with, rather than deflect the death of God. The central importance of this task explains why friend and foe of postmodernism generally recognize Nietzsche as the conceptual turning point from the modern to the postmodern.[14] Ever since the Renaissance, when the certainty of the theocentric order gave way to a less secure humanist world view, many key authors have searched for alternative foundations to anchor their understanding of the world. They include the early humanist elevation of 'man' to the measure of all things, the Enlightenment trust in reason and science, the Romantic deification of the Self, and the contemporary combination of the latter two into a positivist understanding of social change that focuses on grand theoretical models of dissent. Such modern compulsions to anchor the world in stable foundations is not only futile, but also dangerous, for its reifying elements impose one image of reality to the detriment of others.

Instead of continuously trying to fill the void left by the fallen God, I argue for a methodological approach that no longer searches for alternative Archimedean foundations. The complex and increasingly intertwined social dynamics of late modern life require more than ever that one accepts ambiguities and deals with the inevitably contingent character of foundations. One must try to approach issues of human agency and social change by relying on various forms of insight and levels of analysis even if they are incommensurable and contradict each other's internal logic. Often such differences only appear as contradictions because we have not yet come to terms with the death of God, because we still strive for a universal standard of reference that is supposed to subsume all the various aspects of life under a single totalizing standpoint.[15]

---

[13] Jane Flax, Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 188.

[14] As friend: Welsch, "Postmoderne," p. 12. As foe: Jürgen Habermas, Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 104-129.

[15] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, pp. 17-18.

Confronting incommensurability is often equated with a fall into a nihilist abyss. Not so. Welsch convincingly argues that a celebration of difference neither lacks potentials for resistance nor degenerates into some form of relativism. Rather, postmodern dissent is an active, positive and powerful way of safeguarding plurality, of resisting uniformity and totalitarian tendencies in such diverse realms as language, technology, aesthetics and politics.[16] But the practical relevance of such a postmodern approach to power, dissent and human agency is far easier asserted than demonstrated. The latter task, daunting as it may be, is what I will tackle next.

---

[16] Wolfgang Welsch, "Für eine postmoderne Ästhetik des Widerstands," in <u>Ästhetisches Denken</u> (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993), p. 166.

Chapter Five

OF 'MEN,' 'WOMEN'
AND
DISCURSIVE DOMINATION

As her tutor you have the duty to keep her in ignorance.

Tom Stoppard, <u>Arcadia</u>

Grand theories of popular dissent cannot capture the intricate functioning of power relations. So demonstrated my reading of the East German revolution in chapter four. Power can be assessed adequately only in the context of concrete historical and geographical circumstances. It must be understood in discursive terms. But what happens if one ignores these complex, constituted and constantly shifting aspects of power, if one continues to rely on grand theories and refuses to accept the death of God, the contingent character of foundations? Resulting essentialist and positivist approaches, I claimed, uphold a specific image of dissent, one that becomes frozen in time and space - an image that forecloses alternative views and thereby runs the risk of entrenching some forms of domination.

The present chapter sustains these claims by demonstrating how prevalent images and practices of popular dissent are often unable to deal with subtle discursive forms of domination. In doing so I take one more step in the shift away from grand theories towards an articulation of human agency that is not anchored in stable foundations, but revolves around a discursive understanding of power. This is no easy task, for the power contained in discourses is slippery and difficult to detect.

Discursive forms of domination rarely appear as what they are. Only seldom, if ever, William Connolly notes, "does a policy of repression or marginalization simply present itself as such."[1] Indeed, it is precisely this ability to mask and normalize domination that makes discursive systems of exclusion more powerful and lasting than their overt counterparts, like military regimes or dictatorships.

I illustrate the power contained in discourses by examining the interaction between popular dissent and patriarchy, discursively embedded identity constructs which support gender hierarchies. For this purpose I scrutinize the prevalent image of popular dissent as epitomized by the la Boétian tradition. My research reveals a strong and consistent masculinist trait at the core of the theory and practice of popular dissent. Embedded in an essentialist notion of human agency, this gendered core accounts for the fact that for all its spectacular opposition to dictatorships, the la Boétian tradition has had little success in uprooting discursive forms of domination. Indeed, it further strenghtened a model of dissent based on the image of a male revolutionary riding into he sunset of freedom while ignoring and even entrenching the patriarchal social order that makes this heroic fight possible.

A rereading of the East German situation, this time from a gender sensitive perspective, serves to scrutinize the practical consequences that issue from this masculinist image of dissent. How were women affected by the spectacular and heroic revolution of 1989? What has changed for them as a social group? Are they better or worse off in unified Germany than before? Were they able to exert human agency during this important transition period? What do the answers to these questions entail for our understanding of power and dissent?

PROBLEMATIZING SEX AND GENDER

Before probing the theory and practice of popular dissent for gender specific traits, it is necessary to draw attention to the problematic aspects of this task. Feminist theory is a highly complex body of literature. There are heated debates about the meaning and significance of such concepts as 'gender,' 'sex,' 'masculinity,' and 'femininity.' Indeed, the very terms 'men' and 'women' - seemingly incontestable and unproblematic categories - are being scrutinized from various angles.

Consider the concept of patriarchy, which Kathy Ferguson loosely defines as "a set of institutions and practices that asserts and enforces the power of men as a group over women as a group."[2] These institutions and practices are not stable or rooted in some essence. They are always in a state of flux. The functioning of

---

[1] William E. Connolly, Identity \ Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 159.

[2] Kathy Ferguson, The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 185.

patriarchy constantly changes, for it is itself a discursive construct and, as Jean Elshtain points out, dependent upon a reinforcing ideology that penetrates all levels of society.[3] This discursive order renders natural and rational the specific characteristics and role assignments that have been attributed to people designated as men and women. But outside this order there are no compelling reasons to link, for example, people with male bodies and masculine values or people with female bodies and feminine values. These links and the corresponding social division of labor are not biologically conditioned. They are discursively assigned and only appear natural because they are embedded in a regime of truth. Even in the context of these narrow role assignments, people have fragmented and hyphenated identities. These mobile subjectivities, as Ferguson calls them, are ambiguous and unstable. They move across and along axes of power which are themselves in motion.[4]

One could draw attention to a whole range of consequences that arise from the subjectivity, fluidity and constituted nature of gendered role assignments.[5] Such is not my task, at least not in this chapter. My main interest lies in observing the relatively consistent overall discursive regime within which men and women interact as social groups. This means that I pay less attention to the subjective and constantly shifting criteria by which people are identified as belonging to either of these groups. Rosi Braidotti advances convincing arguments in favor of such an approach by scrutinizing the interaction between sex (a biological category) and gender (a performative norm, a social practice). Too much focus on the discursive construct of gender, Braidotti believes, detracts from more imminent political problems, such as masculine domination and structurally asymmetrical power relationships between men and women. Instead of theorizing gender, Braidotti proposes to focus on "sexual difference."[6] This is, of course, not unproblematic.

Judith Butler strongly criticizes a sexual difference approach for its alleged essentialist understanding of gender relations, its uncritical acceptance of the categories 'men' and 'women.' She argues that sexual difference is always marked and formed by discursive practices. It is normative, a subtle form of power, a

---

[3] Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Man, Private Women (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 215.

[4] Ferguson, The Man Question, p. 154.

[5] See, for example, Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 1991); Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds), Feminists Theorize the Political (New York: Routledge, 1992); Christine Di Stefano, Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Jane Flax, Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Linda J. Nicholson (ed), Feminism/Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[6] See Rosi Braidotti, with Judith Butler, "Feminism by Any Other Name," in Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, Vol. 6.2+3, 1994, pp. 27-61; and "The Politics of Ontological Difference," in T. Brennan (ed), Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 89-105.

Foucaultean "regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs."[7] Braidotti counters. She tries to valorize sexual difference in an attempt to oppose what she believes is a hasty dismissal of this concept "in the name of a polemical form of 'anti-essentialism,' or of a utopian longing for a position 'beyond gender.'"[8] Indeed, Braidotti even claims that the very attempt to distinguish between sex and gender re-essentializes sex, for it reduces women's oppression to either materialism or language, nature or culture, body or mind.[9]

Much of the heated debate between essentialist and discursive approaches to relations between the sexes is a vicissitude of the English language. Or so at least believes Braidotti.[10] The English language allows for a clear terminological distinction between sex and gender. This linguistic situation forces people to position themselves on either side of these artificially drawn boundaries. But sex and gender are not mutually exclusive categories, they are intrinsically linked with each other. In many non-English contexts, Braidotti claims, a discussion of gender makes no epistemological or political sense, for their are no linguistic tools to distinguish this concept from sex.[11]

The German word Geschlecht is a case in point. It denotes both sex and gender. By defining sexuality in both biological and discursive manners, this term semantically recognizes that the boundaries between them are fluid and artificial. This sets the stage for very different forms of feminist theorizing. Consider the intensive discussions that were triggered by translations of Butler's work into German.[12] Due to the broad meaning of the word Geschlecht, the actual English terms sex and gender were often used to capture some of Butler's complex arguments. The ensuing discussions, to simplify things a bit, led to a radical deconstruction of the very concept Geschlecht.[13] Many German feminists express strong reservations about the resulting tendency to emphasize the performativity and discursive construction not only of gender, but also of sex. They point towards the idealistic dangers of such a position and reassert, much like Braidotti does, the need to theorize the linguistic, social and political dimensions that are entailed in issues of sexual difference.[14] Similar trends are visible in France too. Luce Irigaray, for

---

[7] Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex' (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.

[8] Braidotti, "Feminism by Any Other Name," p. 48

[9] Ibid., pp. 46-7.

[10] Ibid., pp. 37-8.

[11] Ibid., p. 38.

[12] Most notably Judith Butler, Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter (Frankfurt a.M., 1991), tr. of Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[13] Christina Thürmer-Rohr, "Zur Dekonstruktion der Kategorie Geschlecht," in FRAZ: Frauezitig, 1995 No. 1, pp. 22-25.

[14] See, for example, Frigga Haug, "Anmerkung zur Diskussion um die Kategorie 'Geschlecht,'" in Das Argument, No. 202, Vol. 35/6, Nov/Dec 1993, p. 899-900; Hilde Landweer and Mechthild Rumpf, "Einleitung" to Kritik der Kategorie 'Geschlecht', special issue of Feministische Studien,

example, stresses that the human species is divided into two sexes which assure production and reproduction. Hence, she claims, equality must be attained not through a process of gender neutralization, but through an acceptance of difference - anything else would be disastrous for humanity.[15]

I follow, at least at this point, a sexual difference approach. I leave aside for now some of the complexities entailed in the conceptual tension between sex and gender. This means that I focus less on how women and men are differently constituted in different historical periods. Instead, I examine how, in the context of these constantly changing identity constructs, patriarchy has remained a relatively constant and discursively entrenched social and political practice. Only after having established the broad boundaries of these discursive consistencies will I enter ontological issues and theorize the possibilities of resistance that emerge from the constituted and fragmented nature of the subject.

THE MASCULINIST DIMENSIONS OF POPULAR DISSENT

I begin my portrayal of the discursive continuities of patriarchal power by scrutinizing the dominant image of popular dissent. A rereading of the la Boétian tradition of dissent serves as an illustrative example. If one scrutinizes this body of knowledge and its related political practices systematically from a gender sensitive perspective, one discovers a striking consistency in masculinist positions, a consistency that often degenerates into unrestrained misogyny. There are hardly any exceptions to this rule. Gendered values prevailed with virtually all of the well-known men who have devoted their lives to the struggle against political oppression. Many of their thoughts and self-sacrificing deeds were characterized by either ignorance of or contempt for the system of exclusion in which women are confined.

The theory and practice of popular dissent has revolved around gendered assumptions ever since its early Renaissance days. La Boétie uses the term "effeminate" to describe the cowardly behavior of voluntary servitude, situations where people do not have the courage to stand up and request their natural right to freedom. The heroic battle for freedom, by contrast, is portrayed in strong masculine terms.[16] The assumption of this text is, clearly, that men and women are meant to fulfill fundamentally different societal roles. This is, of course, not only entirely compatible with prevailing practices at the time, but also characteristic of modernity in general. La Boétie's approach perfectly illustrates what Jean Elshtain,

---

Vol. II, Nov. 1993, No. 2, pp. 3-9; Christina Thürmer-Rohr, "Denken der Differenz: Feminismus und Postmoderne," in beiträge zur feministischen theorie und praxis, Vol. 18, No. 39, 1995, pp. 87-97.

[15] Luce Irigaray, Je, tu, nous: pour une culture de la différence (Paris: Grasset, 1990), pp. 10-11.

[16] Étienne de la Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, ed. P. Bonnefon in Oeuvres Complètes (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967/1552), esp. pp. 5-6, 16, 22, 65.

in a study on war, identified as a key discursive construct from Antiquity to today: the societal division into "just warriors" (male fighters / protectors) and "beautiful souls" (female victims / noncombatants).[17] In la Boétie's world, Renaissance men, newly unchained from the deified universal order, heroically venture out into the turbulent political realm to fight tyrants of all kind. Women, by contrast, are passive onlookers to this unfolding drama. They represent "home and hearth and the humble verities of everyday life."[18]

How to reconcile this stark gendered perspective with la Boétie's rhetorical and radically egalitarian claim that all people are born with an equal right to freedom, that nature has created us all in likeness?[19] In light of this apparent contradiction one is inclined to inquire immediately about the meaning of the term 'the people.' Who enjoys the status of a subject? Who can exert human agency? Only those individuals who are being designated as 'men'? The specter of this question did not vanish with la Boétie's death. Instead, it has hovered ever since as a large but largely ignored dark cloud above the theory and practice of popular dissent.

Gendered aspects of popular dissent intensified when la Boétie's legacy came of age during the romantic period. Chapter two already drew attention to the strong masculinist values entailed in the deification of the Self and the heroic quest for boundless freedom beyond the confines of the State. A glimpse beyond romantic writings, into the private lives and opinions of its protagonists, clearly affirms this interpretation. Henry David Thoreau's much celebrated romantic retreat to Walden Pond, at the age of twenty-eight, may have expressed, as one commentator puts it, "pride of domestic independence with its connotation of full manhood."[20] Little does it matter that this escape from the claws of women and motherly comfort was primarily symbolic, for Walden Pond, situated in walking distance from Thoreau's home in Concord, was hardly beyond the limits of the civilized world. Thoreau's writings give equally strong clues about his gendered views on society. For instance, when describing how he lost all his remaining respect for the State, he compares this allegedly timid, pitiful and half-witted institution to "a lone woman with her silver spoons."[21] The gendered social division between 'just warriors' and 'beautiful souls' remains untouched by Thoreau.

Leon Tolstoy further entrenched the masculinist dimensions of popular dissent. While his novels feature a number of sophisticated women characters - such as Anna Karenina -, his political writings clarify what he really thinks about "the nonsense called women's rights." Women, for him, are inferior to men. They fulfill the

---

[17] Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

[18] Ibid, p. xiii.

[19] La Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, pp. 16-7.

[20] Robert Milder, Reimagining Thoreau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 52.

[21] Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," in Walden and Civil Disobedience (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966/1848), p. 236.

function of a breeding stock.[22]   Not surprisingly, Tolstoy has no hesitation in storming off to sites of masculine social struggles, to the heroic battle field of romantic idealism, while leaving his family behind in poverty.   His wife Sofia hardly perceived this form of dissent as an advancement of freedom and justice.   Her diaries shed a different light on her husband's self-sacrificing devotion to peace and nonviolence.   Many entries, written over decades, testify to his fundamentally abusive behavior.   They display her anger about being reduced to an underappreciated care-taker, mother and secretary.[23]

Romanticism may have resurrected the concept of human agency from an Enlightenment obsession with reason and science.   But this resurrection continuously refused to extend the capacity of human agency to women.   A glimmer of hope for a more inclusive approach to popular dissent emerged when Gandhi started to popularize the practice of civil disobedience.   He strongly criticized the common practice of calling women the weaker sex.   "If by strength is meant moral power," he claims, "then women are immeasurably man's superior."   They have greater intuition, courage and powers of endurance.   "If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women."[24]   Elshtain sees in this Gandhian rhetoric a challenge to masculine representations, a calling into question of male identity as warriors and protectors.   She finds support for this position in the disproportionately high representation of women in pacifist movements.[25]

My gender focused reading of Gandhi and popular dissent is less optimistic.   It reveals that his seemingly progressive rhetoric was not matched by his actions, not even by many of his other writings.   Gandhi's famous civil disobedience campaign against colonial rule in India was by and large a male affair.   There was not a single women among the eighty satyagrahi that participated in the important salt march of 1930.   Women assumed a more vocal role during the ensuing nation-wide campaign of nonviolent resistance.[26]   This increasing prominence of women satyagrahis may have shaken the foundations of British Colonial rule, but it did in no way challenge the more deeply entrenched patriarchal systems of exclusion.   Indeed, Gandhi's personal behavior, like Tolstoy's, embodies the conventional masculinist image of a hero who embraces the vow of chastity and is willing to "sacrifice his property and even his family" to fight for justice and a better world[27] - a continuously unchallenged male-dominated world that is.

---

[22] Tolstoy, cited in A.N. Wilson, Tolstoy (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), p. 365. See also Tolstoy's "Letter to N.N. Strakov, 19 March 1870," in I Cannot Be Silent: Writings on Politics, Art and Religion (Bristol: Bristol Press, 1989), pp. 40-2.

[23] The Diaries of Sofia Tolstaya, tr. C. Porter (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985).

[24] Mohandas Gandhi, Satyagraha (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), p. 325.

[25] Elshtain, Women and War, pp. 139-40.

[26] See Judith Brown, Gandhi and Civil Disobedience (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 136, 146.

[27] Gandhi, Satyagraha, p. 67

While these behavioral traits are indicative of larger discursive trends, the most consequential masculinist dimensions of popular dissent operate not at a personal, but at a conceptual level. The underlying patriarchal values of the theory and practice of popular dissent are most deeply rooted at a conceptual level, particularly with the key concept of voluntary servitude, the idea that any form of rule, even the most despotic one, is ultimately dependent upon consent. Chapter four already revealed multifarious problems entailed in consent oriented approaches to power. Feminist theorists strongly criticized this body of theory as well, particularly for its inability to recognize and deal with obvious gender biases. Carole Pateman's work has been particularly path-breaking in this regard.

Pateman draws attention to various reasons why even within the institutions of a liberal democratic state, genuine consent is hardly the ground upon which social dynamics, and especially gender relations, are operating. In the context of a discursively entrenched patriarchal social order, women are not constituted as full-fledged members of civil society. The discursive construction of sexual difference, of what it means to be a man or a women, is such that the position of women in civil society is not based on consent, but, rather, on an exchange of obedience for protection.[28] Other feminists, such as Nancy Hirschmann, reiterate that voluntarist perceptions of obligation reflect a deeply embedded societal gender bias that actually denies women the opportunity to give (or withdraw) consent.[29] Because many obligations women have are not voluntary, consent oriented perceptions of social dynamics further entrench the patriarchal status quo. This gender-biased social order will remain intact, Hirschmann argues, as long as the underlying structures of obligation remain embedded in masculinist world views.[30] Judith Butler equally opposes voluntarist notions of obligation, although her postmodern approach is in many ways in confrontation with Hirschmann's standpoint position. Butler claims the power emerging from gender performativity must be understood in the context of regulatory sexual regimes, a context within which it is impossible to presuppose a "choosing subject."[31]

These feminist arguments, despite their internal disagreements, commonly point towards the problematic aspects of linking power and consent. And the contemporary theory and practice of popular dissent is a prime manifestation of this problematic masculinist link. Implied in this approach to dissent is an acceptance of asymmetrical power relations between the sexes. Women cannot simply follow

---

[28] This is, of course, a grossly simplified representation of Pateman's arguments. See in particular her The Sexual Contract (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and "Women and Consent," in Political Theory, Vol. 8, No. 2, May 1980, pp. 149-168.

[29] Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Freedom, Recognition, and Obligation: A Feminist Approach to Political Theory," in American Political Science Review, Vol. 83, No. 4, December 1989, pp. 1228.

[30] Ibid., p. 1229.

[31] Butler, Bodies That Matter, p. 15

Tolstoy's and Gandhi's lead, leave their children and everything else behind to then ride heroically into the sunset of freedom. Withdrawing consent does not work as easily for women. In most situations, mass protest is not an option for them because the modern patriarchal order has assigned radically different social tasks and responsibilities to women than to men. The suggestion that servitude is voluntary and that any system of domination would crumble immediately if only its subjects would withdraw consent, fails to understand complexities of the discursive system of domination in which women are confined. Kate McGuiness argues convincingly that Gene Sharp's consent based theory of power fails to assess adequately the power dynamics that are operative in gender relations. Basing her analysis on Pateman's critique of contract theory, McGuiness shows that Sharp's notion of popular dissent cannot offer a way of resisting deeply entrenched patriarchal forms of oppression.[32]

How can a tradition of dissent that is so intensively concerned with fighting oppression overlook an oppressive system such as patriarchy? How could this neglect permeate the work of authors as diverse as la Boétie, Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi - authors who are known for their selfless fight against tyranny, their total dedication to the cause of nonviolence and social justice? What does this neglect tell us about understandings of domination and resistance?

WRITING HIS-STORY: THE POWER OF FRAMING THE PAST

The inability to see beyond masculinist images of the world is, of course, not unique to the theory and practice of popular dissent, but characteristic of modernity in general. Patriarchy is a widespread, consistent and deeply entrenched discursive practice.

To pursue my main purpose of demonstrating the subtle power contained in patriarchal discursive practices it is necessary to take a step back and observe forms of repression that are less obvious than those targeted by the prevalent theory and practice of popular dissent. Overt forms of domination, such as the long-standing male control of politics, are undoubtedly important aspects of patriarchy. Yet, the most entrenched systems of exclusion operate on more subtle discursive levels, beyond what is usually seen or known.

Discursive forms of domination are powerful precisely because they do not operate at manifest levels, but penetrate spheres of life which are usually considered objective and value free. Consider the links between patriarchy and science. The myth of detached scientific knowledge has been criticized for long. Nietzsche, for example, detected a will to power in science, an arbitrary attempt to control nature, to impose order and stability upon a chaotic world. The objective of science, then,

---

[32] See Kate McGuiness, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power: A Feminist Critique of Consent," in <u>Journal of Peace Research</u>, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1993, pp. 101-115.

"is not 'to know', but to schematize, - to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require."[33] Feminist theorists focus more specifically on the ways in which the Enlightenment idea of epistemological objectivism - knowledge independent of a subject - is often intrinsically linked with an androcentric world view.[34] Donna Haraway, for example, analyses the scholarship on primatology and shows how scientific discourses interweave fact and fiction. Looking at such aspects as research design or data interpretation, she strongly suggests that this interweaving produces clear Western and sexualized values.[35]

A comparable discursive system of exclusion is at work in the writing of history. Historical events cannot be represented in an objective and value free way. History is a narrative, a story about a particular vision of the past, one that selects, weights and displays events that are deemed memorable from perspectives that are deemed correct. "History is a construct," Margaret Atwood's fictional characters tell us convincingly. "Any point of entry is possible and all choices are arbitrary."[36] But this is not to say that every story about the past is equally relevant, that there is no basis upon which to look at events and époques gone. What must be acknowledged, however, is that power relations interfere with the writing of history, that the narrator cannot be erased from the narration. Recognizing this Nietzschean will to power makes the writing of history a political act. Milan Kundera's fictional world perfectly illustrates why this is the case:

> People are always shouting they want to create a better future. It's not true. The future is an apathetic void, of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past.[37]

Turning things around once more, one could remark that to be master of the past is to have the power to control the present and shape the future. Modern historiography has demonstrated that this is the case not only in Kundera's fiction, but also in political practice.

Modern history, scrutinized from a gender sensitive perspective, is primarily a story of men narrated by men. Things past are presented, selected and ordered according to criteria that men considered worthwhile to be remembered. Women

---

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 278, § 515.

[34] See Sandra Harding, The Science Question in Feminism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) and Elisabeth List, Die Präsenz des Anderen: Theorie und Geschlechterpolitik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 112, 46-89.

[35] Donna J. Haraway, Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science (New York: Routledge, 1989) and Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[36] Margaret Atwood, The Robber Bride (London: Virago Press, 1994), p. 4.

[37] Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, tr. M.H. Heim (New York: HarperCollins, 1994/1978), p. 22.

and their views are largely absent from this account. They are marginalized at best, obliterated at worst. "Women have no history," Huguette Bouchardeau says.[38]

How does discursive power precisely come into play in this gendered representation of the past? Why does it allow for control of the present and influence over the future? What consequences, besides filtering our knowledge of the past, are entailed in women's obliteration from history? A masculinist perception of history annihilates agency for women. It imposes a patriarchal vision upon social dynamics and then objectifies this form of domination. Gayatri Spivak is one of many authors who point towards the grave consequences of historiographical systems of exclusion. Looking at colonial and post-colonial contexts, she argues that despite female participation in insurgency movements, the annihilation of women's voices from the representation of things past has lead to insurmountable practices of subjugation: "Both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant."[39] Spivak is, of course, particularly known for concluding that the subaltern can neither speak nor be represented. This is a harsh and rather pessimistic claim, which I debate in later chapters, when I deal with practices of resistance that address discursive forms of domination. At this point, however, I am concerned with preparing the ground for this task by scrutinizing discursively entrenched patriarchal power relations.

The power of discursive practices becomes most apparent when one observes development patterns over a long time-span. Gerda Lerner examines how patriarchy functioned and evolved throughout the Middle Ages and modernity. She argues convincingly that grave consequences arose from men's ability to frame history, to define what is a political issue and what is not.[40] Men had access to education. They wrote history, transmitted knowledge and built upon their insight, generation after generation. Because women were often denied access to education, they were also deprived of passing on their knowledge to subsequent generations of women. In making this claim, Lerner implicitly refutes Simone de Beauvoir's position that women's powerlessness is to be explained by the passive role that they have fulfilled historically.[41] Lerner, by contrast, argues that there was no lack of outspoken women who advanced insightful critiques of patriarchy. She draws attention to Hildegard von Bingen and Christine de Pizan who, writing in the twelfth and fifteenth century respectively, advanced powerful feminist criticisms of biblical texts.[42] But this critique was largely in vain. As a result of their marginalization

---

[38] Huguette Bouchardeau, Pas d'histoire les femmes (Paris: Syros, 1977).

[39] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 287.

[40] Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 10.

[41] Simone de Beauvoir, Le deuxième Sexe (Paris: Gallimard, 1976/1949).

[42] Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, pp. 138-166.

from religious and philosophical thought, critical authors like von Bingen and de Pizan could, in the long run, neither influence patriarchal practices nor further the creation of a feminist consciousness. Traces of their work were largely erased by the overwhelming mass of masculine historiographers.

Women never knew what other women before them wrote. As opposed to men, they could not build upon previous knowledge, but had to invest their time, energy and talent simply to reinvent the same insight century after century. The importance of this point warrants quoting Lerner at length:

> Men created written history and benefited from the transmittal of knowledge from one generation to the other, so that each great thinker could stand "on the shoulders of giants," thereby advancing thought over that of previous generations with maximum efficiency. Women were denied knowledge of their history, and thus each woman had to argue as though no women before her had ever thought or written. Women had to use their energy to reinvent the wheel, over and over again, generation after generation. Men argued with the giants that preceded them; women argued against the oppressive weight of millennia of patriarchal thought, which denied them authority, even humanity, and when they had to argue they argued with the "great men" of the past, deprived of the empowerment, strength and knowledge women of the past could have offered them.[43]

Although men and women are hardly the stable sites of identity and meaning that Lerner's analysis implies, the insight she advances opens up various opportunities to theorize the interaction between domination and resistance. As my last step of illustrating the power contained in discursive forms of domination, I now redirect Lerner's long-range view on more contemporary events and illustrate how practices of popular dissent, if they are embedded in masculinist visions of the world, are unable to recognize, yet alone struggle against the functioning of a deeply entrenched patriarchal social order.

A word of caution is warranted before I use Lerner's historical insight as a stepping stone to my next task, a more focused scrutiny of the links among discourse, dissent and social change. Because Lerner feels compelled to anchor her arguments in an essentialist standpoint, she enters a highly contentious theoretical terrain. She claims that because women have theorized from a marginalized position and derived knowledge from essential social interactions, rather than books, the knowledge that they acquired was "more nearly correct and adequate than was the knowledge of men."[44] Such standpoint positions rely on the problematic belief that there is authentic insight and that feminist scholarship requires a resort to essences and universals to anchor an argument. The emancipatory practices that emerge from the search for authenticity may well lead to a repositioning of some actors (they may, for example, bring more women from the outside to the inside), but they entrench at the same time the underlying systems of domination that prevents a truly inclusive

---

[43] Ibid., p. 166.

[44] Ibid., p. 11.

politics. As Braidotti puts it, "the point is to overcome the dialectics of domination, not to turn the previous slaves into new masters...Just slotting women in, without changing the rules of the game, would indeed be a mere reification of existing social conditions of inequality."[45]   Lerner's historical argument must thus be taken on board with a sense of epistemological caution.

PROGRESS AS REGRESS: WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE

An act seemingly as simple as writing history proved to be one of the most powerful discursive weapons to defend patriarchy and prevent women from organizing collectively against it. To look at how this system of domination persists despite the occurrence of radical social change on other fronts, one needs to observe how major historical events affect women and men differently.   Valuable lessons for understanding dissent and human agency can be derived from such a scrutiny.

Various feminists who dealt with discursively entrenched and concealed forms of domination have argued that historical periods which are usually considered liberating and progressive often had the opposite effect on women.   Joan Kelly-Gadol was one of the first authors to question conventional methods of periodization by drawing attention to women's historical experiences. Her analysis focuses on the Renaissance, which, as I outlined in chapter one, is usually credited with having ushered in modernity and liberated humanity from the darkness of the Middle Ages. But despite the rhetoric of utopianism and radical egalitarianism, of which la Boétie's work is representative, this period influenced the lives of men and women in fundamentally different ways. By scrutinizing changing forms of courtly love, Kelly-Gadol shows that while men were able to explore new horizons, women as a group, especially among higher urban classes, experienced a sharp reduction of social and personal options.[46]

It would, of course, be too simplistic to equate all 'progressive' historical époques with an automatic regression for women. Things are more complex. But there is enough evidence to demonstrate that courtly love during the Italian Renaissance is by far no exception. The Enlightenment's attempt to liberate the human mind from superstition worsened in some ways the situation for women. The French revolution, for example, may have brought more fraternity for bourgeois men, but it certainly did not entail more liberty and equality for women. The subsequent Napoleonic code of civil law only fortified the subjugation of women in the realms of marriage, sexual behavior and education.[47] Similar dynamics occurred

---

[45] Braidotti, "Feminism by Any Other Name," p. 39.

[46] Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (eds), <u>Becoming Visible: Women in European History</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp. 137-164.

[47] Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert "Restoring Women to History," in <u>Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.

in 1848, when women actively participated in the uprising against the re-established monarchy just to witness afterwards how the introduction of universal male suffrage further entrenched gender-related discriminations in the spheres of political and social rights.[48]

I now engage in one more rereading of the East German revolution in an attempt to scrutinize this feminist skepticism about the progressive nature of conventionally recognized processes of social change. Was the much heralded German Wende, this turning point from the Cold War to a new world order, really as revolutionary as proclaimed? What were its medium-term effects? Were they beneficial for women?

There was no lack of outspoken critique about the transition from the revolution of 1989 to the unification of Germany on 3 October 1990. Prominent intellectuals, usually situated left of center, were critical about the push towards unity. Many East German intellectuals and dissidents, such as Bärbel Bohley, Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym and Volker Braun, but also influential Western figures of the likes of Jürgen Habermas, Günter Grass and Wolf Biermann, critiqued the legal and political framework as well as the hasty implementation of unification.[49] What could have been a chance to build a more just and democratic Germany, they argued, ended in a complete subordination to capricious market-oriented incentives. Unification did not result from a mutual agreement between two equal and sovereign states. Rather, it was a total submission of East Germany's fate to the will (and currency) of West Germany. In this sense, the negotiations and constitutional arrangement that led to German unity are much better characterized by the term Anschluß (annexation) than Wiedervereinigung (reunification). Unified Germany is exclusively built upon the West German political and constitutional structure, including its name, currency, federal system legal norms, diplomatic corps and military personnel.

One could elaborate in detail on these and other "normative deficits of unification," as Habermas calls them.[50] Some of these deficits would surely have been difficult to avoid given the acute pressure and the complex situation that existed at the time of the collapse of the East German regime. Many authors point out, for example, that the East German dissident intellectuals who searched for a third way, a middle ground between communism and capitalism, above all spoke for themselves

---

6; and Ruth Graham, "Loaves and Liberty: Women in the French Revolution," in Bridenthal and Koonz, Becoming Visible, pp. 236-254.

[48] Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, p. 278.

[49] See, for example, Wolf Biermann, "Der grässliche Fatalismus der Geschichte," in Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Jahrbuch 1991, pp. 150-1; Günter Grass, Ein Schnäppchen namens DDR: Letzte Reden vorm Glockengeläut (Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990); Jürgen Habermas, "Die andere Zerstörung der Vernunft," in Die Zeit, 1991.5.17 and Die nachholende Revolution (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991).

[50] Jürgen Habermas, "Die Normativen Defizite der Vereinigung," in Vergangenheit als Zukunft (Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 1990), pp. 45-73.

and were out of touch with what the population desired at the time.[51] The viability of various radical alternatives to immediate unification could be discussed at length. But what seems more telling, at least from my present gender sensitive rereading of the events, is that most of these early critiques of unification were by and large embedded in masculinist visions of what a good society should look like. Many of the most vehement critics, including Grass and Biermann, failed to consider gender related questions as a central issue of their attempt to expose the undersides of unified Germany.

As the euphoria of 1989 gradually calmed down, an increasing number of authors demanded that attention be paid to issues related to women. This continuously growing body of literature, which scrutinizes unification from various feminist perspectives, is undoubtedly among the most revealing and compelling contributions to the rethinking of contemporary German politics. The tone is, by and large, one of disillusionment. The expectation that the onset of radical social change would also improve the position of women in society clearly did not materialize. Less than two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Jutta Gysi and Gunnar Winkler noted that much of the optimism and hope had evaporated.[52] Indeed, in many respects the situation for women in the eastern part of Germany had worsened, rather than improved. A rudimentary sketch:

The early stages of the unification process were already indicative of the gender specific evolution that was to follow. Women played an active and prominent role in the protest movements during the fall of 1989. But when, in December, the slogans at demonstrations started to shift from "we are the people" to "we are *a* people," masculinist elements intensified together with this re-emerging form of German nationalism. A case in point are the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig, which turned into a key symbol of popular resistance against the regime. Dorothy Rosenberg noted that the atmosphere at these demonstrations became increasingly male, aggressive and nationalistic. Female demonstrators gradually withdrew after women had been booed off the speakers' platform week after week.[53] Similar processes of alienation occurred during the so called round table discussions, which emerged all over East Germany. Round tables were meant to provide an opportunity for various groups to be heard and to exert influence on the reform process. Kathrin Rohnstock, a representative of the feminist group Lila Offensive, speaks with great disillusionment about her participation in the central round table in Berlin. She particularly resented the masculinist tone of the discussions: Very little reflection and problematization; authoritarian and intimidating leadership; emphasis

---

[51] John C. Torpey, Intellectuals, Socialism and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. x.

[52] Jutta Gysi and Gunnar Winkler, "Zur Situation von Frauen in den fünf neuen Bundesländern," in A. Lissner et.al., Frauenlexikon (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), p. 1194.

[53] Dorothy J. Rosenberg, "Shock Therapy: GDR Women in Transition from a Socialist Welfare State to a Social Market Economy," in Signs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991, p. 140.

on unemotional formulation of strategic objectives. The effect of this discussion style did not lead to the a politics of inclusion, Rohnstock felt, but was suffocating and marginalizing for women.[54]

The acute time pressure caused by the sudden collapse of the East German regime and the fact that men and masculine values dominated the hasty implementation of unification set the stage for a problematic gendered entry into post-Cold War social politics. Issues related to women were overshadowed by other, seemingly more urgent tasks that needed to be faced. These tasks were, indeed, gargantuan. The East German industry had all but collapsed. Its infrastructure, particularly the railway and telephone systems, required a fundamental reconstruction. The rapid amalgamation of two states made out of entirely different political, ideological, economic, legal, administrative and school systems (not to speak of behavior patterns, values and expectations) proved to be far more difficult than anticipated by the political leadership. The effects on social stability were devastating. Among the indicators of rising tension in the eastern part of Germany were dramatic increases in the number and intensity of frauds, real estate and currency speculation, bank robberies, neo-fascist youth gangs, racist violence, drug consumption, suicides and road accidents.

While the social consequences of this overnight transition from central planning to a market oriented economy affected the entire population in the eastern part of Germany, women suffered disproportionally. A case in point is the unemployment rate, which soared after unification. In March of 1991, 55 percent of all unemployed were women. The following year this figure was as high as 68 percent, in some areas even 77 percent. Some women were unusually hard hit. Unemployment among women over fifty-five, for example, was three times higher than for men of the same age.[55] Others particularly affected were single mothers and academics. In 1995, 48 percent of all young mothers were unemployed, compared with 12% percent 1991.[56] Women were also the main losers of the process that restructured East German academia. They were not only the first ones to lose their positions, but also the last ones to be taken into account for re-employment. Consider the Humboldt University in Berlin. Of fifty-four newly advertised professorships, only four were given to women. Before unification, a total of fifteen women occupied tenured positions of this rank.[57] Similar trends became visible in politics too. The

---

[54] Kathrin Rohnstock in Gisela Erler et.al., <u>Familienpolitik im Umbruch?</u> (München: Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1990), pp. 62-3.

[55] Monika Jaeckel, "Frauen im Vereinten Deutschland," in R. Süssmut and H. Schubert (eds), <u>Bezahlen die Frauen die Wiedervereinigung?</u> (München: Piper, 1992), pp. 22-3; Gisela Helwig, "Einleitung," to G. Helwig and H.M. Nickel (eds), <u>Fauen in Deutschland</u> (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), p. 9.

[56] Rick Atkinson, "Unity Costs Eastern German Women Dear," in <u>Guardian Weekly</u>, 16 April 1995, p. 19.

[57] Brigitte Young, "Deutsche Vereinigung: Der Abwicklungsskandal an den ostdeutschen Universitäten und seine Folgen für Frauen," in <u>Feministische Studien</u>, Vol. II, May 1993, No. 1, pp. 8, 11.

number of female representatives in the parliament, for example, decreased from 32.2 percent under the East German regime to 20.5 percent in unified Germany.[58]

The increasing exclusion of women from political leadership and the workplace is neither an exception nor a coincidental by-product of unification. These examples are part of a larger trend that signifies a structural and discursive entrenchment of patriarchy. A brief look at shifting legal frameworks illustrates the practical dimensions of this phenomenon. Under the East German system women were closely integrated into the work force. Just before the revolution of 1989, as much as 91 percent of working-age women were either in training or pursued an occupation outside the home. This is an unusually high number, especially when compared to the figure of 54% in West Germany.[59] The right to work for women was guaranteed by the East German constitution and the government actively aimed at providing the structural conditions necessary for the exercise of this right. A whole range of institutional arrangements, including extended pregnancy leave and state-subsidized day care centers in virtually every city, provided women with the chance to pursue activities beyond the traditional duties of mothers and housewives. Wide-ranging reproductive rights existed. A woman had the exclusive authority to decide (and the possibility to implement) the determination of a pregnancy during the first twelve weeks.[60] Many of these and other rights granted to women disappeared with the absorption of East Germany into the constitutional structure of West Germany. Reproductive rights were sharply reduced. The new legal arrangements in unified Germany stopped short of an outright ban on abortion only because of the stern resistance by the oppositional Social Democrats.[61] A large number of day care centers were dismantled and the remaining ones often became too expensive for average women to afford.[62]

To draw attention to the sharp deterioration of the position of women after unification is not to glorify the old East German order. It was not only authoritarian, but also politically and economically bankrupt, beyond any hope for repair. Even the most vehement feminist critics accept that the East Germany society was strongly influenced by traditional patriarchal values. Despite the officially promulgated principle of equality between the sexes, conventional gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices towards women remained deeply rooted. A gendered division of labor prevailed and leadership styles in all domains were strongly masculinist in character. The higher one moved up the echelons of the East German

---

[58] Peggy Watson, "Osteuropa: Die lautlose Revolution der Geschlechterverhältnisse," in Das Argument, No. 202, Vol. 35, No. 6, Nov/Dec 1993, pp. 859, 862.

[59] Jaeckel, "Frauen im Vereinten Deutschland," p. 15.

[60] For further details see, for example, Gysi and Winkler, "Zur Situation der Frauen," pp. 1194-1232 and Sabine Berghan, "Frauenrechte im Vereinigungsprozess," in C. Faber and T. Meyer (eds), Unterm neuen Kleid der Freiheit das Korsett der Einheit (Berlin: Rainer Bohn Verlag, 1992), pp. 64-95.

[61] Rosenberg, "Shock Therapy," pp. 135-6.

[62] Jaeckel, "Frauen im Vereinten Deutschland," p. 23.

hierarchy, the lower was the presence of women. Only very few of them occupied influential societal positions.[63]

The clash between two different gendered systems of exclusion, the East and West German, mutually reinforced existing biases and led to what many feminists believe is a qualitative change in the patriarchal system of domination.[64] Central to this shift is the reemergence of a market oriented economy and a strong civil society characterized by masculinist principles and clearly set apart from the private realm. This division, Peggy Watson stresses, is strongly gendered for it is reinforced by a revival of neo-conservative values that place increasing emphasis on the family and the household as the backbone of society. The resulting distribution of rights and duties in the social order is highly consequential: men occupy the powerful central roles in the public sphere while women are relegated back to the private sphere, the family.[65] Various subtle and not so subtle means, such as fiscal and educational policies or the dismantling of day care facilities, ensure the success of this neo-conservative patriarchal system of exclusion.

The separation between private and public spheres and the relegation of women to the latter is, of course, a deeply entrenched patriarchal tradition that has been analyzed in detail by many feminist critics. Carol Pateman's above mentioned work recognizes in this separation the transition from traditional paternal forms of patriarchy to a new, specifically modern and fraternal version of the same gendered system of exclusion.[66] In this sense, the re-establishment of a masculinist civil society in the eastern part of Germany is nothing but one more step in the continuation of a long and consistent discursive practice of domination. The fact that the historic revolution of 1989 ushered in spectacular processes of social change on numerous other fronts cannot compensate for the lost opportunity to address this patriarchal form of domination. Whether or not other emerging benefits for women will outweigh these setbacks in the long run remains to be seen. At this point a gender sensitive reading of the East German revolution reveals, above all, the striking power of patriarchal discursive practices to mask and protect their corresponding systems of domination.

---

[63] See Birgit Sauer, "Weder die Schönen noch die Hässlichen," in Faber and Meyer, Unterm neuen Kleid der Freiheit, pp. 110-130;

[64] Watson, "Osteuropa," p. 860; Young, "Deutsche Vereinigung," p. 14.

[65] Watson, "Osteuropa," pp. 859-874,

[66] Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in John Keane (ed), Civil Society and the State (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 102-4.

SUMMARY

Discursively entrenched power relations cannot simply be toppled by mass demonstrations or other methods of withdrawing consent. The present chapter has focused on patriarchy to illustrate this point and to underline the ensuing need to reframe understandings of domination and resistance.

If a form of resistance, and the image of human agency that it projects, is too deeply embedded in the existing discursive order, it is likely to entrench corresponding systems of exclusion. The la Boétian theory and practice of popular dissent exemplifies this point. Many of its protagonists have contributed to a strengthening of a revolutionary model that is based on the image of a male hero riding into the sunset of freedom while ignoring and even entrenching the patriarchal social order which makes this fight possible. The prevalence of this masculinist image of dissent by and large deprived women of subject status. It framed social practices such that men alone could exert human agency while women were abjected to a mental and material space that Judith Butler describes as the "'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject."[67]

A re-reading of the East German revolution has illustrated my argument about the power of patriarchal discursive practices. Spectacular popular protests against the authoritarian regime, coupled with other factors, triggered processes of fundamental social change. Yet, a closer look reveals that practices of domination did not crumble equally on all fronts. While authoritarian communism has given way to more accountable forms of rule, patriarchal systems of exclusion have persisted. Indeed, in many areas, such as employment, political representation and reproductive rights, women in the eastern part of Germany are worse off today than prior to the revolution of 1989. The re-emergence of a strong civil society further entrenched a gender specific system of exclusion that identifies men with the public and women with the private sphere.

On a theoretical level, this chapter has underlined the need to approach questions of power and human agency from a discursive perspective. The deeply entrenched nature of discursive power and the resulting normalization of practices of exclusion draw clear limits to what can be achieved through conventional forms of dissent. The power of discourse forces our minds into submission even when we think we are resisting all forms of external encroachments.

A recognition that power and discourse are intrinsically linked still leaves us far short of reaching a non-esssentialist concept of human agency. A discursive approach may well be able to reveal forms of domination, but can it also locate

---

[67] Butler, <u>Bodies that Matter</u>, p. 3.

resistance, can it actively account for the occurrence of social change? Is it possible to propose a discursive understanding of power without obliterating the subject or having to abandon the notion of human agency altogether? If power penetrates all aspects of society and is to be seen primarily in a discursive light, can one still carve out terrains of dissent? The next chapter responds to these puzzling questions in the affirmative by demonstrating that a discursive understanding of power can not only explain the persistence of domination, but also account for historical discontinuities.

Chapter Six

OF GREAT EVENTS
AND
WHAT MAKES THEM GREAT

> Believe me, friend Hellishnoise: the greatest events - they are not our loudest but our stillest hours. Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; it revolves *inaudibly*.
>
> Admit it! Whenever your noise and smoke were gone, very little had happened. What does it matter if a town became a mummy and a statue lies in the mud? And this word I shall add for those who overthrow statues: nothing is more foolish than casting salt into the sea and statues into the mud.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, <u>Also Sprach Zarathustra</u>
> tr. W. Kaufmann

More than a century after Nietzsche put these words into Zarathustra's mouth, during the summer of 1883 in Sils Maria, overthrowers not far from this Swiss mountain village still believe they have changed the world by hurling statues into the mud. Of course, the East German revolution of 1989 was spectacular. One of the most authoritarian regimes of East-Central Europe crumbled as people took to the streets. The scenes of common citizens climbing over and dismantling the Berlin Wall could not have been a more sensational, more symbolic termination of the Cold War. They provided perfect snap-shot pictures that satisfied the short attention span of world wide television audiences. The corresponding sound bite, 'we are the people,' still resonates throughout Europe. But were these spectacular acts the

decisive factors that caused social change? Was the overthrowing of communist statues really the key to it all?

The present chapter reads the East German revolution from a perspective that focuses not on the demolition of morbid political foundations, but on the slow transformation of values that preceded the heroic acts of dissent. A shift away from great events entails scrutinizing less spectacular daily influences that shape people's lives. Theorizing these largely inaudible forces from a discursive perspective is, I argue, a way of actively accounting for the occurrence of social change.

The main theoretical task of this chapter is to facilitate a discursive understanding of power that not only explains, as the previous chapter did, the continuity of domination, but also accounts for practices of dissent and their influence on processes of societal transformation. Such is, of course, an unduly ambitious task. For now I merely locate the broad grounds where such transformations take place. In doing so I build a stepping stone for the third and last part of this thesis, which articulates a non-essentialist notion of human agency by exploring alternative, discourse oriented terrains of dissent.

I employ Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to scrutinize the slow transformation of values that led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. A focus on the discursive struggle for hegemony explains how processes of social change are unleashed when a world-view hostile to the prevalent social order has come to be accepted as legitimate and moral by most of the population. Gramsci is well suited to supplement the earlier presented Foucaultean approach. Such a combination of perspectives can overcome the difficulties of locating power, which may counter pessimistic readings of Foucault that run the risk of annihilating the concept of human agency. But a fusion of Gramsci and Foucault is not unproblematic. The former pays attention to broad hegemonic practices, while the latter, at least in his more postmodern moments, focuses on aspects of difference and fragmentation.

The key to understanding complex social dynamics in the late modern world lies precisely in working through such paradoxes, in relying upon various forms of insights even if they are at times incommensurable. With this sense of fragmentation in mind, the present chapter demonstrates how a discursive approach may facilitate a broad understanding of processes of social change. Later chapters then embark on a more finely attuned analysis that theorizes possibilities for dissent that arise from the thin and fragmented nature of discursive dynamics.

TRANSFORMING VALUES AND NURTURING DISSENT IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

I begin by supplementing Foucault's notion of discourse with Gramsci's attempt to theorize the formation of hegemonies. Such a reinforcement is highly useful, I

believe, and its logic needs to be articulated briefly before I can scrutinize the practical dimensions of social change in East Germany.

Antonio Gramsci's approach implies that a movement of popular dissent can only be victorious and establish a new and stable order if the classes or social groups that conduct the revolutionary struggle enjoy widespread popular support and dominate the institutions of civil society before attempting to seize state power. Without having first won this so called "war of position" and achieved hegemonic leadership throughout civil society, a dissident movement is likely to be crushed by the repressive state apparatus. In other words, such a movement has a chance of exerting agency only when its ideological alternative to the established order has infiltrated most societal levels and is considered moral and legitimate by a substantial part of the population.[1]

Much of Gramsci's work revolves around the concept of hegemony, the prevalence of a dominant world view which extends throughout all aspects of a society and encompasses such issues as ideology, morality, culture, language and power. The dissemination of this world view occurs through subtle and hidden mechanisms which conceal and support the dominance of one social group over others. In this sense, hegemony is a cultural practice before it becomes political leadership.

A focus on the formation of hegemonies can facilitate understanding of the dynamics behind historical discontinuities and the long processes that lead up to them. Hegemony bears a number of similarities with Foucault's notion of a systems of exclusion, a subconsciously and discursively diffused set of fundamental assumptions which determines, at a particular time and place, what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, good and evil, true and untrue.[2] Indeed, Gramsci's focus on hegemony and social struggle can supplement Foucault's discursive understanding of power in a way that would provide evidence against a pessimistic reading of this approach. Power and discourse would not, as some fear, be everywhere and thus nowhere.[3] By theorizing the formation of hegemonies and their conditioning of social struggle, a Gramscian addition to Foucault's unmasking of power can provide further hints about how relations of domination may be uprooted. This entails, however, a shift of foci from domineering aspects of discursive practices

---

[1] The majority of Gramsci's ideas are contained in notebooks and letters that he wrote between his confinement (1928) and death (1937) in prisons of Fascist Italy. See Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, tr. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1985/1971). For discussions of his work see Robert Bocock, Hegemony (Sussex: Ellis Horwood, 1986); Jospeh V. Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1981) and Anne Showstack Sassoon. Gramsci's Politics (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

[2] Among the few authors who expanded on the promising links between Gramsci and Foucault is Renate Holub's Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 1992).

[3] Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?", in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), Feminism/Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 168-70.

to the subaltern, from whose perspective the concept of hegemony facilitates understanding of the conditions under which revolutionary societal segments can successfully exert human agency and promote social change.

While Gramsci permits a positive reading of Foucault, Foucault can add important dimensions to Gramsci's understanding of social dynamics, in particular to his attempt at embedding the concept of hegemony in the interaction between civil society and the state. The previous chapter has drawn attention to the problematic masculinist aspects of civil society, to the way in which a separation from the private sphere entrenches a gendered division of labor that confines women to home and hearth. A Foucaultean emphasis on discursive practices does not draw a separating line between the family and the public sphere, but, instead, stresses that power relations penetrate virtually all aspects of life. Such an understanding of power recognizes an important feminist concern, namely the need for analytical tools that do not reify the masculinist borders drawn between the public and private spheres.[4]

With this Foucaultean sense of discourse in mind I now explore the practical relevance of Gramsci's crucial distinction between the state and civil society. Due, in part, to censorship rules during his imprisonment, Gramsci used a range of different terminologies to theorize this distinction. I brush over some of these complexities[5] and portray the state simply as the sphere of coercion that contains such elements as the police, the army, the secret service and the bureaucracy. These are the means of domination and repression at the disposal of the ruling group. Civil society is the sphere where contrasting opinions compete for hegemonic status; in short, the aspects of a society that escape the direct control of the state's coercive elements. Gramsci's own words clarify the functions of this distinction:

> What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society,' that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private,' and that of 'political society' or 'the State.' The two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society, and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or rule exercised through the State and the juridical government.[6]

Although the sphere of coercion, embodied in the State, plays an important role in influencing the pace of social change, it is primarily within civil society that hegemony emerges out of conflicting and competing ideas. Thus, when examining the stability of a particular social order, a Gramscian analysis not only focuses on a

---

[4] See Elisabeth List, Die Präsenz des Anderen: Theorie und Geschlechterpolitik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 159.

[5] For detailed discussions see Perry Anderson "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," in New Left Review, No. 100, 1976-77, pp. 5-78; Bocock, Hegemony, pp. 28-37; and Noberto Bobbio, "Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society", in J. Keane (ed), Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 82-92.

[6] Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, p. 12.

ruling group's means of domination and coercion, but also on the degree of popular support that the regime acquires through its domination of the non-coercive sphere.

The boundaries between the state and civil society are always in flux. Depending upon the level of direct government control, such institutions as trade unions, the media, religious organizations, schools and universities may either belong to the regime's propaganda and repression apparatus or be part of the pluralistic struggle for hegemony within civil society. The ways in which the boundaries between the state and civil society are drawn is of crucial importance in understanding processes of social change. Before a resistance movement against an authoritarian regime can merge and organize its activities, at least some aspects of civil society must be defended successfully against the encroachment by the state apparatus.

The struggle to carve out a public sphere within an otherwise state dominated and suffocating authoritarian system is one of the features that may explain the underlying dynamics behind the East German revolution of 1989. The regime tried everything possible to annihilate civil society. East German leaders, from Ulbricht to Honecker, knew that a certain breathing space from the state is necessary for the emergence of regime critical opinions and their organized expression in the form of massive popular dissent. Acknowledges Günter Schabowski, the former spokesperson of the government: "Repression alone cannot hold together a State. Even Honecker strove to be popular."[7] This is why the regime not only employed methods of direct control, coercion and intimidation to ensure its survival, but also attempted to erase the public sphere. School curricula and virtually all domestic sources of information (newspapers, journals, radio, television) were under direct and harsh control of the state apparatus. The bourgeois public sphere was officially declared obsolete, and its role was taken over by what Peter Uwe Hohendahl appropriately called a Parteiöffentlichkeit, a public sphere of the Party. Form and content of the discussions in this public space were carefully circumscribed by the Communist Party, whose role was to serve as a mediating (read controlling) agent between the state and the mass of citizens.[8]

Despite sustained efforts, the East German regime was unable to annihilate civil society. The regime's efforts were undermined in part by the carving out of a civil society in an otherwise authoritarian system. German social scientists refer to this sphere as an Ersatzöffentlichkeit, a replacement for the suppressed public sphere. Various spaces provided opportunities for dissent to emerge, spread and prepare itself for the battle against the oppressive state. The Protestant church, being the only East German mass organization that was not directly subordinated to the state, provided such a forum for organized dissident activities. Its newspapers were not as harshly censored as the 'normal' media, its photocopying-machines were at the

---

[7] Günter Schabowski, Das Politbüro: Ende eines Mythos (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990), p. 173.

[8] Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Recasting the Public Sphere," in October 73, Summer 1995, p. 45.

disposal of régime-critical writers, and its ministers and representatives were always among the most outspoken critics of the system. When the state attempted to undermine this limited autonomy, the church was usually determined to defend itself. Not surprisingly, most grassroots protest movements initially emerged out of church circles.

One of the church's most influential activities consisted in providing platforms for regular critical discussions and for the expression of popular dissent. For instance, ever since 1983, each Monday evening at five a clock, young Christians met for a peace prayer in Leipzig's Nikolaikirche. Initially, this gathering was intended to draw attention to the absurdity of the nuclear arms race. Then it turned into a forum where frustrations about restricted mobility rights were articulated. Starting in the spring of 1989, as I noted earlier, the Monday prayers were regularly followed by public protests against the régime. The number of participating citizens continuously grew and by the autumn of that year the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig became a highly symbolic, influential and quasi-institutionalized event of mass dissent.[9]

The fact that this crucial breathing space from encroachment by the state was provided by the Protestant church has nothing to do with its religious or political aspirations, but is primarily the result of the unusual degree of autonomy that it enjoyed in an otherwise suffocating totalitarian state. The church - and a few other, less prominent forums - facilitated the carving out of a quasi civil society, an Ersatzöffentlichkeit. Within this arduously defended public space, contrasting opinions competed without being directly confined to the dogmatism of the prevalent state ideology.

But the creation of a public sphere, or an ersatz for it, does not by itself prepare the ground for successful outburst of popular dissent. To understand the forces behind social change, we must also examine the struggle for hegemony within civil society. We must observe whether or not a government or, alternatively, an opposition movement is able to gain popular support for the particular vision of society that it espouses.

HEGEMONIES, COUNTER-HEGEMONIES, SOCIAL CHANGE

The East German régime enjoyed various degrees of popular support during its existence. But its ability to exert hegemonic leadership decreased year after year. Besides being delegitimized by repressive practices and disastrous economic policies,

---

[9] For discussions on the role of the Protestant church see, for example, Detlef Pollack (ed), Die Legitimität der Freiheit: Politisch alternative Gruppen in der DDR unter dem Dach der Kirche (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990); Jörg Swoboda, Die Revolution der Kerzen: Christen in der Umwältzung der DDR (Wuppertal/Kassel: Onkenverlag, 1990), and Martin Zagatta, "Kirche als Ersatzöffentlichkeit," in H. Wehling (ed), Politische Kultur in der DDR (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1989).

a number of more subtle factors undermined the ruling group's attempt to impose its ideology through domination and indoctrination. I now examine briefly how a regime hostile world view gradually became hegemonic and how this transformation of values prepared the ground for the successful revolution of 1989.

One of the most noteworthy influences on the transformation of values in East Germany was the regime's inability to keep 'subversive' ideological influences from reaching its population. East Germany's porous borders to the West assured the constant mental presence of an ideology, an economic system and a way of living that was fundamentally opposed to the official ideological discourse employed by the ruling group to justify its dominance. Ever since Ostpolitik replaced the West German Hallstein doctrine, mail exchange between East Germany and the outside world was permitted and 'capitalist' newspapers and magazines were relatively easily available. With the establishment of the Grundlagenvertrag, the basic treaty between the two German states signed in 1972, cross-border visits became a normal feature.[10]

An additional and particularly consequential external influence on the struggle for hegemony in East Germany must be ascribed to the constant presence of outside audio and visual media sources. Western radio broadcasts had always been available throughout East Germany and since the 1970s about 90% of the population was able to regularly tune in to West German television.[11] Egon Krenz, Honecker's successor, confirmed in retrospect that the availability of Western media sources had a strong influence on East German citizens.[12] The image that these media programs projected rendered the East German population alert to the enormous economic gap that separated them from their Western European neighbors. Given the long-term deprivation of consumer items, the incentives that an awareness of the West German materialistic society provided for East German citizens could only lead to a strong and widespread dissatisfaction with the present régime. The widely available Western media sources not only deprived East Germany's harsh domestic censorship practices of all their purpose, but also imbued them with a counter-productive effect. Since Western television devoted regular attention to exposing the underside of Communist life in East Germany (corruption, bureaucratic despotism, pollution etc.), the official East German propaganda appeared even farther removed from 'reality' and thus increased the population's distrust of the ruling group. One cannot better express this phenomenon than in the words of Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, the protagonist commentator of East Germany's legendary 'counter-propaganda' television series Der Schwarze Kanal:

---

[10] For details see Eckehard Jesse, "Die innerdeutschen Beziehungen unter der christlich-liberalen Regierung," in E. Jesse (ed), Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Deutsche Demokratische Republik (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1985), esp. pp. 435-436.

[11] Gunter Holzweissig, Massenmedien in der DDR (Berlin: Verlag Gebrüder Holzapfel, 1989), pp. 69-71

[12] Egon Krenz, Wenn Mauern Fallen (Wien: Paul Neff Verlag, 1990), p. 90.

One who thinks that it would not be of any harm to listen to antidemocratic television and radio programs or to read Western newspapers, opens his ear to the deadly enemy.[13]

Even the infiltration of seemingly apolitical ideas and practices influenced the struggle for hegemony. Among these rapidly spreading features of West European culture, all of them officially denounced by the government as expressions of capitalist decadence and ideological weapons of the bourgeoisie, were phenomena such as rock, beat, and punk music, Franz Kafka and Marcel Proust novels, or, even 'worse', literary traditions of an existentialist, avantgardist or poststructuralist nature.[14] These postmodern cultural expressions questioned some of the most fundamental tenets of the modern East German political discourse, especially the (Marxist) historicist belief in linear evolution and confidence in liberation through rational, scientific and bureaucratic planning.

As a result of the infiltration and dissemination of 'subversive' values and the regime's inability to counter them, a discourse which was antithetical to the prevalent communist ideology became hegemonic, i.e. was accepted as legitimate and moral by most people. This new hegemony clearly pointed towards the desire and need for some form of social change, and in this sense it was a crucial precondition for the successful revolution against the regime. The spectacular force of popular dissent unfolded during what could be called a window of opportunity in 1989. In a few months, a great variety of domestic and external circumstances came together and permitted mass protest movements to tear down the old despotic structures. Yet, what facilitated processes of social change was not the spectacular revolutionary act of 1989, but the slow discursive struggle for hegemony that preceded it. Various German scholars have already emphasized this point. Cristiane Lemke, for example, believes that the crumbling of the Berlin Wall resulted from the continuously increasing gap between the official political culture (the one determined by the state) and the dominant political culture (the one prevailing in the heads of people).[15] Sigrid Meuschel advances similar propositions when examining changing levels of legitimacy that the communist régime enjoyed.[16]

A few qualifying remarks about a focus on the slow transformation of values is necessary before I problematize one more dimension of this approach to social

---

[13] Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, quoted in Holzweissig, Massenmedien in der DDR, p. 62.

[14] See Susanne Binas and Peter Zocher, "Eigentlich habe ich Hunger, eigentlich hab ich's satt...," in R. Blanke and R. Erd (eds), DDR - Ein Staat vergeht (Frankfurt: Fischer Tagebuch, 1990), pp. 52-60; and Günter Erbe, "Moderne, Avantgarde und Postmoderne: Zur neueren Rezeption in der Literaturwissenschaft der DDR," in M. Gerber (ed), Studies in GDR Culture and Society, Vol 6 (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1986), pp. 157-172.

[15] Christiane Lemke, Die Ursachen des Umbruchs 1989: Politische Sozialisation in der ehemaligen DDR (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991).

[16] Sigrid Meuschel, "Wandel durch Auflehnung: Thesen zum Verfall bürokratischer Herrschaft in der DDR," in R. Deppe, H. Dubiel and U. Rödel (eds), Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 26-47

change. Discursive transformations were, of course, not the only factors responsible for the spectacular collapse of the Berlin Wall. No monocausal explanation can ever do justice to such a complex set of events. I have already pointed out, for example, that the Soviet alliance system needed to become morbid enough for domestic forces of dissent to express themselves independently of externally imposed geopolitical restraints. Neither does my emphasis on the infiltration of 'subversive' ideas into East Germany suggest that processes of social change were merely influenced by changes in the external environment. Such a position would amount to the very structural and discursive determinism that annihilates the possibility of retaining a notion of human agency.

Many East Germans did, at various levels and in various forms, actively influence the transformation of societal values. Some authors focus on the role intellectuals played in this process. David Bathrick, for example, argues that the activities of the literary intelligentsia contributed to the peaceful occurrence of social change in East Germany.[17] He demonstrates how several generations of writers and public intellectuals, from the early reform oriented novelists and playwrights to the more radical Prenzlauer Berg poets of the 1980s, broke taboos, challenged the official legitimization discourse and were able to carve out dialogical spaces within a suffocating public realm. Others give less credit to the leading literary figures, who are often dismissed as mere Staatsdichter, poets whose prime function was, allegedly, to represent the official party position. Some analysts thus focus more on how everyday forms of resistance gradually undermined the East German system of domination. Jeffrey Kopstein, for instance, pays attention to the influence of workers' resistance on the stability of the communist regime.[18]

It is not my intention here to theorize such forms of dissent - a task I will tackle in detail throughout the third part of this thesis. At this point my objective is merely to identify the broad spaces within which these manifestations of human agency take place. And these spaces are the ones in which power is created by the slow transformation of societal values.

TIME, SPACE AND SPEED IN A SHRUNKEN WORLD

One more important issue needs to be addressed before I can start to theorize discursive terrains of dissent and their potential for engendering human agency. The concept of civil society can only serve as an adequate analytical base for such an endeavor if it is not artificially sealed off from other realms. I have already mentioned the dangers entailed in reifying the boundaries between public and private

---

[17] David Bathrick, The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 2.

[18] Jeffrey Kopstein, "Chipping Away at the State: Workers' Resistance and the Demise of East Germany," in World Politics, Vol. 48, April 1996, pp. 391-423.

spheres. In a similar vein, the concept of civil society must not entrench an artificial separation between domestic and international spheres. It is, indeed, precisely through an engagement with the transformation of values in the spaces between the domestic and the international that human agency may be exerted most successfully in the late modern age.

I end this chapter with a brief theoretical excursus that draws attention to the importance of discursive struggles in these expanding in-between-spaces. For this purpose I first introduce some of the ideas espoused by two French authors, Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard. Both have written provocative and often controversial texts about various effects of globalization, particularly the rapidly changing nature and impact of mass media and means of communication. They show how these transformations have rearranged the relationship between time and space, and thus fundamentally altered contemporary social dynamics. I embrace some of the arguments Virilio and Baudrillard advance, but reject the overall conclusions that they draw from them.

Virilio points out that the contraction of distances has become a strategic reality. The corresponding negation of space carries with it incalculable economic and political consequences.[19] He claims that we are currently witnessing a revolution in global relations, comparable to the fundamental impact of changing mass transportation in the nineteenth century and means of telecommunication in the twentieth. We are undergoing a sea change in social dynamics. This change revolves around the use and regulation of speed. Speed is the relationship between various phenomena, notably space and time. Space has become annihilated, Virilio claims, and time has taken over as the criterion around which global dynamics revolve. The instantaneous character of communication and mass media have annihilated duration and locality. The "now" of the emission is privileged to the detriment of the "here," the space where things take place.[20] What matters are no longer the three spatial dimensions of height, depth, and width, but above all a fourth one, time. Or, rather, what matters is the present, for our notion of "real time" has been transformed into a universal fetish, a situation in which local and chronological time has given way to world time, to speed, which regulates our political, social and economic interactions.[21]

Various consequences arise from this. Virilio predicts that the globe will no longer primarily be divided spatially into North and South, but temporally into two forms of speed, absolute and relative. The "haves" and "have-nots" are then sorted out between those who live in the hyperreal shrunken world of instant communication, cyberdynamics, and electronic money transactions - and those, more disadvantaged than ever, who live in the real space of local villages, cut off from the

---

[19] Paul Virilio, <u>Vitesse et Politique</u> (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1977), p. 131.

[20] Paul Virilio, <u>La Vitesse de Libération</u> (Paris: Galilée, 1995), pp. 21-34.

[21] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 23, 89.

temporal forces that drive politics and economics.[22] Virilio also believes that the prevalence of speed has led to the disappearance of consciousness in the form of direct perceptions of our existence. Cinematography and televised images, for example, are only technically transmitted optical illusions, and not the representations of 'reality' they are often taken to be.[23] It is in this domain that Baudrillard takes up the argument and pushes it a step further.

For Baudrillard the present world is hyperreal, a model of something real that has no origin in reality. The distinctions between reality and virtuality, political practice and simulation are blurred to the extent that they are no longer recognizable. Indeed, these distinctions have been effaced altogether, Baudrillard claims, owing mostly to the impact of mass media. Our media culture has annihilated reality in stages, such that in the end its simulating image "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum."[24] Television, the unproblematic transmission of the hyperreal, has conditioned our mind such that we have lost the ability to penetrate beneath the manifest levels of surface. It has changed fundamentally social dynamics in the late twentieth century, where politics has disappeared in a void and is reduced to a useless trace that only operates on the level of vi lity, somewhere between our mental television screens and public opinion polls.

It is not my intention to endorse all of Virilio's and Baudrillard's positions. Many of their arguments are problematic, even though they draw attention to important contemporary phenomena. For instance, their analyses deal primarily with aspects of Western culture. Although this culture has spread throughout the globe, an undifferentiated universal assessment of its dynamics suppresses important local differences. It fails to appreciate the fragmentations and contradictions that arise precisely as a reaction against processes of homogenization. Problematic as well is the claim, especially pronounced in Baudrillard, that current cultural trends have robbed us of the ability to appreciate reality. Many authors have criticized this position as a form of metaphysical idealism, a naive desire to return to some pre-mass media authenticity.[26] There cannot be unmediated access to reality, authentic awareness of our existence. Representations of the 'real,' even before the advent of mass media, were inevitably intertwined with social images embedded in language. The advent of speed has not fundamentally changed, but only intensified this aspect of social dynamics.

---

[22] Jean-Baptiste Marongiu, "Excès de Vitesse," in Libération, 21.9.1995, p. xi.

[23] Paul Virilio, Esthétique de la Disparition (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1989/1980), pp. 56-7, 117.

[24] Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in Simulations, tr. P. Foss, P. Patton, P. Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 11.

[25] Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," tr. J. Johnston in Hal Foster (ed), Postmodern Culture (London: Pluto Press, 1985); pp. 126-134; "Les ilotes et les élites", in Libération, 4 Sept 1995, p. 4.

[26] Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, pp. 33-4; John Docker, Postmodernism and Popular Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 104-108.

What does the changing relationship between time and space entail for the notion of human agency? The issue is, indeed, a difficult one. Do human actions still matter in a world where the exchange of virtual capital through computerized networks plunges the global economy, at random so its seems, into up and down spirals that sweep across traditional boundaries of identity and sovereignty? And even if we suppose that actions matter, can we understand them at a time when political and social consciousness gushes out of five-second sound-bites and corresponding hyper-real images that flicker over our television screens?

Virilio and Baudrillard are highly pessimistic about the prospects of understanding human agency in the late modern world. One of the main themes in Virilio's latest book revolves around the environmental pollution of not only our atmosphere and hydrosphere, but also of our planet's time-space relationship. This "dromospheric pollution," he claims, eludes all democratic controls and will soon precipitate a yet unknown fatal event, "the accident of all accidents, or, in other words, the [global] circulation of the generalized accident."[27] Baudrillard's apocalyptic vision looks slightly different. For him, human agency has been annihilated because the link between "realities" and "referents" no longer exist. And since we have no more reality, theory can no longer dissent against it.[28] The task of the theorists is then reduced to revealing the elusive nature of contemporary life.

While accepting the rapidly changing nature of the late modern world, my own approach explicitly retains notions of dissent and human agency. I locate them, as mentioned above, in the slow transformation of societal values. Such an argument, I believe, can be sustained by acknowledging the phenomena that Virilio and Baudrillard analyze while rejecting the overall conclusions they have reached. A brief engagement with the following passage from Virilio's latest book helps to outline the contours of such a position:

> The question no longer is one that opposes the *global* in relation to the *local*, or the *transitional* in relation to the *national*. It is, above all, the question of this sudden temporal commutation which blurs not only the inside and the outside, the boundaries of the political territory, but also the before and after of its duration, its history. All this occurs to the sole benefit of a *real moment* (un instant réel) whose dynamic ultimately escapes all influence.[29]

Yes, the blurring of distinctions between global and local, transnational and national, has altered the interaction between domination and resistance today. If 'real space' has become absorbed into the domains of speed and simulation, as Virilio and Baudrillard claim, then dynamics of dissent do not primarily, or at least

---

[27] Virilio, La Vitesse de Libération, pp. 90 and 35, 47, 83-4, 98-9.

[28] Or so at least interpret Smart, Postmodernity, pp. 122-3; and Wolfgang Welsch, Ästhetisches Denken (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993), pp. 208-11.

[29] Virilio, La Vitesse de Libération, p. 31.

not only, take place in their immediate spatial environment, as for example in the streets of East Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig. Dissent operates as least as much in the virtuality of speed, the instanteneity of globalized communication.

This phenomenon, however, does not annihilate possibilities of engaging in acts of dissent that interfere with the gradual transformation of societal values over 'real time.' Virilio, I suggest, mistakenly claims that the blurring of the inside and the outside, the before and the after, has left a void that in turn was filled to the sole benefit of a 'real moment' which eludes all outside influences. Speed may well have erased space to the benefit of some kind of globalized instantaneousness. Yet, hyperreal images racing daily over our television screens nevertheless take part in a discursive struggle over 'real time.' Independently of how instantaneous, distorted and simulated they are, these images influence our perceptions of the world and thus lead to a slow transformation of values. To accept speed, then, is not to render 'real time' obsolete, but to acknowledge multiple and overlapping spatial and temporal spheres within which values are constantly formed and reformed.

The prevalence of speed in the late modern age provides increasing opportunities to interfere with the processes through which values are slowly transformed. Acts of dissent now have the potential to transcends their immediate spatial context and enter discursive domains beyond national boundaries. This is to say that the boundaries of discursive struggle have widened - and so have, consequently, the possible terrains of dissent where human agency can be exerted. But more is needed to articulate and sustain such an argument. One must specify, for example, which forms of dissent most successfully engage discursive struggles in the late modern age, and how ensuing manifestations of human agency can best be understood.

SUMMARY

While the previous chapter explained why great revolutionary events do not always uproot discursive systems of domination, this chapter suggested that discursive dynamics are among the driving forces behind great events. Both of these arguments entail that commonly perceived instances of popular dissent, like mass demonstrations, are much less influential in triggering social change than their spectacular appearance suggests. The events that deserve our analytical attention are not the moments when overthrowers hurl statues into the mud.

Key historical events are more elusive, more inaudible in their appearance. They evolve around the slow transformation of societal values. Foucault:

An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked "other."[30]

In an attempt to comprehend processes through which this 'masked other' precipitates social change, I supplemented Foucault's approach to power with Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Another re-reading of the East German case has served to illustrate the practical usefulness of such a theoretical fusion. My objective was to capture at least some of the inaudible forces that facilitated the revolutionary events of 1989. I suggested that the collapse of the Berlin Wall can best be understood by focusing on the slow transformation of values that preceded the more overt and spectacular acts of rebellion. Expressed in Gramscian terms, a resistance movement can only exert agency and establish a new and stable order if the classes or social groups that conduct the revolutionary struggle enjoy widespread popular support before attempting to seize state power. Without having first won this so-called 'war of position,' and achieved hegemonic leadership within civil society, dissident voices will most likely be silenced by the repressive state apparatus.

While appreciating the discursive dimension of social change, it is important not to separate civil society from spheres that lie beyond it. I emphasized that it is precisely in the spaces between the domestic and the international that some of the most important discursive dynamics take place. Influential technological and communicative innovations have led to an increasing annihilation of space by time, to the blurring of conventional boundaries of sovereignty and identity. This 'shrinking' of the globe has increased not only the range of discursive struggles, but also the potential opportunities of exerting human agency.

I have now located the broad terrains where discursive struggles take place, that is, the terrains in which power is created by the slow transformation of societal values. My next task is to comprehend how precisely practices of dissent that operate in these terrains can exert human agency and engender processes of social change. Can these largely inaudible forms of human agency actually be theorized? Or are they simply too complex, too subtle, too elusive to be understood by the human mind?

---

[30] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," tr. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon, in The Foucault Reader, ed. P. Rabinow (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984/1971), p. 88.

PART THREE

DISCURSIVE
TERRAINS OF DISSENT

Part two of this thesis reframed conventional understandings of dissent. No less is required if we are to retain the possibility of theorizing human agency in the turbulent late modern age. Prevalent grand theoretical approaches that focus on heroic revolutionary events are unable to deal with subtle, discursively entrenched forms of domination. I proposed two parallel shifts to prepare the ground for a more attuned understanding of the interaction between domination and resistance. From a methodological point of view, I moved away from grand theories of dissent towards a discursive understanding of power. In a related topical reorientation, I suggested that processes of social change can be assessed more adequately by focusing not on great events, but on the slow transformation of values that precedes them.

The third and final part of this thesis explores discursive terrains of dissent that become visible through this reframing of domination and resistance. I locate the most promising forms of dissent in seemingly mundane daily acts of resistance that slowly transform societal values. Theorizing such discursive dissent, I argue, is our best hope for retaining a viable and non-essentialist notion of human agency. It requires an approach that relies on various forms and levels of insight but is nevertheless precise about where discursive dissent occurs and how it can be understood. Such precision is particularly warranted because discourse and dissent are, at least at first sight, two rather contradictory terms. Discourses are generally perceived to be so overarching and deeply entrenched that they annihilate all

possibilities for dissent. Not so, I argue. Despite their power, discourses are fragmented, unstable, thin at times. An exploration of these weaknesses can gradually transform discursive practices such that they lead to processes of social change.

To demonstrate the practical relevance of this assertion I focus on some of the most potent and representative everyday forms of resistance, those related to our daily practices of speaking and writing. After an engagement with the philosophy of language I return to German politics, but this time to the immediate post-War period. A close look at the poetry of Paul Celan and its impact on social dynamics illustrates the potential for human agency that is contained in discursive dissent

Chapter Seven

MAPPING RESISTANCE:
DISCOURSE, ONTOLOGY, DISSENT

> What Nietzsche calls Entstehungsherd [the place of emergence]...is not specifically the energy of the strong or the reaction of the weak, but precisely this scene where they are displayed superimposed or face-to-face. It is nothing but the space that divides them, the void through which they exchange their threatening gestures and speeches.
>
> Foucault, "Nietzsche, la Généalogie, l'Histoire"
> tr. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon

I have already identified the broad terrain where discursive dissent takes place: the slow transformation of societal values. I now proceed to the task of theorizing more specifically how discursive dissent functions and how it engenders human agency. For this purpose I move away from considering discourses as overarching monolithic forces that dominate all aspects of our lives. Without denying their power, indeed, by drawing upon it, I pay attention to the fissures in them, theorize their fragmentation, their thinness. By doing so, discursive terrains of dissent all of a sudden appear where forces of domination previously seemed invincible.

I locate the dynamics through which discursive dissent operates in the (Nietzschean) void between the strong and the weak, between dominant and marginalized discourses. The power that lingers in this void is best understood by shifting foci from epistemological to ontological issues. This is to say that one must observe how an individual may be able to escape the discursive order and influence its shifting boundaries. Individuals have fragmented and hyphenated identities. By

tapping into these multiple dimensions of Being, I argue, individuals can take the first step in resisting some aspects of discursive domination. I theorize this transformative potential of Being and then illustrate its functioning by drawing attention to ensuing everyday forms of resistance. Later chapters will then remove more layers of abstraction and demonstrate more specifically the practical relevance of such discursive forms of dissent and the possibilities for human agency that they open up in the late modern age.

THE LINGERING POWER OF DISCURSIVE VOIDS

What does Foucault, in his reading of Nietzsche, discover when he draws attention to the void between the energy of the strong and the reaction of the weak? Why is this space so important? How can it explain processes through which discursive dissent engenders human agency? Foucault identifies this void as the place where power relations are usurped. It hosts the entry of forces, their eruption, "the leap from the wings to central stage."[1] The discursive void contains, in short, the key to understanding historical discontinuities.

But how are we to understand a void? How are we to appreciate the dynamics that evolve within it, the ways in which it plays out the forces that linger on all of its multiple points of entry and exit? The first step in this direction entails a departure from the deeply entrenched Western practice of viewing the world in dualistic terms. Much of modern thought has revolved around the juxtaposition of antagonistic bipolar opposites, such as rational/non-rational, good/evil, just/unjust, chaos/order or, precisely, strong/weak. One side of the paring is considered to be analytically and conceptually separate from the other. The relationship between them generally expresses the superiority, dominance or desirability of one entity (such as strong/order) over the other (such as weak/chaos). The crucial spaces between them, the gray and indefinable voids, remain unexplored. Departing from this long tradition would, by contrast, emphasize the complementariness of opposites and the overlapping relationships between them. Since one side of the pairing (such as order) can only exist by virtue of its opposite (such as chaos), both form an inseparable and interdependent unit.[2]

Non-dualistic conceptualizing recognizes that social dynamics cannot be understood by juxtaposing dominant and marginalized discourses. Discourses

---

[1] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," tr. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon in P. Rabinow (ed), The Foucault Reader (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984/1971), p. 84.

[2] Opposition to dualistic conceptualizing was a main theme in ancient Chinese Philosophy, particularly among Taoists, and has become prominent in contemporary Western thought Derrida's deconstruction. See Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, tr. D.C. Lau (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986); Chuang Tzu, Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters, tr. A.C. Graham (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986); and A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds, ed. P. Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 259-76.

overlap, influence each other, and are in a constant state of flux. And so are their multiple relationships with political practice. A dominant discourse usually incorporates elements of discursive practices that are squeezed into the margins. The influence of these exiled discourses, in turn, may increase to the point of their becoming dominant. The dividing lines between discourses always changes and may be blurred to the point that one needs to accept, as Foucault does, that multiple discursive elements interact at various strategic levels.[3] What deserves our attention then is the discursive void, the space where these multiple and overlapping discourses clash, where silent and sometimes not so silent arguments are exchanged, where boundaries are redrawn constantly.

The second step in appreciating the discursive void requires, I argue, a break with some aspects of Foucault's thought. I am still in agreement with his claim that the confrontations in the discursive void do not take place among equals, that, indeed, the only drama staged there is an endlessly repeated play of domination.[4] Yet, I believe that resistance to these plays of domination is an equally constant theme. Foucault, of course, would not necessarily disagree for he argues that "wherever there is power, there is resistance."[5] He is simply less optimistic about the chances of precisely locating and directing these forms of resistance. He may also, at least according to some commentators, deny that these forms of resistance actually contain transformative capacities.[6] These are the aspects where I find myself disagreeing with Foucault's pessimistic reading of Nietzsche, most notably with the argument that because the dynamic in the space between the strong and the weak takes place in an interstice, a "non-place" where adversaries do not meet directly, no one is responsible for its outcome.[7] Such an interpretation can easily lead to a fatalistic interpretation that annihilates altogether the concept of human agency - an interpretation which I suggest is not compelling and does not necessarily arise from most of Foucault's remaining arguments.

If power and domination are so omnipresent, so invincible, how could anything every change? If, as Foucault suggest, there is no conversation, no common language, not even a visible discursive meeting between the inside and the outside, the center and the margin, how could one explain all those challenges from below, the moments when people walk through walls, take to the street and shake, successfully or not, the foundations of the established order?

---

[3] Michel Foucault, La Volonté de Savoir, Vol. 1 of Histoire de la Sexualité (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 133.

[4] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," pp. 84-5.

[5] Foucault, La Volonté de Savoir, p. 125. See also "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," tr. J.D. Gauthier, in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen, The Final Foucault (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), esp. pp. 11-3.

[6] Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?", in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), Feminism/Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 167.

[7] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," p. 85.

Hegemonies are not invincible. There are fissures, there are cracks, there are weak spots: windows of opportunity that lead to transformative pathways. The question is how to locate, theorize and explore them.

James Scott has taken a decisive step in this direction by deconstructing the notion of hegemony. I will follow his logic, at least up to a point, to illustrate the dynamic that occurs in the discursive void. Central to Scott's argument about the interaction between domination and resistance is the separation he draws between what he calls the "public transcript" and the "hidden transcript." The public transcript is, at least at first sight, comparable to what one I referred to as hegemony in the previous chapter. It is that which is visible in public of the interaction between subordinates and those who hold power, in short, the self-portrait of the dominant social group.[8] By controlling the public transcript, elites can establish an official ideological narrative that depicts how they want subordinates to see them. But this is not the whole story, Scott insists. Beside this hegemonic public conduct there is "a backstage discourse consisting of what cannot be spoken in the face of power."[9] The hidden transcript is where these "offstage" opinions are revealed. Elites have their hidden transcripts, the gestures and words which, for example, reveal the contradictions of the public transcript or shed light on its instrumental and exploitative dimensions. But subordinates have hidden transcripts as well. Once they escape the eyes of power holders, they too engage in "offstage" gesturing and talking that contradict the public transcript. These forms of speech are, of course, produced for a different audience and under very different circumstances than the public discourse. Scott illustrates where and how the hidden transcript renders possible a critique of power behind the back of domination:

> Here, offstage, where subordinates may gather outside the intimidating gaze of power, a sharply dissonant political culture is possible. Slaves in the relative safety of their quarters can speak the words of anger, revenge, self-assertion that they must normally choke back when in the presence of the masters and mistresses.[10]

The disguised practices of dissent that develop in these anonymous spaces will receive attention later in this chapter. At this point is more important to note that Scott grants subordinates more cognitive autonomy than most theorists of hegemony do. For him, the powerless are well aware of their situation, but accept the status quo for strategic reasons. In one of his early studies on exploitation and peasant politics in South East Asia, Scott demonstrates, for example, that peasants, confined by basic problems of subsistence, often reject outright rebellion and deliberately chose risk-averse strategies to minimize the probability of disaster.[11] The powerless

---

[8] James C. Scott, <u>Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 2, 18.

[9] Ibid, p. xii.

[10] Ibid, p. 18. See also pp. xii and 1-69.

[11] James C. Scott, <u>The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

thus have good reasons for keeping up a public appearance that suggests acquiescence with the public transcript.

Scott's suggestion that subordinates, driven by self-interest, deliberately reinforce hegemonic appearances amounts to a major critique of the (neo)Marxist concepts of false consciousness and hegemony. Indeed, he engages directly with some of Gramsci's ideas. Scott is particularly critical of what he calls the thick theory of hegemony. He dismisses as untenable the argument that a dominant ideology is so powerful in concealing its logic of oppression that it persuades subordinate groups to espouse uncritically the values that explain and justify their own subordination.[12] Thick hegemony suggests that manufactured consent in the form of false consciousness sustains systems of domination and social dynamics in general. This position, Scott argues, gravely misjudges the ability of subordinates to learn from their daily material experiences, which allows them to penetrate and demystify the dominant ideology. He has more sympathies for a thin theory of hegemony and false consciousness. From this theoretical perspective, resignation is the key factor and consent is achieved without necessarily changing the values of subordinates. This is to say that hegemony does not alter people's minds, it only delineates the realistic from the unrealistic, the possible from the impossible by convincing subordinate groups that certain elements of the given social order are simply inevitable. Hence, some of the aspirations that the powerless have are relegated to the realm of idle dreams, of wishful thinking.[13]

Scott's analysis implies, much like Foucault's reading of Nietzsche, that it is important to focus not only on the actions of the strong or the reactions of the weak, but also on the space between them. Scott does not talk directly of a void, but his description of social dynamics renders supports for such a concept. For example, he considers the boundaries between the public and the hidden transcripts not a solid wall, but a "zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate." By observing the "dialectic of disguise and surveillance" that unfolds in this space, he argues, one can understand better cultural patterns of domination and subordination.[14]

I follow Scott's arguments against hegemony only up to a certain point. I believe his theorizing of hidden transcripts constitutes an important step in locating contradictions and possibilities for dissent that would be missed by focusing solely on hegemony and discursive practices. But I disagree with his entire dismantling of the concept of hegemony. Yes, subordinates are much more aware of their situation than their often accommodating public behavior suggests, than, indeed, the Gramscian concept of hegemony suggests. Yes, discursive domination does not

---

[12] Scott, <u>Domination and the Arts of Resistance</u>, p. 72.

[13] Scott, <u>Domination and the Arts of Resistance</u>, p. 74, and 70-107; <u>Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 304-50.

[14] Scott, <u>Domination and the Arts of Resistance</u>, pp. 4, 14.

crush everything in sight. The powerless often deliberately reinforce hegemonic appearances for reasons of strategy or simple self-preservation. But this is not to say that their insight into a situation is authentic, that they enjoy some form of pre- or extra-discursive knowledge. Even while strategically maintaining a public posture of consent against their better judgment, subordinates do not derive this 'chosen' attitude from a position of authenticity. They, like anybody else, live in a community whose language, social practices and customs set limits to the thinking process. They too are part of a discursive order, one that provides the conceptual tools through which 'reality' makes sense. They too are confined by the edges of discursive practices, even if these practices are more subtle than an undifferentiated concept of hegemony suggests. Hidden transcripts revolve around their own hegemonies, discursive orders that may be markedly different from the public transcript, but nevertheless play a crucial role in influencing social dynamics that unfold in the void between the strong and the weak. Ignoring the restraining and enabling elements that are entailed in these crucial discursive factors is to miss out on what may well be the most potent forms of dissent, those that operate through a transformation of discursive practices.

Rather than dismantling the concept of discursive power, my approach attempts to reinforce it by theorizing how cracks, contradictions and weaknesses in hegemonic orders can be exploited such that the transformative potential that is contained in them can be employed to exert human agency and promote social change. While continuously relying on Foucault's and Scott's opposing arguments, my position is situated somewhere between the two. This is to say that I maneuver back and forth between an (early) Foucaultean emphasis on discourse, which runs the risk of annihilating human agency, and Scott's trust in the ability of subordinates to cut through the fog of hegemony, which may border on idealism and hinder an adequate understanding of discursive forms of domination and dissent.

HOW BEING IS ALWAYS ALREADY THAT WHICH IT IS NOT

A shift of foci from epistemological to ontological concerns is necessary to explore the transformative potentials that are contained in the discursive void. The main focus then no longer lies with how knowledge is always mediated by discourse, but how, at the level of Being, the subject may or may not be able to escape the confines of this discursive order.

A discussion on Being is, of course, impossible without an engagement with Martin Heidegger. Yet, Heidegger is problematic. His writings are dense, by no means easy to digest. They range anywhere from brilliant arguments to appalling political remarks. There are the (in)famous fascist overtones of his inaugural address as rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933, the subsequent one year of open cooperation with the Nazi regime, and his unwillingness to discuss the issue even long after the fall of the Third Reich. Yet, few would dispute the status of

Heidegger's philosophical writings as one of the most insightful and influential contributions of this century. I am in agreement here with such commentators as Fred Dallmayr, John Caputo or Leslie Thiele, who vehemently criticize Heidegger's political position while drawing heavily on his theoretical writings to advance such projects as a critical ontology or a conception of justice and obligation. The main premise of these and many other like-minded approaches is that one can separate the useful, non-ideological aspects of Heidegger's though from his fascist comments,[15] that one can discover a politics in Heidegger that is at odds with the one he personally championed,[16] that one can "read Heidegger against Heidegger."[17] It is not my intention here to engage with the details of this debate, either in its political or philosophical dimensions. I follow Heidegger's ontology only as long as it is necessary to provide the minimal groundwork for my task of articulating a discursive approach to dissent and human agency.

The question of the meaning of Being, Heidegger argues, is the most universal but also the most empty of questions.[18] There is no possibility of reaching a definitive answer to it. Indeed, it is not simply that these answers always remain elusive, but that the very concept of Being lacks an authentic dimensiòn, independently of whether or not it is apprehensible through intellectual means. Heidegger's later writings make clear what was only implied in Being and Time, namely that Being (Sein) must be differentiated from that-which-is (das Seiende), things around us which can be correlated to situations within our world (no matter how socially constituted these correlations are). Being, by contrast, is "that through which things are" and can thus not be "defined or explicated or situated within the world."[19] Expressed in the language I used above, Being constitutes and is always already constituted by and through discourse. Since we can perceive the world only through the filtering lenses of discourse, we cannot determine a notion of Being as that-which-is, independently of how this 'that' and this 'is' have been imbued with arbitrary meaning. Yet, precisely because Being is so elusive, so inexhaustible, so empty, it opens up extremely rich ground for thought. But how can I, with my limited tasks of theorizing discursive dissent and articulating a viable notion of human agency, derive useful insights from this Heideggerean ontological puzzle without getting lost in the unbounded vastness of Being?

---

[15] Fred Dallmayr, Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) and The Other Heidegger (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[16] Leslie Paul Thiele, Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 9.

[17] John D. Caputo, Against Ethics: Contribution to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 227.

[18] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, tr. D.F. Krell in Basic Writings (New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1927), pp. 42-44, 86.

[19] L.M. Vail, Heidegger and Ontological Difference (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), p. 3.

Heidegger's concept of Dasein constitutes a good starting point. Dasein is derived literally from a combination of the German words "Das-sein," the that-it-is of a being, its existence, as opposed to its essence, the what-it-is (Was-sein) of a thing or person.[20] Dasein thus is the specific and concrete existence of a being as incorporated into a cultural setting and constituted through interactions with people and things in this world. It has always a temporal character, it expresses the relationship between Being and time. Heidegger argues that Dasein derives its meaning in temporality, that it is only through time that Dasein can understand Being, that, indeed, "the meaning of Being of that being we call Dasein proves to be *temporality*."[21] David Krell captures this rather complex connection between Being and time in a few succinct lines:

> Dasein involves itself in all kinds of projects and plans for the future. In a sense it is always ahead of itself. At the same time it must come to terms with certain matters over which it has no control, elements that loom behind it, as it were, appurtenances of the past out of which Dasein is projected or "thrown." Dasein has a history. More, it *is* its own past.[22]

It is already clear from this short summary that in theorizing the links between Being and time Heidegger departs fundamentally from conventional notions of time and temporality. He no longer considers time as distinguishing the different regions of Being (such as past, present, future) and opposing that with "atemporal" things like spatial or numerical relationships.[23] Temporality, for Heidegger, does not just mean being in time. For him Being itself can only become visible in its temporal character, which entails that atemporal and supratemporal phenomenon are also temporal with respect to their Being.[24]

Understanding Being through its temporality thus means that the past is not an époque gone, but an integral part of the present of Being. In this sense, Dasein is always historical. Expressed in discursive language, one cannot separate who one is from how one grew up, from the education, the custom, the language and a whole set of other experiences and impressions that shaped our Being over time. Dasein is always circumscribed by the presence of these past discursive elements. Moreover, Dasein not only regulates what it transmits from the past, but also conceals this very process of regulation. This, in turn, means that all actions of subjects and, indeed, the very notion of human agency, are always delineated by the boundaries of this temporal dimension of Being.

---

[20] Cf. Heidegger, <u>Being and Time</u>, p. 48 (footnote by the editor of the English language edition).

[21] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 60.

[22] David Farrell Krell, "The Question of Being," general introduction to Heidegger, <u>Basic Writings</u>, p. 22.

[23] Heidegger, <u>Being and Time</u>, p. 61.

[24] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 61-2.

But the inevitable presence of its past is only one aspect of the temporal dimension of Being. Discourses do not overwhelm the subject entirely. Dasein also contains the future and all its various possibilities. In view of Heidegger's unconventional notion of time, this potential is not something that may or may not materialize. It is already contained in the very temporality of Being. Dasein, then, is always already that which it is not. It is not a stable and permanent aspect of Being, it is in constant transformation, it is always in the process of becoming something else than what it is. It is a process that is linked to such aspects as dialogue, consciousness and self-reflection:

> Dasein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its Being this being is concerned *about* its very Being. Thus it is constitutive of the Being of Dasein to have, in its very Being, a relation of Being to this Being. And this in turn means that Dasein understands itself in its Being in some way and with some explicitness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its Being. *Understanding of Being is itself a determination of Being of Dasein.*[25]

The point, then, is not only that Dasein's awareness of Being influences the constitution of its own nature, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter, but also that Being already embodies the transformative potential of Dasein to be something else than what it is. Dasein, Heidegger points out, always understands itself "in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself."[26] It is up to the task of thinking to explore the range of these options that are contained in the double-edged character of Being. Self-reflection has the potential, at least up to a certain point, to cut through the fog of conventional temporality and thus undermine the forms of concealment by which Being resists the possibility of being something else than what it is.

My own, more limited task, entails searching for ways through which this tranformative potential of Dasein's relation to Being permit us to conceptualize discursive dissent and thus salvage a notion of human agency. For this purpose it is necessary to transport Heidegger's theorizing from the level of abstraction to the level of practice, to the politics of dailiness. Heidegger's failure to draw such a link has frustrated many of his most prominent interpreters. Thus, authors who rely heavily upon Heidegger, such as Derrida, Levinas or Lyotard, chose not to travel the abstract road of Being, but instead theorize concrete instances of obligation and responsibility that arise out of specific situations.[27]

How are we to bring the theoretical discussion of dissent and human agency to the level of practice without loosing the benefit of Heidegger's more abstract insights

---

[25] Ibid., pp. 53-4.

[26] Ibid., p. 54.

[27] John D. Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 210.

into the question of Being? I believe that recent post-positivist feminist literature leads us in the right direction. Hardly any feminist reaches so blindly into abstraction that s/he looses sight of the more immanent political task of addressing the concrete circumstances within which women's lives are confined. Those who venture into metatheoretical spaces, and many do so successfully, often feel the need, unlike Heidegger, to justify their approach and draw attention to its direct political and ethical relevance.[28] Before theorizing the differences between Heidegger and feminist authors, first a few remarks on important similarities. They are not explicitly laid out. While one finds abundant references to psychoanalytical perspectives on the subject, especially via Freud, Jung, Lacan, and Zizek, Heidegger's name is astonishingly absent from feminist debates. Only a few isolated authors, such as Luce Irigaray and Gayatri Spivak, theorize Being through more than just fleeting and symbolic footnotes to Heidegger. Yet, while his name is largely effaced, many of Heidegger's ideas are omnipresent in feminist literature. This is the case not only of his ontology, but also of his work on such topics as identity/difference, language, otherness, concealment, or Destruktion (handed down, via post-structuralism, as deconstruction). The presence of these insights, however, is (ironically) concealed and mediated via Heidegger's more 'sanitized' and 'de-Germanized' contemporary French interpreters, such as Derrida, Foucault, Levinas or Deleuze.

But where precisely linger these Heideggerean residues in feminist theory? Where is his emptiest of all concepts, this Being that is not authentic and cannot even be grasped? The refusal to freeze and objectivize the subject, to transport the positivist discourse of science into the ontological realm is also a key rallying point in postmodern feminism. I have already drawn attention to Judith Butler's view that the subject is nothing but a Foucaultean regulatory practice, a normative rule that governs and upholds culturally constructed gender identities.[29] She thus rejects the notion of an authentic female identity, an essence that crystallizes when one digs deep enough. Instead, she analyzes the process by which subjects are constituted as essences, to then explore the possibilities that emerge from their multiplicities. Others argue along the same lines. Trinh Minh-ha believes that there is no permanent essence of wo/man, that, indeed, "women can never be defined."[30] Kathy Ferguson eschews the search for an "essential reality to which our representations correspond."[31] These assumptions about Being's elusiveness are probably best captured in Donna Haraway's metaphor of women as cyborgs. A cyborg is a hybrid of machine and organism, something that lies between social reality and fiction. In today's mythic and high-technological age, she argues, we all live as chimeras, we

---

[28] For example, Kathy Ferguson, The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. ix-xi.

[29] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 16-17.

[30] Trinh T. Minh-ha, Woman, Native, Other (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 95-6.

[31] Ferguson, The Man Question, p. 154.

are all cyborgs, a "condensed image of both imagination and material reality." The cyborg, then, is "our ontology; it gives us our politics."[32] Opposing positions of biological determinism, Haraway takes another implied Heideggerean leap:

> There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism.[33]

Being, in this interpretation, is not only evasive and constructed, but, much like Heidegger argues, it actually *is* not. It *happens*. Being is a constant process of renewal. Moving along the same slippery lines, Butler considers gender not as a noun or a static cultural marker but, rather, as an activity, an incessant action of some sort, something that one becomes but can never be.[34]

While working within these and other Heideggerean concepts, most feminist authors are reluctant to elevate the question of Being to a purely abstract level. Those who deal directly with Heidegger deplore that his concept of ontological difference does not include sexual difference, that he fails to pose the "sexual question." Braidotti, for example, reads Heidegger via Derrida's interpretation and criticizes both of them for placing the emergence of the subject beyond sexual difference. Such a conceptual notion of Being above and beyond sexuality, she argues, makes the mistake of reducing sexual difference to a derived given that is not constitutive of the subject.[35] Spivak, while taking a similar overall stance, sees the issue in more complex terms. By examining Derrida's reading of Heidegger's interpretation of the concept-metaphor 'women' in Nietzsche, Spivak points out that Derrida places the question of sexual difference at a pre-ontological level. Hence, Derrida too is perceived as joining the anti-abstraction choir by viewing Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as "being idling offshore ever since it missed the women in the affabulation of truth."[36]

Those feminists who grapple with the question of Being without dealing with Heideggerean dilemmas of abstraction focus (ironically, again) on Heideggerean themes of identity and difference.[37] Yet, the main focus of these authors lies not so

---

[32] Donna J. Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-50.

[33] Ibid., p. 155.

[34] Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 112.

[35] Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 104.

[36] Derrida in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Feminism and deconstruction, again: negotiating with unacknowledged masculinism," in T. Brennan (ed), Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 209-10.

[37] See Heidegger, Identity and Difference, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

much, or at least not only, with differences between men and women, not even with differences among women. Strategies of resistance are carved out by exploring differences *within* women. The terms fractured or hyphenated identities are most commonly used to convey the theoretical starting point for this unusual and innovative approach to difference. Being, here too, is a very complex issue. Braidotti speaks for many feminists when she argues that the synthesizing power of the term "I" is nothing but a grammatical necessity, a theoretical fiction that holds together the collection of differing layers, the integrated fragments of the very-receding horizon of my identity."[38] Women (and men) have multiple, fractured, and ambivalent subjectivities that move back and forth between such terrains of identity as class, race, gender, nationality, language and sexual preference. Women's identity, then, is not reducible to an essence, but situated fluidly among such lines as, for instance, Afro-American-socialist-English-speaking-recently-divorced-factory-worker-women or Hispanic-lesbian-college-educated-abroad-in-Northern-Europe-residing-women. The combinations, of course, are endless.

What is the potential for resistance contained in these hyphenated identities? How can they lead to expressions of human agency? Some of the above feminist authors claim convincingly that a strategic use of hyphenated identities opens up chances for undermining the regulatory norms established by these very identities. They permit the subject to escape the suffocating impact of hegemonies, seek out its cracks and weaknesses, and explore the enabling potential that lingers in what I called the discursive void.

Ferguson employs the term "mobile subjectivities" to capture the possibilities that arise from moving back and forth among a whole range of hyphenated identities and its corresponding mental resting places. This process not only entails traveling across and along axes of power, domination and resistance, but also destabilizes the regulatory norms that have been constructed through the delineation of these identities.[39] By being aware of the arbitrariness and excluding tendencies embedded in identity constructions, such as class, race or gender, subjects become empowered and can take part in daily processes that slowly but constantly redraw the political boundaries of identities. Haraway makes a similar point through a slightly different terminology that relies upon her cyborg metaphor. She talks of "situated knowledges," of how moving back and forth between various subjectivities can open up multiple visions. The point is, Haraway emphasizes, not to ground one's knowledge in stable standpoints, but to explore visions of change that unfold through multidimensional, shifting and always eluding hyphens of identity.[40]

---

[38] Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of Ontological Difference," in Brennan, Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis, p. 93. See also Ferguson, The Man Question, pp. 153-183; Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, pp. 155-161; Sandra Harding, The Science Question in Feminism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 163-196; and Trinh, Woman, Native, Other, pp. 95-6.

[39] Ferguson, The Man Question, pp. 158-63.

[40] Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, pp. 183-201.

The potential for change embedded in these visions of Being are as potent as the ones advocated by Heidegger. But their potential does not lie primarily in the temporal aspects of Being, future possibilities that are already contained in the existential self-aware of Dasein. It is captured by drawing attention to the multiple dimensions of Being that exist simultaneously. Potential for human agency is then contained in the subversive transgression of boundaries, a process that is facilitated by an awareness of the flexibility contained in hyphenated identities. However, these two seemingly disparate visions of Being also display important parallels.

Either in temporal or simultaneous dimensions, Being is always already that which it is not. In both visions, discursive domination is a crucial force to be reckoned with. But it is not the end of the story. There are ways of eluding discourse. There are glimmers of hope. There are fractured visions of human agency.

NETWORKS OF ANTI-DISCIPLINE / EVERYDAY FORMS OF RESISTANCE

To get closer to my objective of theorizing the practical dimensions of discursive dissent it is necessary to remove one more layer of abstraction. For this purpose I am shifting foci again, this time from ontological to tactical issues, from mobile subjectivities to the tactics through which they turn into vehicles of dissent. I must now enter the level of everydayness, the sphere of Alltäglichkeit that Heidegger theorized only in abstract terms. With this step I return, full circle so to speak, to the Nietzschean argument I presented in the previous chapter, namely that our attention should be focused less on great historical events, and more on the seemingly insignificant slow transformation of values that precede them.

There are many ways of searching for practices of dissent and aspects of human agency hidden in the dailiness of life. I consider Michel de Certeau's approach one of the most productive conceptual entry points to explore everyday forms of resistance. De Certeau's objective is to refute the widespread assumption that common people are passive onlookers, guided by the disciplinary force of established rules. He attempts to demonstrate that seemingly mundane daily practices are not simply background activities, not even mere forms of resistance, but, indeed, an integral part of socio-cultural production.

De Certeau clearly detects human agency in everyday life. For him, normal people are not simply faceless consumers, they are "[u]nrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality."[41] De

---

[41] Michel de Certeau, Arts de Faire, vol. I of L'Invention du Quotidien (Paris, Gallimard, 1990/1980), p. 57, tr. S.F. Rendall in The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p. 34.

Certeau's theoretical stance demonstrates why. Influenced by Wittgenstein and Bourdieu, he makes uses of Foucault's research by turning it upside down, somewhat similar to what Marx did to Hegel. De Certeau strongly opposes Foucault's notion of a panoptical discourse, one that sees and controls everything. He considers unwise spending one's entire energy analyzing the multitude of minuscule techniques that discipline the subject and paralyze her/him in a web of micro-level power relations. Such an approach, de Certeau argues, unduly privileges the productive apparatus. Instead, he proposes an anti-Foucaultean path to understanding domination and resistance:

> If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also "minuscule" and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what "ways of operating" form the counterpart, on the consumer's (or "dominee's"?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order.[42]

These 'ways of operating,' de Certeau argues, are the practices by which people can re-appropriate the space controlled through the existing discursive order. It is not my intention here to provide an exhaustive account of everyday forms of resistance that take place in these "networks of anti-discipline," as de Certeau calls them.[43] Such a task would be doomed from the start, for the range of daily acts of dissent is unlimited. I simply illustrate the persuasive aspects of de Certeau's argument via a few examples, leaving it to chapters eight and nine to analyze in detail more specific everyday forms of resistance, those related to speaking and writing.

De Certeau focuses primarily on the uses of space in Western consumer societies, on how everyday practices like walking, shopping, dwelling or cooking become arts of manipulation that intervene with the prevalent discursive order. Other authors locate daily practices of subversion in different spheres of life. James Scott has dealt in detail with everyday forms of peasant resistance. For him too, the big events are not peasant rebellions or revolutions. They occur rarely anyway. What deserves our attention, he argues, is the constant everyday struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, taxes, rents and the like from them.[44] Through extensive, detailed and highly compelling research Scott demonstrates the prevalence of low-profile forms of resistance. These are the critiques spoken behind the back of power, the utterances that make up the earlier mentioned hidden transcript. Although such critique is never spoken openly, it nevertheless is in the open. Indeed, this form of critique is almost omnipresent in folk culture, disguised in such practices as rumors, gossip, jokes, tales or songs. They are the vehicles of the powerless by which they "insinuate a critique of power

---

[42] De Certeau, Arts de Faire, pp. xxxix-xl, tr. The Practice of Everyday Life, p. xiv.

[43] De Certeau, Arts de Faire, p. xl.

[44] Scott: Weapons of the Weak, pp. xv-xvi.

while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct."[45] We find a perfect example of such a practice in Margaret Atwood's fictional, but all too real authoritarian word:

> There is something powerful in the whispering of obscenities about those in power. There's something delightful about it, something naughty, secretive, forbidden, thrilling. It's like a spell, of sorts. It deflates them, reduces them to the common denominator where they can be dealt with. In the paint of the washroom cubicle someone unknown had scratched: *Aunt Lydia sucks*. It was like a flag waved from a hilltop in rebellion.[46]

The context of Atwood's narrative does not matter for the purpose of my theoretical reflections. The scene of an obscenity anonymously scribbled into a bathroom wall is enough to evoke the subversive aspects of this act. Anonymity provided the security necessary to scream out what cannot even be whispered in the face of the oppressors. There is a clear target, but no visible author, no agitator that could be prosecuted. The audience is potentially limitless. Scott insists that such a politics of hidden dissent, of disguise and anonymity, is neither empty posturing nor a substitute for real resistance. It is resistance of the most effective kind, for these subversive gestures eventually insinuate themselves, in disguised form, into the public discourse. They lead to a slow transformation of values, they nurture and give meaning to subsequent, more overt forms of resistance or rebellion. They may bring upon an explosive political situation during which the <u>cordon sanitare</u> between the hidden and public transcripts is torn apart.[47]

Everyday forms of resistance are, of course, not new. Indeed, one of the most famous illustrations of such dissent dates back to sixteenth century France, to the Renaissance author François Rabelais. His very personality illustrates how he escaped aspects of discursive orders by navigating back and forth between various hyphenated identities: Franciscan monk, humanist, doctor of medicine and, in the function that interests us here, writer of grotesque and satirical stories. His five books on the adventures of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel are episodes of carnival, laughter, mockery and fantastical imagination. They include, for example, a chapter on how his father realized "Gargantua's marvelous intelligence by his invention of an Arse-wipe" or how Pantagruel visited the regions of the moon, how

> he fought against the devils, set five chambers of hell on fire, sacked the great black hall, threw Proserpine into the flames, and broke four of Lucifer's teeth, also one horn on his rump...together with a thousand other little jests, all of them true.[48]

---

[45] Scott, <u>Domination and the Arts of Resistance</u>, p. xiii, 19, 136-182.

[46] Margaret Atwood, <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u> (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 234.

[47] Scott, <u>Domination and the Art of Resistance</u>, pp. 19-20, 183-227.

[48] François Rabelais, <u>The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel</u>, tr. J.M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1966), p. 277, 66-69.

In his influential analysis of Rabelais' writings, Mikhail Bakhtin draws attention to the revolutionary potential hidden in these seemingly merely humorous stories. Indeed, Rabelais demonstrates that contrary to the position of la Boétie, his contemporary and fellow humanist, resistance does not need to be confined to heroic acts of mass dissent.

The popular culture of laugher was deeply subversive, for it opposed, even ridiculed, the seriousness and hypocrisy of the official feudal culture. It mocked the clergy and rigid Christian rituals. In this sense, Bakhtin stresses, laughter was freedom because it "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions."[49] This suspension and, in a more general sense, the language of the market place and of carnival, created possibilities for uninhibited speech. It carved out a space where, in late twentieth century talk, those unpronounceable public-toilet-wall-scribblings could be screamed out into the streets.

Laughter opened up, at least for a short moment, a glimpse at utopian freedom, a life beyond the heavy Christian mythology of death and eternal punishment in the form of Hell after death. Laughter, Bakhtin argues, purifies from dogmatism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation. It shatters the belief that life has a single meaning.[50] In this sense, laughter, in both practice and writing, creates mobile subjectivities and situated knowledges. Carnival becomes a revolutionary act, one that slowly transforms values and norms, one that enters political spheres. Rabelais satire, blessed with immediate popular success and equally swift condemnation from the leading clergy, rendered support for an emerging Humanist movement and contributed to the eventual death of God, the gradual decay of an unchallenged theocentric weltanschauung.

Despite engendering powerful and hidden mechanisms of change, everyday forms of resistance are not unproblematic. Like more open forms of dissent, they are certainly not immune from entrenching discursive forms of domination. Here too, the work of Rabelais is illustrative. For all his subversive carnevalesque writings, his views on women undoubtedly supported existing patriarchal practices. Consider the following famous passage in book one, when Rabelais describes Gargantua's arrival in Paris and his annoyed reaction to the curious crowd that surrounded him. The passage epitomizes both the subversive aspects of Rabelais' grotesque satire and his refusal to grant women even the status of subjecthood:

---

[49] Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, tr. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), p. 10.

[50] Ibid, p. 123.

Then, with a smile, he [Gargantua] undid his magnificent codpiece and, bringing out his john-thomas, pissed on them so fiercely that he drowned two hundred and sixty thousand, four hundred and eighteen persons, not counting women and small children.[51]

Bakhtin misses entirely the discursive consequences that arise from Rabelais' treatment of women as faceless objects. Instead, he analyzes enthusiastically the various metaphorical aspects of scenes like the tossing of excrement, drenching in urine or, in general, Rabelais' repeated focus on "images of the material bodily lower stratum." Bakhtin draws links to circles of birth, life, and death, fertility and renewal, but never even touches upon the issue of gender relations and related systems of exclusion.[52] He never asks who laughs about whom in Rabelais' world. He never notices that only men laugh about masculine themes, like the drenching in urine. Women, by contrast, often refuse to ridicule themselves and "view the laughter of others as an instrument of control over them."[53] This neglect has not, of course, prevented feminists and others from drawing upon many of Bakhtin's key insights. Indeed, some consider his later work on dialogism, the ability to reach towards the Other through the potential of dialogue, as "central to feminist practice because it invites new possibilities for activism and change."[54]

The list of everyday forms of resistance could go on endlessly. One could find them in all époques, places and aspects of life. They are, for example, hidden in the seemingly homogenizing and suffocating forces of popular culture, such as television, where some detect, much like Rabelais did half a millennium before, carnevalesque challenges to the narrow and single representation of reason in the pubic sphere.[55] On a more organized level, one can find everyday forms of resistance in the numerous and continuously spreading new social movements, pressure groups and other loose organizations that do not challenge the prevailing political system as such, but contribute to a slow and constant transformation of values by focusing on the need to rethink specific issue areas. They are in some

---

[51] Rabelais, The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel, p. 74.

[52] Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, pp. 147-152, 368-436.

[53] Madelaine H. Caviness "Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed," in Speculum: A Journal in Medieval Studies, Vol. 68, No 2, April 1993, p. 361. See also, for example, Deborah Jacobs, "Critical Imperialism and Renaissance Drama: The Case of *The Roaring Girl*," in D.M. Bauer and S.J. McKinstry (eds), Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 73-84; and Mary Russo "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in T. de Laurentis (ed), Feminist Studies / Critical Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 213-229.

[54] Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry, "Introduction" to Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic, p. 2.

[55] John Docker, Postmodernism and Popular Culture (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994).

sense the quintessential aspect of postmodern politics, of local resistance to metanarrative impositions.[56]

SUMMARY

This chapter has mapped out the theoretical terrain in which discursive dissent takes place. I began by deconstructing the concept of hegemony. Discourses are not invincible monolithic forces that subsume everything in reach. Despite their power to frame social practices, a discursively entrenched hegemonic order can be fragmented and thin at times. To excavate the possibilities for dissent that linger in these cracks, I suggested a shift of foci from epistemological to ontological issues. Scrutinizing the level of Being reveals how individuals can escape aspects of hegemony. Dasein, the existential awareness of Being, always contains the potential to become something else than what it is. By shifting back and forth between hyphenated identities, an individual can travel across various discursive fields of power and gain the critical insight necessary to engage in subversive behaviors.

Practices of dissent that issue from such mobile subjectivities operate most effectively at the level of dailiness. Through a range of seemingly mundane acts of resistance, people can gradually transform societal values and thus promote powerful processes of social change. I have drawn attention to a few everyday forms of resistance. But their type and form, as well as the terrains in which they operate, are unlimited. Instead of getting entangled in these boundless fields of inquiry, I will examine in detail a specific everyday form of resistance. But before embarking on this task it is necessary to pause briefly, recapitulate my discursive understanding of dissent, and assess to what extent the insights gained from such a position can facilitate the articulation of a viable and non-essentialist concept of human agency.

---

[56] Or so at least claims Stephen K. White, Political Theory and Postmodernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 10-12.

Second Interlude

TOWARDS
A DISCURSIVE NOTION OF HUMAN AGENCY

> The kind of critique we need is one that can free it of its illusory
> pretension to define the totality of our lives as agents, without
> attempting the futile and ultimately self-destructing task of rejecting
> it altogether.
>
> Charles Taylor, <u>Language and Human Agency</u>

The task of finding and articulating such a critical position on human agency towered over the entrance to this thesis and has never ceased to be its main puzzle, a cyclically reoccurring dilemma, the issue with which each chapter had to struggle. Where is this fine line between essentialism and relativism, between suffocating in the narrow grip of totalizing knowledge claims and blindly roaming in a nihilistic world of absences? How to walk along this narrow path without taking a fatal step, either to the left or to the right, into a bottomless epistemological pit? How to deal with the death of God, to make a clear break with positivist and grand theoretical approaches, without either abandoning the concept of human agency or falling back into a new form of essentialism?

I have now arrived at the point of my research where I can pause for a moment and provide some answers to these difficult questions. The lessons I have so far learnt from rethinking domination and resistance suggest, I argue, that it is possible to articulate a positive and non-essentialist concept of human agency. Such a concept cannot be based on a parsimonious proposition, a one-sentence statement that captures something like an authentic nature of human agency. There is no

essence to human agency, no core that can be brought down to a lowest common denominator, that will crystallize one day in a long sought after magic formula. The point is, rather, to recognize the complexities that are involved in a formulation of human agency and to work through them, rather than against them.

Accepting the elusive nature of human agency, I ground its articulation in a specification of what Michel de Certeau called "operational schemes."[1] As opposed to a systematic theory, an understanding of operational scheme recognizes that human agency should be assessed in its fluidity and its constituted dimensions. Rather than trying to determine what human agency is, such an approach maps the contours within which human agency is carried out. These contours, I suggest, are best understood through three crucial and closely interconnected terms: discourse, tactic, temporality. I explain their importance by recapitulating some of my research results and arguments. Equipped with the ensuing conceptual map, I then embark on the last two chapters, whose main task is to illustrate the practical relevance of my arguments by analyzing manifestations of human agency in a specific form of discursive dissent.

DISCOURSE, TACTIC, TEMPORALITY

Discourse is the first and most important concept with which I approach the task of articulating a non-essentialist notion of human agency. I have argued that a shift from grand theories of dissent towards a discursive understanding of power is necessary to reach a more adequate understanding of domination and resistance. A discursive approach is not only able to deal better with deeply entrenched systems of exclusion, but also minimizes the danger of reification, of imposing one's own subjective vision upon a series of far more complex social events. Instead of focusing on ahistorical theories of power, a discursive approach investigates ways in which social dynamics have been imbued with meaning and how, in turn, this process of rendering rational and meaningful circumscribes the boundaries within witch the interaction between domination and resistance takes place.

While providing compelling evidence of subtle forms of domination, a discursive approach may run the risk of leaving us with an image of the world in which the capacity for human agency is all but erased, annihilated by impenetrable discursive forces. The result of such a position is as totalitarian as is an uncritical belief in grand theoretical models of dissent. Yet, a discursive approach does not necessarily have to end up in a pessimistic cul de sac. Discourses are not as overarching as some analysts suggest. They contain fissures and cracks, weak point which open up chances to turn discursive dynamics against themselves. The previous chapter has outlined this position in detail. A brief rehearsal - even at the risk of appearing

---

[1] Michel de Certeau, Arts de Faire, Vol. I of L'Invention du Quotidien (Paris: Gallimard, 1990/1980), p. 51.

slightly repetitive - is necessary here to draw a link between this position and a non-essentialist conceptualization of human agency:

Cracks and weaknesses in discourses can be seen best by shifting foci from epistemological to ontological issues. This is to say that in addition to analyzing how discourses mold and control our thinking process, we must scrutinize how individuals, at the level of Being, may or may not be able to escape aspects of the prevalent discursive order. Being is always a product of discourse. But Being also is becoming. It contains future potential, it is always already that which it is not. Being has multiple dimensions.

Hyphenated identities permit a person to shift viewpoints constantly, to move back and forth between various ways of constituting oneself. Resulting methods of mental deplacement, of situating knowledge, open up possibilities for thinking beyond the narrow confines of the established discursive order. This thinking space provides the opportunity to redraw the boundaries of identity which control the parameters of actions available to an individual. Exploring this thinking space already is action, Heidegger claims, for "thinking acts insofar as it thinks." Such action, he continues, is "the simplest and at the same time the highest, because it concerns the relation of Being to man."[2] But how is one to understand processes through which critical thinking breaks through the fog of discourse and gives rise to specific and identifiable expressions of human agency?

The concept of tactic offers the opportunity to take a decisive step towards exploring the practical dimensions Dasein, the existential awareness of Being, without losing the abstract insight provided by Heidegger. The sphere of dailiness is where such practical theorizing is most effective. Entering this ubiquitous sphere compels us to one more shift, away from contemplating the becoming of Being towards investigating specific ways in which individuals employ their mobile subjectivities to escape discursive forms of domination. The focus now rests on everyday forms of resistance, seemingly mundane daily practices by which people constantly shape and reshape their environment. One can find such forms of resistance in acts like speaking, writing, laughing, gossiping, singing, dwelling, shopping or cooking. It is in these spheres that societal values are gradually transformed, preparing the ground for more open manifestations of dissent.

A major problem in assessing human agency through everyday forms of resistance lies in the impossibility of drawing a direct link between action and outcome. Discursive dissent operates tactically, rather than strategically. In a strategic form of dissent, agent and target can be separated and the attempt is usually made to articulate a causal relationship between them. An identifiable agent (as a protest march) exerts influence on an identifiable target (as a change in policy

---

[2] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," tr. D.F. Krell in <u>Basic Writings</u> (New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1927), p. 217.

desired by the march.) A non-essentialist understanding of human agency cannot rely on such strategic and causal assumptions. To recognize why such extreme caution is warranted, we may want to consult Nietzsche, who convincingly argued that the duality of cause and effect as we commonly perceive it does not exist. What there is, instead, is a continuum of complex factors from which we arbitrarily isolate a few pieces and fit them neatly into the image we had already made ourselves of the world.[3]

The link between action and outcome in discursive forms of dissent is diffused, subtle and impossible to articulate through a causal formula. As opposed to strategic action, de Certeau emphasizes, tactical forms of resistance have no clearly specified target, no visible place to exert influence on. There is no direct causal relationship between the subject of will and the exterior circumstances at which this will is directed. Tactical actions, de Certeau claims, cannot be autonomous from their target. They always insinuates themselves into the Other, without seizing it entirely, but yet without being able to keep their distance.[4] Take the rather mundane example of a critical and environmentally aware consumer in an industrialized society who, against hegemonic practices of production and consumption, refuses to buy milk that is bottled in non-reusable glass. Alone this shopper does not stand a chance of exerting human agency in the traditional sense. But if a substantial part of the population engages in similar daily acts of protest producers will eventually be compelled to adjust to changed market conditions. But where is the agent and the causal relationship in this form of protest? One cannot pick out a particular shopper who epitomizes this tactical and collective act of dissent. Consumers may also have a whole range of reasons for refusing to buy milk in non-reusable glass bottles. They may, for example, have environmental related concerns, oppose commercial dairy farmers, or be vegetarian / vegan. Moreover, where is the target of this tactical form of dissent? Is it the supermarket? The retailer? The producer of glass bottles? The farmer who delivers milk? Government authorities who fail to impose sufficient environmental standards? Fellow shoppers who still buy milk bottled in non-reusable glass? Or even the society as a whole, of which the said shopper is as much part as anybody else?

A tactic does not have the possibility of perceiving its adversary in a space that is distinct, visible and objectifiable. Indeed, the space of tactic is always the space of the Other.[5] This is to say that a tactical form of dissent, like shopping, cannot keep its distance from the object of the action. It always operates in the terrain of the opponent. Tactical actions leave their assigned places, enter a world that is too big to be their own but also too tightly woven to escape from. Because tactic does not have a specific target and cannot separate between the I and the Other, it can never

---

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, <u>Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft</u> (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1982/1882), §§ 110-2, pp. 127-131.

[4] De Certeau, <u>Arts de Faire</u>, p. xlvi.

[5] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 60-1.

conquer something, it can never keep what it wins. Tactic must always seize the moment and explore cracks that open up. It must constantly manipulate its environment in order to create opportunities for social change.[6]

It is through the concept of temporality that we can appreciate the impact of discursive dissent, the ways in which tactical actions leave their assigned places and unleash transformative potential by entering the non-place space of the Other. The causality entailed in a discursive notion of human agency, as far as one can speak of causality in this diffused context, is always mediated through time. But temporality is a slippery concept, an experience that is, according to Gaston Bachelard, never pure.[7] There is Heidegger's convincing notion of time as the simultaneous presence of both past and future in Dasein. While accepting entirely Heidegger's critique of attempts that artificially freeze Being in its present, I also rely upon a more linear notion of time.

The temporal aspect of a discursive notion of human agency escapes spatial delineation because it is linear only insofar as it focuses on how the becoming of Being reaches from an ontological back to an epistemological sphere by influencing, over time, the construction and reconstruction of discursive practices. A return to de Certeau helps to clarify this issue. He demonstrates how anonymous tactical forms of dissent move along "indeterminate trajectories" that defy the spatial logic established by the organizing procedures of a particular system. The term trajectory evokes a temporal movement through space, but one that focuses on the diachronic succession of points, rather than the figure that these points establish on a supposedly synchronic and achronic space. The latter view, de Certeau stresses, would make the mistake of reducing a "temporal articulation of places into a spatial sequence of points."[8]

A discursive notion of human agency, by contrast, does not rely upon a view of actions as a succession of events in space. The above mentioned refusal to buy milk bottled in non-reusable glass is a tactical protest action that is not bound by spatial dynamics. Such and countless other tactical forms of dissent not only lack a localized target, they also escape the spatial controlling mechanisms of established political and economic boundaries. Their temporal movement thus occurs in a more diffused manner. Tactical dissent moves along an indeterminate trajectory because it promotes a slow transformation of values whose effects transgress places and become visible and effective only by maturation over time.

Having introduced - through notions of discourse, tactic and temporality - the conceptual tools for a discursive understanding of human agency, I now move to the last task of my thesis, which aims at demonstrating how a specific everyday form of

---

[6] Ibid., pp. xlvi-ii, 61.

[7] Gaston Bachelard, La Dialectique de la Durée (Paris, PUF, 1989/1950), p. 113.

[8] De Certeau, Arts de Faire, pp. 58-9.

resistance works in practice. For this purpose I move again back and forth between abstraction and dailiness, theory and practice, epistemology and ontology, domination and resistance. I begin by scrutinizing forces of domination and resistance entailed in one of our most daily activities, speaking and writing. From the general terrain of language I move into more specific potentials for dissent entailed in the practice of writing. Finally I focus on one specific writing style, poetry, and scrutinize in detail aspects of human agency that are being unleashed through it.

RESISTANCE
AT THE EDGE OF LANGUAGE GAMES

Chapter Eight

RESISTANCE
AT THE EDGE OF LANGUAGE GAMES

...We who would see beyond seeing
see only language, that burning field.

Charles Wright, Chickamauga

Language is one of the most fundamental aspects of human life. It is everywhere. We speak, Heidegger stresses, when we are awake and when we are asleep, even when we do not utter a single word. We speak when we listen, read or silently pursue an occupation. We are always speaking because we cannot think without language, because "language is the house of Being," the home within which we dwell.[1]

Languages are never neutral. They embody particular values and ideas, social practices, a whole way of life. They are an integral part of politics and power relations. Languages impose sets of assumptions on us, frame our thoughts so subtly that we are mostly unaware of the systems of exclusion that are being entrenched through this process. But a language is not just a form of domination that engulfs the speaker in a web of discursive constraints, it is also one of the most important terrains of dissent. It is a form of action, the place where possibilities for social change emerge, where values are slowly transformed, where individuals carve out

---

[1] See Martin Heidegger, Unterwegs zur Sprache (Stuttgart: Verlag Günter Neske, 1959), p. 11; Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis) (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), p. 510; "Letter on Humanism," tr. D.F. Krell in Basic Writings (New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1977), p. 217.

thinking space and engage in everyday forms of resistance. In short, language epitomizes the potential and limits of discursive dissent.

This chapter provides the theoretical groundwork necessary to conceptualize the links between language and human agency, so that the subsequent, final chapter can scrutinize in detail the practical relevance of a specific, language based everyday form of resistance. I begin by engaging with themes that are central to the philosophy of language. Rather than trying to present this complex body of knowledge in a coherent way, I focus on two authors who are of particular importance for my attempt to theorize discursive dissent, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. They embody an approach that perceives language not as a way of representing the world, but as an activity, a way of life. The consequences of such a position are far-reaching.

Language appears no longer as a mere medium of communication. It is the very site where social struggles are carried out. This is to say that practices of dissent cannot be separated from critique of language. To demonstrate what is at stake in coming to terms with this aspect of social life, I focus on everyday forms of resistance entailed in the practice of writing, understood not in its narrow sense as a mere act of inscribing signs, but as everything which makes this act possible - in short, language itself.

THE METAPHORICAL STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

It would be far beyond the scope of this chapter to provide even a highly condensed summary of the major writings on the philosophy of language. Ruminations on this subject go as far back as ancient Greek philosophy. More recently, differences have been particularly pronounced between an Anglo-Saxon tradition, which focuses on the logical clarification of linguistic statements, and a continental approach that pays more attention to the socially embedded dimensions of language, to its function of providing meaning and embedding forms of life. I will engage only with the latter tradition. But even within this more restricted domain, I cannot possibly do justice to the complexities of the debates that are being waged. My objective is limited to outlining a few central assumptions about the functioning of language which are crucial to my articulation of discursive forms of dissent and their ability to exert human agency.

Nietzsche played an important role in the debate about language, for he opened up the possibility of connecting philosophical tasks with radical reflections on language.[2] Language, he argues, can never provide us with pure, unmediated knowledge of the world. Thinking can at best grasp imperfect perceptions of things

---

[2] Or so claims Michel Foucault, Les Mots et les Choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 316.

because a word is nothing but an image of a nerve stimulus expressed in sounds. It functions, to simplify Nietzsche's argument, as follows: a person's intuitional perception creates an image, then a word, then patterns of words, and finally entire linguistic and cultural systems. Each step in this chain of metaphors entails interpretations and distortions of various kinds. When we look at things around us, Nietzsche illustrates, we think we know something objective about them, something of "the thing in itself." But all we have are metaphors, which can never capture an essence because they express the relationship between people and things.[3] Language systems are built upon sets of prejudices that are expressed via metaphors, selectively filtered images of objects and phenomena that surround us. We thus live in conceptual 'prisons' that permit us to take only very narrow and sporadic glimpses at the outside world, glimpses that must entail, by definition, fundamental errors of judgment.[4]

But there is more to the problem of language than its imperfections as a medium of expression. Languages embody the relationship between people and their environment. They are part of a larger discursive struggle over meaning and interpretation, an integral element of politics. We are often not aware of this function of language. The process of forgetting that we have been conditioned by linguistically entrenched values largely camouflages the systems of exclusion that are operative in all speech forms. We become accustomed to our distorting metaphors until we "lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all."[5] Tracy Strong underlines the importance of this point by drawing attention to aspects of Nietzsche's thought that perceive language as human practice, as a way of constructing the world and then erasing the traces of this construction.[6] Nietzsche's own words illustrate best how central the links between language and social practices are. Without using the actual term reification (Verdinglichung), he provides an astonishing account of his dynamics, of the processes through which values embedded in language turn into objectivized things that appear as if they had always been there:

> This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for - originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin - 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

---

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Über Warheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn," in Erkenntnistheoretische Schriften, ed. J. Habermas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968/1873), esp. pp. 100-1.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, Morgenröte: Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurteile (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1983/1881), p. 100, § 117. See also Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1982/1882), §§ 57-8, 110-2, 354-5, pp. 83-4, 127-31, 235-40.

[5] Nietzsche, "Über Warheit und Lüge," p. 103.

[6] Tracy B. Strong, "Language and Nihilism: Nietzsche's Critique of Epistemology," in M.J. Shapiro (ed), Language and Politics (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 81-107.

appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such.[7]

With this recognition Nietzsche moved language from the margins to the center of philosophy. The function of words is no longer neutral, linked to the search for truth or even adequate expression. There cannot be authentic knowledge of the world, knowledge that is not in one way or another linked to the values of the perceiver and the language through which s/he gives meaning to social practices. With Nietzsche, language, truth and politics become intrinsically linked. One of his most frequently cited passages:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are...[8]

The importance of Nietzsche's position on language becomes clearer when placed in comparison with Wittgenstein's approach. While Nietzsche made language a philosophical and political issue, Wittgenstein turned philosophy and politics into the study of language. A brief elucidation of the differences between his earlier and later work, both highly influential in shaping contemporary philosophical discussions, underlines the importance of approaching language as social practice, rather than a mere representation of them. Like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein believed that we can never reach something like an authentic bottom of things. We cannot advance fundamental propositions because the boundaries set by language prevent us from asking further, more profound questions.[9] His early work was concerned with delineating what can be said about the world and what cannot be said. For that purpose he intended to correct the shortcomings of ordinary language and search for more clear and logical forms of expression. This is how he presented the task of his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that the method of formulating these problems rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language. Its whole meaning could be summed up somewhat as follows: What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.[10]

[7] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 84, § 58, tr. W. Kaufmann in The Gay Science (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 121-2.

[8] Nietzsche, "Über Warheit und Lüge," p. 102, tr. W. Kaufmann as "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense, " in The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1982/1954), pp. 46-7.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1930-1932, ed. D. Lee (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980/1931), p. 34.

[10] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, tr. C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1990/1922), p. 27.

From this perspective the main task of philosophy is "the logical clarification of thoughts."[11] The assumption behind this search for clarity is that language represents the world to us, that a proposition is a "picture of reality," "a model of reality as we imagine it."[12] In a radical turnaround three decades later, Wittgenstein considered his earlier work on language seriously flawed and embarked on an entirely different path.

The position of the later Wittgenstein, which largely informs my approach to formulating a discursive and linguistic approach to dissent, abandons the search for a perfectly logical language and returns words from their metaphysical use back to the context of everyday life.[13] He considers futile the attempt to clarify or reveal a hidden logic underlying the relationship between words and reality, for the very process of naming can only be carried out in the context of rules that are operative within an established language. These rules of naming are not embedded in a form of logic, but in social interactions. They are part of an ensemble of human practices from which an author cannot escape. Wittgenstein starts his journey towards this perspective by outlining the problems entailed in Augustine's approach to language, which focuses on substantives and draws a direct link between words and the objects they refer to. The word "red apple," for example, signifies a fruit labeled as apple and displaying the color characteristic commonly defined as red. This practice of naming may work in the case of nouns, such as 'apple,' 'table' or chair,' where one can point towards an object that corresponds to the word. But the issue becomes problematic with more tangible nouns, or with verbs, pronouns, prepositions and other grammatical subtleties. For instance, one cannot point towards 'morality,' 'thinking,' 'whether,' 'but' or 'of.' These words have no referent. They express such intangible factors as activities, functions, feelings, opinions, relationality. In short, they do not correspond to some object in the real world. They are part of a social convention, of shared linguistic rules that embody a particular approach to life.[14]

For the later Wittgenstein language is no longer a picture of the world. The speaking of a language "is part of an activity, or a form of life."[15] This does not mean, however, that there is no life outside language. David Pears explains that the position of later Wittgenstein

> is not that our view of the world owes nothing to its nature. That would be absurd. Wittgenstein's point is only that, if we try to explain our view of the world by saying something about its nature, what we say will necessarily belong to our view

---

[11] Ibid., p. 77, § 4.112.

[12] Ibid., p. 63, § 4.01.

[13] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, in Werkausgabe Band I, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993/1952), p. 300, § 116.

[14] Ibid., pp. 237-44, §§ 1-15.

[15] Ibid., p. 250, § 23.

of it. We have no independent standpoint from which to assess the relation between our usual standpoint and the world.[16]

From this perspective, one does not try to grasp the meaning and representational aspects of words, but instead pays attention to their function, to the "workings of our language."[17] Wittgenstein uses the term "language game" to draw attention to the ways in which languages are part of culturally specific forms of life. There are countless language games that come and go. He mentions such examples as giving orders and obeying them, translating from one language to another, or asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.[18] Language games, Henry Leroy Finch claims, are the absolute starting point in Wittgenstein's thought, but they can neither be explained nor justified. They precede experience and perception. An attempt to explain a language game would already be another language game, presupposing what it is supposed to explain. Hence, noting a language game is not noting a social fact, but an "agreed-upon activity."[19]

An approach that perceives language as human activity, rather than a way of categorizing phenomena, opens a whole range of opportunities to study the relationship between language and human agency. Hanna Pitkin, for instance, shows how our understanding of action may be enriched by asking no longer what action is or how it functions, but how we talk about it, how language games guide the implementation of this particular aspect of practice. Language thus becomes action itself because "we use language not merely to talk about action, but to act - to carry on actions, to teach actions, to plan or produce actions, to assess actions done and redress any ways in which they have gone wrong."[20]

With Wittgenstein language is revealed as one of the most central aspects of our lives. Philosophy of language, viewed from the perspective of his later writings as the analysis and description of language in its everyday use, is no longer just a branch of philosophy. It is philosophy itself. Many, of course, dispute this claim. Yet, there is hardly any philosopher who does not acknowledge to have made "the linguistic turn," the admission that knowledge of the world is always pre-interpreted by the language we employ to assess and express it.[21] It is not my task here enter into the details of this complex philosophical debate.

---

[16] David Pears, The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1987), p. 12.

[17] Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, p. 298, § 109.

[18] Ibid., p. 150, § 23.

[19] Henry Leroy Finch, Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1977), pp. 74-5.

[20] Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 164.

[21] For a selection of essays that represent various ways of dealing with the consequences of this recognition see K. Baynes, J. Bohman and T. McCarthy (eds) After Philosophy: End or Transformation (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987).

I am primarily interested in scrutinizing the extent to which a Wittgensteinean view of language as a way of life opens up possibilities for exploring practices of dissent and manifestations of human agency that are hidden in daily acts of speaking and writing. Can one take the linguistic turn and still retain some notion of human agency?

From a Wittgensteinean perspective we cannot think about dissent or human agency outside language, indeed, we cannot act human agency outside language. And if the difficulty in philosophy is, as he emphasizes, "to say no more than we know,"[22] we must seriously reflect about what we could possible know and say about human agency. I have taken a relatively cautious approach to this question, rejecting that agency can be understood in teleological, causal or intentional terms. But by relying on the intertwinement of discourse, tactic and temporality, I showed that there are alternative ways of conceptualizing human agency. The remaining sections of this chapter outline the potential and limits of this approach with regard to discursive dissent expressed through practices of writing.

CRITIQUE OF LANGUAGE AS AN EVERYDAY FORM OF RESISTANCE

How can a Wittgensteinean understanding of language contribute to an approach that tries to theorize the potential for human agency entailed in engagements with discursive struggles? How are languages and discourses linked? They overlap in many ways, but are by no means the same. For Mikhail Bakhtin discourse is "language in its concrete living totality."[23] His working definition offers a good starting point to explore the similarities between language and discourse. Differences shall surface a bit later.

Discourse and language are forms of concealment that offer opportunities to reveal. They are forms of domination that offer opportunities to resist and transform. These practices of concealing and revealing must be examined in their cyclical existence. Without paying attention to the domineering aspects of language one cannot understand its potential for resistance. For many authors the subjugating power of language is overwhelming. Theodor Adorno, for example, claims that even before dealing with specific speech contents, languages mold a thought such that it gets drawn into subordination even where it appears to resist this tendency.[24]

---

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations' (New York: Harper Torchbooks 1964), p. 45.

[23] Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, tr. C. Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 181.

[24] Theodor W. Adorno, Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973/1964), p. 416.

Roland Barthes goes even further in his notorious remarks during the inaugural lecture at the Collège de France. For him, freedom can exist only outside language. But languages have no exterior. Moreover, a language imposes, and in this sense it is "neither reactionary nor progressive, it is simply fascist, for fascism does not prevent speech, it forces speech."[25] Barthes' claim, largely dismissed as polemics, has the merit of reminding us that there is always an aspect of subjugation in the use of languages, no matter how objective, neutral, and open they may appear. There are many ways of exploring the authoritarian dimensions of language. Parallel to my examination, in chapter five, of how discursive factors serve as a crucial source of power for patriarchy, one could investigate the practical consequences that arise from corresponding linguistic systems of exclusion. This is not my task here. A short demonstrative example must suffice to prepare a more detailed scrutiny of the intricate links among language, discourse and human agency.

The subjugating power of language has been well documented in feminist literature. The work of Dale Spender brings us immediately to the core of the debate, and this despite the fact that by today most feminists consider her position simplistic and largely outdated. Spender argues that language, as part of a larger process of social construction, has been a crucial factor in controlling meaning and delineating social possibilities. The English language, she claims, is man made and largely under male control. This, in turn, has constructed language and thought patterns that define the male as norm and the female as deviant. Spender reinforces her point by showing how the introduction and legitimization of 'man' and 'he' as terms to denote both male and female "was the result of a deliberate policy and was consciously intended to promote the primacy of the male as a category."[26] Indeed, virtually all the writers I examined in chapters one to three, from la Boétie all the way to Gene Sharp, rely on a sexist usage of nouns and pronouns. This linguistic practice of exclusion is so deeply entrenched that it remains prevalent even among those who investigate the very dynamics of language. Consider how Georges Mounin, a prominent linguist, ridicules the manner in which philosophers like Ricoeur, Derrida or Deleuze simplify linguistic theory. Mounin goes on to correct their flaws and demonstrates the complexity of the interaction between language and thought, all while referring consistently to philosophers as 'he' (il) and 'man' (hommes).[27] Hilary Putnam, a leading analytical philosopher, acknowledges the Wittgensteinean argument that all knowledge relies upon rules which are themselves normative. He claims that there is no difference between the male and the female mind for "today everybody knows... that all men (hommes) are equal."[28] These widespread practices illustrate why despite the (more or less) official elimination of

---

[25] Roland Barthes, Leçon Inaugurale de la Chaire de Sémiologie Littéraire du Collège de France (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), pp. 14-5.

[26] Dale Spender, Man Made Language (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985/1980), p. 150.

[27] Georges Mounin, Linguistique et Philosophie (Paris: PUF, 1975).

[28] Hilary Putnam, "Entretien" in Le Monde, 22.10.1995, p. 13.

sexism in the social science community, misogynist attitudes, deeply entrenched in language and discourse, remain as prevalent as ever.[29]

But the issue of linguistic domination is not quite as straightforward as Spender suggests. While some language reform is clearly necessary to provide the preconditions for less asymmetrical gender relations, some feminists point out that it is not clear whether women have no control over language because they lack social power, or whether they must control language before they can gain social power.[30] Others, like Luce Irigaray, argue that instead of desexualizing language entirely, which would be fateful, one must tune it such that gender relations can be re-balanced in the domain of society and culture.[31] This would entail, for example, retaining grammatical possibilities for women to situate themselves as female agents, while preferring the usage of gender-neutral terms like 'people' or 's/he' over 'man' and 'he.' But even this suggestion plays down some of the complexities and may run the risk of falling back into a logical positivist position. The puzzle can never be solved, or even understood, at a purely terminological level. From the perspective of the later Wittgenstein, there is no logical and authentic relationship between the meaning of term 'man' and masculine values or patriarchy. 'Man' is only what we make out of the term. The main problem is a language game in which the term 'men' embodies social practices that assign masculine values priority and keep men as a group dominant over women as a group.

While analyses of language provide us with many important clues about domination, they also run the same risks as discursive approaches. Language can become an authoritarian concept that crushes everything under its weight, much like a pessimistic reading of Foucault may lead, as outlined earlier, to an annihilation of human agency. Consider these takes on language: Benjamin Lee Whorf, in his path-breaking study of Hopi conceptualizations of time and space, object and subject, argues that the individual is utterly unaware of the power of language to construct his/her consciousness and "constrained completely within its unbreakable bonds."[32] In Heidegger's later writings, aspects of which I shall employ a bit later, language takes priority to the point that the subject disappears almost entirely, for "man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man."[33] While undoubtedly drawing attention to important subjugating elements of language, such approaches run the risk leading to statist, not to say defeatist, models of the interaction between language and social practices. They

---

[29] Elisabeth List, Die Präsenz des Anderen: Theorie and Geschlechterpolitik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 8,

[30] Mary Crawford, Talking Difference: On Gender and Language (London: Sage, 1995), p. 7; Deborah Cameron, Feminism and Linguistic Theory (London: Macmillan, 1985).

[31] Luce Irigaray, Je, Tu, Nous: Pour une Culture de la Différence (Paris: Grasset, 1990), pp. 35-7.

[32] Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought, and Reality (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974/1956) p. 256.

[33] Martin Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells...," in Poetry, Language, Thought, tr. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971/1951), p. 215.

reflect in some way the conservative dimensions of the later Wittgenstein, the focus on immanent rather than transcendent critique, on the priority of understanding the "here and now" over attempts to innovate or expand.[34]

How can one turn language from a system of exclusion to a practice of inclusion, from a method of domination to an instrument of resistance? The starting point lies, I argue, with what is aptly called Sprachkritik in German. Literally translated as "critique of language," Sprachkritik is, at least according to the linguist Fritz Mauthner, "the most important task (Geschäft) of thinking humanity." The poet Paul Valéry probably captured its objective best when claiming that "the secret of well founded thinking is based on suspicion towards language."[35] If challenges to practices of domination and attempts to open up thinking space are to avoid being absorbed by the dominant discourse, then they must engage in a struggle with conventionally recognized linguistic practices, or at least with the manner in which these practices have been constituted. The form of speaking and writing becomes as important as their content. Dissent cannot be separated from critique of language, for it remains ineffective as long as it does not interfere with the ways in which linguistic systems of exclusion constitute and objectivize social practices.

But can a language so easily be appropriated as a tool of dissent against its own subjugating power? Is it enough, as Nietzsche suggests, to "create new names, estimations and probabilities to create eventually new 'things.'"[36] Of course not, and Nietzsche is well aware of the difficulties entailed in critique of language.

One can never be free within language, one can never break free from language. The point is, rather, to acknowledge that one cannot function as an authentic perceiver or agent, that the spaces for action opened up by critique are still circumscribed by the larger boundaries of linguistic structures. Moreover, critique of language must be careful not be trapped in an idealism that suggests the world exists only because it is perceived by our mind, that objects outside this mental sphere have no qualities of their own. Such a working assumption would go astray in a futile search for the perfect language and, by doing so, fall back into the logical positivism from which the later Wittgenstein so carefully tried to escape.

Because there is no direct and logical correspondence between words and meaning, between a name and a thing, a spear-heading into unexplored linguistic terrains can only be socially meaningful if it stretches the rules of existing language games while never losing sight of the ways in which these language games constitute and are constituted by concrete forms of life. Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes how

---

[34] David Bloor, Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 160-184.

[35] Mauthner and Valéry cited in Hans-Martin Gauger, "Sprachkritik," in Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Jahrbuch 1991, pp. 23-24.

[36] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 84, § 58.

important it is to embed critique of language in the specific contexts within which languages and social practices operate hand in hand:

> Stylistics must be based not only, and even *not as much*, on linguistics as on *metalinguistics*, which studies the world not in a system of language and not in a "text" excised from dialogic interaction, but precisely within the sphere of dialogic interaction itself, that is, in that sphere where discourse lives an authentic life.[37]

The point, then, is to avoid lifting words out of their social and dialogical context while, at the same time, exploring to the utmost the unstable and transformative nature of languages. The point is to articulate resistance at the edge of language games. This is best done, I argue, by interfering with the ways in which languages constitute sites of political practice, sites where realities are formed, reformed, legitimized and objectivized.

I focus on the practice of writing in my attempt to explore possible manifestations of human agency entailed in critique of language. But is writing not an elitist activity, something that is restricted to those few literates who have the money and time to devote themselves to the written word? Do not speaking and listening constitute the essence of language, as Wittgenstein suggested? Derrida demonstrates well why this is not necessarily the case. Consider his engagement with Saussure's influential theory of linguistics. For Saussure, the study of the abstract concept of language (le langage) can roughly be divided into two subject eras, la parole, which are individually spoken or written utterances, and la langue, the particular socialized language-system that establishes the codes and conventions by which these individual messages can be realized.[38] Derrida points out that the term la parole, literally translated as speech, gives clear precedence to voice, hearing, sound and breath. This Saussurean position constitutes writing as a simple supplement to the spoken word, as an activity that consists merely of derivative functions.[39] Derrida vehemently rejects as ethnocentric the Western practice of logocentrism, the study of language based on phonetics, on the spoken word, the logos. He even goes as far as claiming that writing, defined in a broad sense, came before speech. Once we free ourselves from the artificially constructed link between writing and a phonetic alphabet, we recognize writing in inscriptions of any kind, such as in the pictographic, the ideographic or the hieroglyphic.[40] It is important, though, to recognize that Derrida's preoccupation with the creation of texts, while departing from the Wittgensteinean (or Saussurean) focus on speech practices, still occurs within a similar perception of langage as a way of life, rather than a representation of the world.

---

[37] Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p. 202.

[38] Ferdinand de Saussure, Cours de linguistique général (Paris: Payot, 1987/1915), pp. 138-9.

[39] Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, tr. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976/1967), pp. 7-8, 30-44.

[40] For a concise discussion see John Docker, Postmodernism and Popular Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 135-143.

In demonstrating how writing can function as a form of discursive dissent I rely on only two of Derrida's provocative claims, but I grant both of them crucial importance. First, he shows that the written word exceeds in some ways the spoken one.[41] Speech may be more elusive than writing for it can be erased, refuted, it is not engraved once and for all. But face-to-face speech is often severely constrained by the necessity to reinforce hegemonic appearances, to restrain one's criticism in the face of power. The process of writing, by contrast, is removed from the immediacy and performative pressure of face-to-face speech. Thus, writing creates enough distance from the eye of power to facilitate critique and nurture the confidence to express it. Second, and more importantly, Derrida convincingly argues that writing designates "not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic and ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible."[42] Writing thus stands for everything that enables it, in short, language itself. Scrutinizing the forms of dissent that are hidden in practices of writing has relevance beyond this immediate realm, for it represents the potential for resistance contained in language per se.

WRITING DISSENT I: DISENCHANTING THE CONCEPT

There are unlimited possibilities to engage in dissent through the practice of writing. It is not my intention here to provide anything that resembles a coherent summary. Rather, I focus on the work of Theodor Adorno to demonstrate that there are aspects of human agency hidden in the written word and in language in general. I have chosen Adorno, and especially his reading of Nietzsche, because he epitomizes both the strengths and dangers of writing dissent.

Adorno's approach to language emerges out of opposition to what he calls identity thinking. "To think," he claims, "is to identify."[43] It is a process through which we try to understand the bewildering world that surrounds us. Thinking is part of a desire to control, to establish order, to identify choices. There is no escape from the subjective dimension of thought, no possibility of extracting pure facts from observation. Thinking cannot be done without language. And language, of course, has always already established a preconceived conceptual order prior to what thinking is trying to understand.[44] Language draws us into submission even where we think we have escaped this tendency. Identity thinking, Adorno points out, is the form of thinking that ignores these unavoidable restraints and embarks on a fatal search for essences by extracting the general out of the particular and forcing unique things into an artificial unitary system of thought. Yet, while much of Adorno's writings is concerned with demonstrating the reifying dangers of identity thinking, his position on language is not nearly as pessimistic

---

[41] Derrida, Of Grammatology, pp. 8-9.

[42] Ibid., p. 9.

[43] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialektik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966), p. 17.

[44] Ibid., p. 15.

as many analysts suggest. Among these pessimistic interpreters is Stephen Bronner, who speaks for many when critiquing Adorno's methodological radicalism as "dialectics at a standstill." This approach, he claims lacks positive foundations because it enters a cul de sac and degenerates into a methodological critique "incapable of either specifying the conditions needing transformation or positing an alternative form of institutional organization.[45] Others, like Terry Eagleton, are equally opposed to Adorno's elusive theorizing, but they acknowledge that there are two sides to him, a "defeatist" one that retreats "from the nightmare of history into the aesthetic," and a more positive, "for whom the aesthetic offers a paradigm, rather than a displacement of emancipatory political thought."[46] It is Adorno's latter side that primarily interests me here.

Thinking, Adorno claims, is not only obeying the power of language and discourse. Thinking also contains critical potential, for it is in itself already a process of negating, of resisting what is forced upon it.[47] Stretching the boundaries of language games, engaging in Sprachkritik, is the key to realizing this potential. It permits us to break loose from the claws of the established order and to venture beyond the givenness of life. Adorno's conceptual starting point for this journey is negative dialectics, the refusal to subsume the particular under the general. This entails creating thinking space without succumbing to the temptation of searching for a Hegelean synthesis, a new totalizing and exclusionary system of thought that would drift us back into the dangerous waters of identity thinking. Negative dialectics is the constant awareness of non-identity. It refuses to rely upon a preconceived standpoint, rescues and develops what does not fit into prevailing totalizing practices or what may emerge as a potential alternative to them.[48] Adorno tries to open up such thinking spaces by a critique of language that entails a radical departure from both the traditional usage of concepts and the style in which they are presented. Clear potential for human agency, I argue, arises from this practice.

To talk and write we need concepts to express our ideas. Yet, concepts can never entirely capture the objects that they are trying to describe. A concept is always a violation, an imposition of static subjectivity upon complex, interconnected and continuously changing phenomena. A concept is of part of a language game and fulfills a variety of functions that are constantly shifting. It cannot be captured by an ahistoric assertion of a link between the concept and that which it represents, between the sign and that which it signifies. Nietzsche pointed out that "all concepts that semiotically subsume entire processes defy definition. Only that which has no

[45] Stephen Eric Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 197-8.

[46] Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 360.

[47] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, p. 28.

[48] Ibid., p. 15 and "Einleitung zum Positivismusstreit," in Soziologische Schriften I, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 8 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972/1969), pp. 292-295.

history can be defined."[49] Adorno illustrates the problem of conceptualizing by showing that the judgment that one is free depends on the concept of freedom. But this concept is both less and more than the object or subject it refers to.[50] It is less because it cannot adequately assess the complexities of the individual's expectations and the contexts within which s/he seeks freedom. It is more because it imposes a particular interpretation of freedom upon and beyond the conditions for freedom sought after by the individual. Thus, Adorno argues that "the concept of freedom always lags behind itself. As soon as it is applied empirically it ceases to be what it claims it is."[51] Here too we hear the echo of Nietzsche, who already claimed that liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are established, that, as a result "there is nothing more wicked and harmful to freedom than liberal institutions."[52]

Acknowledging and dealing with the political dimension of concepts is essential in articulating a discursive notion of dissent and human agency. But how can one employ concepts such that they do not delineate our thinking space but, instead, turn into tools of dissent? One can appropriate and open up the meaning of existing concepts. The political relevance of this practice was amply demonstrated by German and English speaking gay/lesbian activists, who, over decades, have managed to transform the terms "schwul" and "queer" from derogative and discriminatory expressions to positively imbued assertions of identity that create possibilities for more inclusive ways of thinking and acting.[53] In almost diametrically opposed terrains we find the Australian poet Les Murray, trying to reshape and de-vilify the term 'redneck.'[54] During the East German revolution we witnessed how citizens turned the expression 'we are the people' from a dogmatic governmental claim to legitimacy into a slogan that condensed all the resentments against this claim and, indeed, into a highly effective battle cry that contributed substantially to the downfall of the authoritarian regime. One can, of course, also try to create new concepts in order to avoid the pitfalls of existing ones and open up spaces to think. But the belief that new words can usher in an immediate emancipatory politics amounts to a linguistic idealism that has been criticized extensively by many who probe the links between language and politics.[55] Even new concepts, no matter how well chosen and inclusive they are, will never be sufficient, will never do justice to the object they are trying to capture.

---

[49] Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral (Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1991/1977), pp. 71-2. See also "Über Warheit und Lüge," pp. 101-2.

[50] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, p. 153.

[51] Ibid., p. 154.

[52] Nietzsche, Götzen-Dämmerung (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969/1889), p. 133.

[53] See, for example, Lisa Duggan, "Making it Perfectly Queer," in Socialist Review, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 11-31; and Steven Epstein, "A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality," in Sociological Theory, Vol. 12, No 2, July 1994, pp. 188-202.

[54] Les Murray, Subhuman Redneck Poems (Potts Point, NSW: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1996).

[55] For example, Sigrid Weigel, Die Stimme der Medusa: Schreibweisen in der Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1989), pp. 104-5.

Knowing the dangers of exclusion and reification inherent in any form of conceptualizing does not release us from the need to employ concepts in order to express our thoughts. What, then, is the point? Adorno claims we must not turn the necessity to operate with concepts into the virtue of assigning them priority.[56]

The daring task is to open up with concepts what does not fit into concepts, to resist the distorting power of reification and return the conceptual to the non-conceptual. This disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of critical philosophy, it impedes the concept from developing its own dynamics and thus from becoming an absolute in itself.[57] The first step towards disenchanting the concept is simply refusing to define it monologically. Concepts should achieve meaning only gradually, in relation to each other. Adorno even goes as far as intentionally using the same concept in different ways in order to liberate it from the narrow definition that language itself had already imposed upon it.[58] That contradictions could arise out of this practice does not bother Adorno. Indeed, he considers them essential. One cannot eliminate the contradictory, the fragmentary and the discontinuous. Contradictions are only contradictions if one assumes the existence of a prior universal standard of reference. What is different appears as divergent, dissonant, and negative only as long as our consciousness strives for a totalizing standpoint, which we must avoid if we are to escape the reifying dangers of identity thinking.[59]

Just as reality is fragmented, we need to think in fragments. Unity is not found by evening out discontinuities. Contradictions are to be preferred over artificially constructed meanings and the silencing of underlying conflicts. Thus Adorno advocates writing in fragments, such that the resulting text appears as if it always could be interrupted, cut off abruptly, any time, any place.[60] Here too we hear the advice of Nietzsche, who recommends that one should approach deep problems like taking a cold bath, "quickly into them and quickly out again."[61] The belief that one does not reach deep enough this way, he claims, is simply the superstition of those who fear cold water. But Nietzsche's bath has already catapulted us into the vortex of the next linguistic terrain of resistance, the question of style.

---

[56] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, p. 23.

[57] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, pp. 23-5, 156-8; "Der Essay als Form," in Noten zur Literatur, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 11 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974/1958), pp. 9-33.

[58] Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," pp. 19-20.

[59] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, pp. 17-18.

[60] Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," pp. 24-5.

[61] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 278, § 381.

WRITING DISSENT II: THOUGHTS ON THE SUBSTANCE OF STYLE

Conventional wisdom holds that good writing is concise, clear, and to the point. Many activists stress how important ease in communication is for purposes of organizing popular resistance. Gramsci emphasized time and again the crucial importance of bridging the communicative gap between intellectuals and the working class. Philosophy, he argued, is not a strange or difficult thing, not something that is confined to the activities of specialists.[62] The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire argued along the same line. For him questions of language and human agency are directly linked. They are essential in the attempt to unveil the dehumanized world of oppression, to transform the dispossessed into responsible subject that can enter and forge historical processes.[63] If an intellectual speaks in a language that is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people s/he is trying to reach, then the talk is nothing but alienated and alienating rhetoric.[64] The ones who are devoted to liberation but unable to communicate with the people only impose a monologue, the very instrument of domination and domestication from which the people have to liberate themselves in order the make the transition from object to subject.[65] Thus, the intellectual's task is not to preach to the people, but to listen to them, to enter into a dialogue and open up space for the people to think and act themselves. To facilitate this process, the intellectual must trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason. S/he must understand the day-to-day conditions that frame the language of the people. Only words that have meaning in this context contain a potential for change. All other words are not true words, they are deprived of the dimension of action, their transformative power.[66]

But is the link between language and human agency as unproblematic as Freire suggests? Is clear language all that is needed to express dissent? Or is not clear language only clear because we have acquired fluency in it over the years, because we have rehearsed it time and again as part of a system of shared meanings that channels our thinking into particular directions? Do we not appreciate clarity only because we have already been drawn into a language game that is integral to the discursive practices of domination that silently frame and subjugate our mind? Adorno certainly thinks so. For him standard modes of communication are inadequate to express a critical thought. He even goes as far as arguing that clear language is domination. It imposes closure. Even if critical, an argument presented in a straightforward writing style can, at best, articulate an alternative position and

---

[62] Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, tr. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1985/1971), pp. 323, 347-7.

[63] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, tr. M.B. Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1983/1970), pp. 20. 40.

[64] Ibid.,, p. 85.

[65] Ibid., pp. 47-52.

[66] Ibid., pp. 28, 38-9, 42, 53, 75-7, 85-6.

replace one orthodoxy with another one. It is unable to open up thinking space. If a reader is to break free from the subtle repression that the dominant discourse disguises through its linguistic practices, s/he has to struggle with a text, grapple for the meaning of words, and be torn away, painfully, from a deeply entrenched form of communicative subjugation. If a reader is to come to terms with her/his own prejudices, a text must challenge, puzzle, shake, uproot, disturb, even frustrate and torment her/him.

"Slack and sleeping senses must be addressed with thunder and heavenly fireworks."[67] So preaches Zarathustra and so believes Adorno, who defies all Cartesean methodological rules and rejects as dangerous the proposition that one ought to move from the simple to the complex and that one must demonstrate clearly and explicitly each step that leads to the articulation of a particular idea.[68] He justifies this unusual position with the argument that the true value of a thought is measured according to its distance from the continuities of orthodox knowledge. This is to say that the closer a thought gets to the generally accepted standards of writing and representing, the more it loses its dialectical and antithetical function. Adorno thus attempts to open up thinking space by writing in an unusual style, unusual in word choice, concept usage, syntax, sentence flow and many other aspects.[69] Style is at the core of Adorno's thought. It leads him to a position where, expressed in Eagleton's ironically disapproving voice, every sentence is "forced to work overtime; each phrase must become a little masterpiece or miracle of dialectics, fixing a thought in the second before it disappears into its own contradictions."[70]

It is not my intention to endorse all aspects of Adorno's provocative and controversial position on language. The difficulty of his style severely limits possibilities for the expression of dissent and human agency. As long as a critical text is only accessible to a small circle of intellectuals who invest the time to decipher it, solve its puzzles and explore its contradictions, critical knowledge will continue to reside in the margins, hegemonies will remain unchallenged, and practices of dominating will persist. Adorno also comes dangerously close to a linguistic idealism or a heroic avant-garde elitism. By freeing himself radically from the totalizing forces of identity thinking, he paradoxically runs the danger of falling back into the positivist pitfalls from whence he is so desperately trying to escape, for his position on style implies, much like the one espoused by the early Wittgenstein, that ordinary language is insufficient, in need of correction.

---

[67] Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, tr. W. Kaufmann in The Portable Nietzsche, p. 205.

[68] Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," pp. 22-5.

[69] Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980/1951), pp. 88-9; Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, pp. 440-2. For discussions of the crucial importance that Adorno grants to the question of style see Gillian Rose, The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno (London: MacMillan, 1978), pp. 11-26.

[70] Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, p. 342.

The point is not to search for a more prefect representation of reality, but to acknowledge that language games are an integral part of politics. Peter Bürger illustrates the centrality of this problem when comparing Adorno's and Lukács' approach to aesthetics. Adorno advocates avant-gardiste art in a radical form that rejects all false reconciliation with what exists. Lukács, by contrast, opposes such a form of dissent, for it remains too abstract, void of historical perspective, and thus unable to promote social change.[71] My approach to writing dissent takes some elements of the Adornean position but has overall much more parallels with Lukács' rejection of an avant-garde search for radical and authentic expression. Words, even if they dissolve into their own contradictions, can never be more than what we make out of them. One can never guess how a word functions, Wittgenstein claims. One must first examine how it is used and then learn from it.[72]

Any attempt to assert human agency through a critique of language that reaches beyond the ways in which words are embedded in their social and dialogical contexts, is in danger of ending up in a cul de sac. Adorno runs this danger when he searches for utopia in avant-garde aesthetics and relegates resistance to art and its hidden "it should be otherwise."[73] This is the defeatist side of Adorno, which deplores that truth can never be plausible or directly communicable to everyone because each communicative step distorts and falsifies.[74] While I reject Adorno's futile search for perfect expression and his resulting retreat into a pessimistic form of aesthetics, I accept the importance of the issue that feeds his dilemma, namely the recognition that writing styles, and language in general, are intrinsically linked to politics.

---

[71] Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, tr. M. Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 88.

[72] Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, p. 387, § 340.

[73] Adorno, cited in Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, p. 350.

[74] Adorno, Negative Dialektik, pp. 50-2. Adorno's resignation in the face of linguistic domination is by far no isolated phenomena. Kant, defending himself against the reproach of writing in an obscure and inaccessible way, responds that critique of reason, and metaphysical questions in general, can never be popularized or phrased in a simple language. Rousseau simply states that he does not know the art of being clear to those who do not want to listen. Nietzsche shrugs and claims that if his writings are incomprehensible or offensive to anyone, then the fault would not necessarily be his. To understand him one must practice reading as an art. One must work through a text slowly, halt, and be profoundly perplexed by every single one of his words. For Benjamin, one must first walk across a long desert of abstraction to get to concrete philosophizing. Spivak even claims that the power of language not only prevents subalterns from speaking, but also makes it impossible for intellectuals to either represent them or open up space to that they could speak themselves. See Immanuel Kant, Die Metaphysik der Sitten, in Werke Vol. VII (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922/1797), pp. 5-7; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat Social (Paris: Flammarion, 1966/1762), p. 97; Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, pp. 16-7 and Morgenröte, pp. 14-5; Benjamin cited in Adorno, Negative Dialektik, p. 9; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 288-9.

Writing styles are issues of substance, sights of contestation. Critique of society cannot be separated from critique of language. The form of writing is as important as its content. Indeed, form is content.

Any approach that attempts to exert human agency against the encroachment of thought by dominant discursive practices must grapple with this issue. This does not mean that a writing style necessarily needs to be difficult. The key is to write within the communicative restraints of existing language games while at the same time pushing their boundaries. To recognize this necessity is to do away with the myth that dissent can be articulated best by relying merely on a clear writing style. Michael Shapiro is among the authors who have most convincingly argued - and demonstrated - that resorting to this "old epistemology of 'clarity'" fails to recognize and deal with practices of domination that are embedded in language.[75] He draws attention to the importance of style, to how literary forms of writing, that is those who are self-conscious about their own figural practices, constitute important politicizing practices:

> Literary discourse... is hyper-politicizing. By producing alternative forms of thought *in* language, it makes a political point. By virtue of its departures from linguistic normality, it points to the way that institutions hold individuals within a linguistic web. But it goes beyond this demonstration. It deforms image to show how accepted models of the real are productions of grammatical and rhetorical constructions, and it forms antagonistic imagery that provides sites for resistance to domination.[76]

There are, of course, many literary styles that have the potential to serve as discursive forms of dissent. Before focusing in detail on one of them, poetry, I illustrate, via a few examples, the range of possibilities for exploring the crucial links between form and substance, writing and dissent, literature and politics.

I have already mentioned Nietzsche's and Adorno's preference for writing in fragments to avoid practices of domination that emerge from totalizing representations of the world. This substantive dimension of style is why many authors consider Nietzsche's resort to aphorisms as one of the most important contributions of his work. Just as Eagleton describes Adorno's language as "rammed up against silence where the reader has no sooner registered the one-sidedness of some proposition than the opposite is immediately proposed,"[77] one never finds Nietzsche engaging in concealment by upholding the correctness of a viewpoint without drawing attention to its contradictions, to the voices that linger in its shadows. This is why many prominent commentators, from Thomas Mann to

---

[75] Michael J. Shapiro, "Literary Production as Political Practice," in Language and Politics, p. 230. See also his Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

[76] Ibid., p. 239.

[77] Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, p. 342.

Giorgio Colli, argue that to take Nietzsche literally is to be lost, for "he said everything, and the opposite of everything."[78]

The key to Nietzsche does not lie in his viewpoints, but in the style through which he opened up thinking space, celebrated diversity, and came to terms with the death of God. His thought is inseparable from his particular writing style. There are, of course, many other authors who relied upon aphorisms to push the boundaries of writing. Wittgenstein, for example, recognized the dangers of welding his ideas into an artificial whole, of forcing them against their will into an unbroken chain of coherent sequences. The best he could do, Wittgenstein claimed, would always remain philosophical remarks, fragments that defy the logic of a totality.[79] Paul de Man faced similar difficulties when dealing with a historical analysis of Romanticism. The stylistic conclusion he gained warrant citation:

> I feel myself compelled to repeated frustration in a persistent attempt to write as if a dialectical summation were possible beyond the breaks and interruptions that the readings disclose. The apparent resignation to aphorisms and parataxis is often an attempt to recuperate at the level of style what is lost at the level of history. By stating the inevitability of fragmentation in a mode that is itself fragmented, one restores the aesthetic unity of manner and substance that may well be what is in question in the historical study of romanticism.[80]

The essay is a comparable stylistic form of dissent that may serve to engender human agency. It defies totalizing forms of representation by refusing to rely on methodological procedures that pretend to lead towards an authoritative form of knowledge. Montaigne was one of the earliest authors who employed the form of the essay to express his skeptical Humanism. Other well known representatives are the early Frankfurt School writers, in particular Lukács, Benjamin and Adorno.

An essay must fulfill a number of strict requirements, or so at least argues Adorno, who considers this genre as "the critical form par excellence."[81] An essay is explicitly anti-authoritarian insofar as it recognizes no first principles, no standpoint outside itself. It negates everything that is systematic, that drifts towards a totalizing claim. To acknowledge that there are no transcending forms of knowledge is to accept the historical dimension of truth contents, it is to abandon the illusion of thought breaking out of culture into nature, of the subject piercing through layers of masking facades towards some sort of objectivity.[82] The consequences of such a

---

[78] Thomas Mann and Giorgio Colli, cited in Volker Gerhardt, "Philosophie als Schicksal," postscript to Nietzsche's <u>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</u> (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1988/1886), p. 236. See also David B. Allison (ed), <u>The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation</u> (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990/1985).

[79] Wittgenstein, <u>Philosophische Untersuchungen</u>, p. 231.

[80] Paul de Man, <u>The Rhetoric of Romanticism</u> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. ix.

[81] Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," p. 27.

[82] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 10, 19.

recognition are, of course, often branded as relativism. Adorno counters by arguing that the essay intends to free thought from its arbitrariness precisely by accepting arbitrariness into the essay's own procedures, instead of masking it as spontaneity.[83] The result, then, is a form of writing much like de Man described the aphoristic style. The essay makes its hostility towards totalizing thought an integral part of its existence by revolving emphatically around the form of its presentation. Breaking free from conventionally recognized procedures, the essay begins where it wants to begin, discusses what it wants to discuss, ends where it feels itself completed, rather than where there is nothing left to say.[84]

The novel is another literary form that contains possibilities for discursive dissent. There is room for diversity in the novel, a genre that is, like aphorisms and the essay, freed from the compulsion to present only one totalizing viewpoint. Lukács, for example, points out that in the novel a totality can only exist in abstract terms. The relatively independent and unconnected parts of a novel endow it with an unfinished form, one that is always in the process of becoming.[85] Indeed, it is precisely with this insight into style that the later Lukács defines the essence of praxis as "annulling *that indifference of form towards content.*"[86] Mikhail Bakhtin argues along the same lines and considers the novel as an anarchic, insubordinate genre, a site of popular resistance against the hegemony of official and centralized authority. Here too style is considered not an innocent or neutral aesthetic dimension, but a political expression, an "epistemic choice."[87] Bakhtin deals specifically with Dostoevsky and the so-called polyphonic novel, a genre of writing that refuses to submit everything to a single objective narrative, a unifying authorial position and instead permits a "plurality of independent and umerged voices and consciousnessses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices."[88]

The application of these subversive stylistic devises is, of course, unlimited. We find many 19th century women writers, like Mary Shelly, Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft, or Dorothy Wordsworth, who employed the novel to subvert the dominant romantic discourse that celebrated a masculinist search for freedom beyond the dailiness of life. Their style did not imitate the voice of the male Romantic hero, but expressed their political struggle against oppression, articulated the concrete

---

[83] Ibid., p. 27.

[84] Ibid., pp. 10, 26.

[85] Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, tr. A. Bostock (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971/1920), pp. 70-83.

[86] Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, tr. T. Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 126. See also J.M. Bernstein, The Philosophy of the Novel: Lukács, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[87] Josephine Donovan, "Style and Power" in D.M. Bauer and S.J. McKinstry, Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 85-6; Tzvetan Todorov, Poétique (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968), p. 100.

[88] Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p. 6.

daily frustrations of being pushed to the societal margins.[89]   We know of contemporary African novelists, like Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, Yvonne Vera or Ayi Kwei Armah, who "decolonize" the English language in an attempt to break free from the repressing forces of imperialism. This entails, as for example in the case of Armah, deliberately handling directions and time not through European concepts, but via localized terms like "the falling" and "the rising" (instead of west and east) or "seasons" and "moons" (instead of years and months).[90]   This simple example of stylistic dissent illustrates that the boundaries of language can be pushed without relying upon a difficult and obscure Adornean writing style. Franz Kafka's main novels, The Trial and The Castle, as well as many of his short-stories, are all written in very simple and direct German. Yet, Kafka's metaphorical story telling pierced through linguistic domination with such ease that he managed to advance one of the most powerful critiques of the modern condition.

The resort to dialogues is another, more direct way of accepting fragmentation and resisting impositions from monological thought forms. Theater is the most explicit expression of this genre. It is not surprising that Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Berthold Brecht, Hélène Cixous and many other prominent social critics engaged in this form of stylistic dissent. Tom Stoppard claims to write plays because dialogue is the most respectable way of contradicting himself.[91]   But the notion of dialogue goes further than the theater. Many authors search for stylistic ways of articulating thoughts such that they do not silence other voices, but co-exist and interact with them. I have already mentioned Bakhtin's dialogism, a theory of knowledge and language that avoids the excluding tendencies of monological thought forms.   Bakhtin accepts the existence of multiple meanings, draws connections between differences, and searches for possibilities to establish conceptual and linguistic dialogues among competing ideas, values, speech forms, texts, validity claims and the like.[92]   Jürgen Habermas attempts to theorize the preconditions for ideal speech situations. Communication, in this case, should be as unrestrained as possible, such that "claims to truth and rightness can be discursively redeemed,"[93] albeit, one should add, through a rationalism and universalism that is violently opposed to Bakhtin's and Adorno's anti-systemic thinking. We also know of feminists, like Christine Sylvester, who employ a method of empathetic

---

[89] Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 9. For an account of more contemporary strategies of resistance in women's literature see, for example, Weigel, Die Stimme der Medusa.

[90] See Emmanuel Ngara, Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel (London: Heinemann, 1982), p. 140.

[91] Tom Stoppard cited in The New Yorker, 17 April 1995, p. 111

[92] Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 79-84, 181-186, 279-82, 292-3. See also Michael Holquist, Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World (London: Routledge, 1990); and Paul de Man, "Dialogue and Dialogism," in The Resistance to Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 106-114.

[93] Jürgen Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," in New Left Review, No. 151, May/June 1985, p. 94.

cooperation, which aims at opening up questions of gender by a "process of positional slippage that occurs when one listens seriously to the concerns, fears, and agendas of those one is unaccustomed to heeding when building social theory."[94]

SUMMARY

Disenchanted concepts, aphorisms, the essay, the novel, satire and dialogue are only examples of stylistic devices that can be employed to seek dialogue and transformation, to escape the encroaching grip of a totality and subvert practices of domination. There is no correct style, no language that solves the problem of representation and related practices of exclusion.

An author who tries to exert human agency by engaging in linguistic dissent must defy the language of the dominant discourse in order not to get drawn into its powerful vortex. But s/he must also articulate alternative thoughts such that they are accessible enough to constitute viable tools to open up dialogical interactions. This can, of course, only be achieved if alternative knowledge can break out of intellectual obscurity, if it can reach and change the minds of most people. However, a text that breaks with established practices of communication to escape their discursive power has, by definition, great difficulties in doing this. Hence, writing is, as Roland Barthes claims, always a compromise between memory and freedom, between, on the one hand, being constrained by the long history of words, by the power of language to penetrate every single aspect of our writing, and, on the other hand, affirming one's freedom by an act of writing that is not just communication or expression, but a leap beyond the narrow confines of existing language games.[95]

Nietzsche was already well aware of this inevitable dilemma. Zarathustra is constantly torn back and forth between engaging with people and withdrawing from them. The masses fail to comprehend his attempts to defy herd instincts and problematize the unproblematic. "They do not understand me; I am not the mouth for these ears", he hails. "Must one smash their ears before they learn to listen with their eyes?"[96] At times he appears without hope: "what matters a time that "has not time" for Zarathustra?...why do I speak where nobody has *my* ears? It is still an hour too early for me here."[97] Succumbing to the power of language, Zarathustra returns to the mountains, withdraws in the solitude of his cave. But thoughts of engaging with humanity never leave him. He repeatedly climbs down from his cave to the depths of life, regains hope that monological discourses will give way to

---

[94] Christine Sylvester, "Empathetic Cooperation: A Feminist Method for IR," in Millennium, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1994, p. 317. See also M. Wohlrab-Sahr, "Empathie als Methododisches Prinzip?" in Feministische Studien, Vol. 2, 1993.

[95] Roland Barthes, Le degré zéro de l'écriture (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972/1953), pp. 7-24.

[96] Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pp. 128-130.

[97] Ibid, pp. 280, 284.

dialogue, that the herds will understand him one day: "But *their* hour will come! And mine will come too! Hourly they are becoming smaller, poorer, more sterile - poor herbs! poor soil! and *soon* they shall stand there like dry grass and prairie - and verily, weary of themselves and languish even more than for water - for *fire*."[98]

No dissenting writer can hope to incinerate immediately the dry grass of orthodox linguistic prairies. Discourses live on and appear reasonable long after their premises have turned into anachronistic relics. More inclusive ways of thinking and acting cannot surface overnight. There are no quick solutions, no new paradigms or miraculous political settlements that one could hope for.

Discursive forms of resistance do not engender human agency in an immediate and direct way. Writing dissent is a long process, saturated with obstacles and contradictions. It operates, as I outlined in the Interlude preceding this chapter, through tactical and temporal transformations of discursive practices. Zarathustra knew that too. It is in our daily practices of speaking, of forgetting and remembering that slow transformative potentials are hidden. Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; it revolves *inaudibly*."[99] But the inaudible character of these transformative potentials does not make them any less real.

The systems of domination and the possibilities for dissent that are embedded in language are as real as the practices of Realpolitik. They effect the daily lives of people as much as so-called 'real-world issues.' Language, in both speech and writing, is politics disguised. It contains powerful potential for human agency. With this recognition emerges a new kind of activist, situated, as Barthes notes, "half-way between militant and writer," taking from the former the commitment to act and from the latter the knowledge that the process of writing constitutes such an act.[100] My task now is to remove one more layer of abstraction and demonstrate the practical dimension of writing dissent by analyzing how a specific stylistic form of resistance, usually thought to be the most esoteric of all - poetry -, can engender human agency in a concrete political setting.

---

[98] Ibid, p. 284.

[99] Ibid, p. 243.

[100] Barthes, Le degré zero de l'écriture, p. 23.

Chapter Nine

THE POLITICS
OF
APOLITICAL POETRY

> To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace
> of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's
> night utters the holy.
>
> Martin Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter?"
> tr. A. Hofstadter

Truth vanished once one came to terms with the death of God, once one accepted the impossibility of understanding the world in its totality, once one lay to rest the search for Archimedean foundations, be they theological, scientific, or moral. "No god any longer gathers men and things unto himself," Heidegger observes with a slight tone of regret.[1] People have lost the ability to grasp, taste, apprehend, even imagine the location of the holy source of knowledge. Truth fell into a bottomless pit. But the fugitive gods still linger around the holy source and provide us with hints about its location - hints full of ambiguities and contradictions. Poetry, Heidegger claims, is the instrument that comes closest to apprehending these hints.

---

[1] Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" in Poetry, Language, Thought, tr. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971/1936), p. 91.

It is the voice that senses the trace of the fugitive gods, stays on their tracks, and shows to its kindred mortals "the way toward the turning."[2]

Poetry as the preeminent discursive terrain of dissent, the ultimate sphere of revealing? No. Poetry cannot leap beyond language games. To elevate poetry on a golden pedestal that towers over other forms of writing and speaking is highly problematic. One then simply engages in one more futile and dangerous attempt to resurrect the fallen God.

Poetry is neither pure nor innocent. A poem can be as much part of a linguistic system of domination as any other genre. Consider how poetry was employed by many authoritarian regimes in eastern Europe to legitimize forms of domination. Poets were often mere spokespeople for the government, singing countless lyrical hymns to the greatness of autocratic political leaders and their statist five-year plans. These hymns turned many dissidents away from poetry. Their memory is one of "lyrical blindness," of a time when "the poet reigned along with the executioner." They speak of the darkest side of lyrics, of "a gulag that has poems plastering its outside walls and people dancing before them."[3] Heidegger's own political behavior, of course, was not beyond scrutiny either. Thrown into a destitute time, he tried to attend to the trace of the fugitive gods and utter the holy, but ended up singing heartily to the rhythm of Nazi military tunes.

What, then, is the point of illustrating an inquiry into discursive dissent with an excursus on poetry? Why, indeed, preoccupy oneself with a form of speaking and writing whose impact remains confined, in most cases, to a very small literary audience? And even if poetry is indeed able serve as an instrument to exert human agency, how can one possibly assess the processes by which it transforms social practices? These difficult questions beg for complex answers. I do not claim to have found them all, nor do I believe that all can be found, at least not in an absolute and definitive way.

I focus my attempt to elucidate the links between language and human agency on the German-Jewish poet Paul Celan. Situated in the immediate post-war period, Celan's work reflects a larger societal struggle with the problematic burden of recent German history. Celan epitomizes the search for words and integrity in a destitute time, the effort to disassociate the German language from its Nazi past, so that it becomes possible to speak once more, critically, dialogically, humanely. Pragmatic and didactic reasons have guided my decision to focus on Celan. I could as well have illustrated my points by returning to the political context I scrutinized in part two of this thesis. Yet, a thorough analysis of how poetry and literature transformed societal values in East Germany cannot be conducted in a chapter-length exposé, at

---

[2] Ibid., p. 94. See also L.M. Vail, "Revealing and Concealing," in Heidegger and Ontological Difference (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), pp. 25-46.

[3] Milan Kundera, Testaments Betrayed, tr. L. Asher (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 157.

least not without being forced to confine oneself to sweeping assertions and meaningless clichés. David Bathrick's recent study on this topic convincingly demonstrates the complexities - as well as the crucial role played by - linguistic dissent in East Germany.[4]

An analysis of Paul Celan's poetry allows for a more focused investigation into the role that discursive dissent plays in social struggles. Celan illustrates, almost perfectly, the potential and limits of exerting human agency through critique of language. I demonstrate the range of this potential from two different perspectives. At one level I observe the impact of Celan's poems, particularly his early ones, on societal dynamics in post-war Germany. I am not pretending to establish a definitive and positive assertion of human agency from these observations. A longer and more thorough study may be able tackle some aspects of this difficult task more successfully. I merely draw attention to the important role that literature plays in the evolution of discursive struggles. At a second, more abstract level, I illustrate the workings of discursive dissent by focusing on the actual functioning of Celan's poetry. The evidence provided there is primarily theoretical, that is, I show through what processes critique of language can break through aspects of the existing discursive order. By closely reading and examining passages of two specific poems I demonstrate how a deliberate stretching, even violating, of linguistic conventions can open up spaces to think and act.

It is primarily at this abstract and theoretical level that an analysis of poetry gains relevance beyond the relatively narrow and often elitist social circle within which the poetic imagination holds sway. Because of its self-conscious engagement with the links between form and substance, poetry serves as a model that depicts the general process of stretching the boundaries of language games. What one can learn from observing poetic subversions of linguistically entrenched forms of domination can facilitate understanding, at least to some extend, of how dissent functions in more mundane, daily acts of speaking and writing, which, by definition, mostly elude the eyes and ears of intellectual observers.

COME SEE THE BLOOD IN THE STREETS: PRELIMINARY REMARKS ABOUT POETIC DISSENT

Before dealing in detail with Celan's poetry it is necessary to address a number of preliminary questions about the poetic imagination - questions that deal with what poetry actually is, how one can talk about it and, indeed, why it matters all.

What distinguishes poetic expressions from other forms of speaking and writing? There are no clear-cut answers. Attempts to define poetry are as vague as they are

---

[4] David Bathrick, The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

divergent. In its broadest meaning, the poetic refers to literature in general. For Paul Valéry, for example, poetics is not simply the study of the aesthetic rules concerning poetry, but a preoccupation with all forms of composition in which language is means and substance at the same time.[5] This working definition is the broad starting point for Tzvetan Todorov, Julia Kristeva and many others who deal with the poetic.[6] Implied in this approach, and at times explicitly articulated, are many ideas of Russian formalists. We recognize, for example, the influential voice of Roman Jakobson, who, like Valéry, refuses either to reduce the poetic function to poetry or limit poetry to the poetic function.[7] What matters is whether or not the poetic function becomes dominant in a literary work. This is the case if a word possesses its own weight and value, if it is perceived as a word, and not simply as a substitute for an object.[8]

The question of style, then, is central to the poetic imagination. Valéry further clarifies this point by contrasting the role of form in poetry and prose. He argues that prose works in a direct line, it takes the path of least resistance. Form is not preserved within prose, but disappears as soon as it has fulfilled its purpose. Once you have understood the content of my speech, Valéry illustrates, the form of my speech becomes meaningless, it vanishes from your memory. The form of the poem, by contrast, does not vanish after its usage. It is an integral part of speech, designed to rise from its ashes.[9]

Any definition of poetry that tries to be more specific than drawing attention to the importance of form runs the risk of undermining the very power that poetry may be able to unleash. The boundaries that separate poetry from other forms of writing are always in flux. Indeed, it is precisely this fluidity, the refusal to accept what is, that sets poetry apart. A poem is a conscious transgression of existing linguistic conventions, a protest against an established language game and the systems of exclusion that are embedded in it. In this sense poetry sets itself apart from prose because it negates, not by chance or as a side effect, but because it cannot do otherwise, because this is what poetry is all about.[10]

If form is indeed the essence of poetry, then the problem arises of how to talk about it. Because style is what sets poetry apart from other forms of writing, one

---

[5] Paul Valéry, Variété V (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 291.

[6] Tzvetan Todorov, Poétique, vol. 2 of Qu'est-ce que le structuralism? (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968), pp. 15-28; Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

[7] Roman Jakobson, Essais de linguistique général (Paris: Minuit, 1963), p. 218.

[8] Roman Jakobson, "Qu'est-ce que la poésie," in Huit questions de poétique, tr. M. Derrida (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977/1933), p. 46.

[9] Paul Valéry, "Propos sur la Poésie," cited in Jean-Louis Joubert, La Poésie (Paris: Armand Colin, 1988), p. 53.

[10] Ulrich Schödlbauer, "Die Modernitätsfalle der Lyrik," in Merkur, No 551, vol. 49, No 2, Feb 1995, p. 174.

cannot simply translate the meaning of poetry into prose, explain its significance in a language familiar to our daily forms of verbal interaction. How can poetics, the study of poetry, possibly do justice to its object of inquiry? To speak of a poem, Heidegger warns, is to judge from the outside what a poem is. No position, no insight can ever justify such a presumptuous approach.[11] This is why Celan, when asked to explain the meaning of his poems, often replied: "Read! Just keep reading. Understanding comes of itself."[12] The point, then, is not to drown poetry in an ocean of explanatory prose, but to let a poem speak, to accept its authority and listen to the stylistic method of dissent that operates at its core. Consequently, I will frequently rely upon direct citations of poems and weave my analysis of dissent around them. But the problem of speaking about poetry cannot be solved simply by means of quotation.

No poem can ever represent or even illustrate what poetry is all about. Because the poem strives for openness it refuses to speak for a totality. Because the poem searches for cracks in hegemonies, voices that have gone unnoticed, it is an instant of subversive particularity. Paul Celan explains in one of his rare excursions from poetry into poetics: "But I am speaking of poetry that does not exist! The absolute poem - no, it certainly does not exist, it cannot exist![13] Heidegger, likewise, explains that "no single poem, not even all of them taken together, can tell everything."[14] Poetry deals with the particular, but it is not primarily about this or that argument, this or that idea. It is about searching for a language that provides us with different eyes, different ways of perceiving what we already know, it is about unsettling, making strange that which is familiar, about opening up thinking space and creating possibilities to act in more inclusive ways. No isolated citation ever does justice to this objective. Only an extended reading of poetry can succeed in stretching the boundaries of our minds.

What are we left with if poetry cannot be explained in prose and if there is no absolute poem either, one that could represent and illuminate the power of poetry? We must attempt the impossible task of speaking about the unspeakable. Heidegger has some ideas about how to tackle this difficult puzzle. For him, a poem surrounded by the noise of unpoetic language is like a bell hanging freely outside. Even the slightest snowfall would throw it out of tune. Each comment to a poem, he frets, may well do nothing but cast snow unto the bell. But because there is no absolute poem we must still look for a way to talk about poetry, a way that swirls up as little snow as possible. What we must aim for, Heidegger suggests, is a form of

[11] Martin Heidegger, Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1981), p. 182.

[12] Celan cited in Israel Chalfen, Paul Celan: A Biography of His Youth, tr. M. Bleyleben (New York: Persea Books, 1991/1979), p. xi.

[13] Paul Celan, "Der Meridian," in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986/1958), p. 199.

[14] Heidegger, "Die Sprache im Gedicht," in Unterwegs zur Sprache (Stuttgart, Verlag Günter Neske, 1959/1953), pp. 37-8.

comment that renders itself obsolete once it is spoken; a form of comment that explains but then defers authority back to the poem.[15] To search for this formless form is the methodological challenge of this chapter.

One more preliminary issue needs to be raised before I can begin to ring the bells of poetic dissent. It is, in many ways, the most crucial issue: does poetry really matter? How could it possibly constitute a meaningful and influential practice of discursive dissent? Is poetry not a mere entrance key to the society of high culture, a pleasant distraction for those who have the leisure to pursue it, for those whose privileged education has rendered the obscure style of poems accessible? Is poetry not simply an ode to the beauty of life as viewed from the sheltered living rooms of the upper classes? Not so, argues many a poet.

Poetry is for everyone, it deals with the dailiness of life, its good and bad sides. This is why Pablo Neruda believes we should look for poetry that is "steeped in sweat and in smoke, smelling of lilies and urine."[16] His poetry not only speaks of love and beauty, but is also permeated with a profound concern for social justice, for the impurity of the human condition. Neruda in <u>Residencia en la tierra</u>, one of his early collections that gives voice to his experiences with the Spanish civil war and the murder of a fellow poet:

> Would you know why his poems
> never mention the soil or the leaves,
> the gigantic volcanoes of the country that bore him?
>
> Come see the blood in the streets,
> come see
> the blood in the streets,
> come see the blood
> in the streets![17]

The fact that poets are concerned with political issues - and Neruda is certainly no exception - does not immediately render poetry politically relevant. Poetry needs to be read and understood as well. It must change the way people think. But who still reads poetry today? In the time of the early Greeks, for Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and many others, poetry and philosophy were inseparable. As recently as the nineteenth century, when romantics searched for new ways of self-expression, poetry played a central role in Western thought and, indeed, in everyday activities of many people. These times are clearly gone. Poetry today lingers at the margins of societies. With poetry removed from the center of human activity, our time has become destitute because, as Heidegger notes, "it lacks the unconcealedness of the

---

[15] Heidegger, <u>Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung</u>, p. 194.

[16] Pablo Neruda, "Toward an Impure Poetry" in <u>Pablo Neruda: Five Decades</u>, tr. B. Belitt (New York: Grove Press, 1974), p. 57.

[17] Neruda, "A Few Things Explained" in <u>Pablo Neruda</u>, p. 57.

nature of pain, death, and love."[18]   Our time may, indeed, be destitute because the languages of economic rationalism and mass media entertainment have taken over our minds, established the frameworks of collective thinking patterns.   Are we simply to throw up our hands in despair? No.

Poetry still contains powerful potential to resist the delineation of thought and action. This chapter is in some ways a pledge to resurrect poetry in a destitute time, to bring back stylistic dissent into the dailiness of our lives. But my approach to poetry is more than a mere longing for utopia, an argument for stretching thinking space. Poetry has not died out entirely. Some of its subversive elements remain alive, as my analysis will show. Despite being restricted in its circle of influence, poetry remains a practice of dissent that can engage discursive struggle. Maybe even more importantly, the process through which poetry stretches language games provide valuable lessons that can be useful for understanding the workings and impact of more mundane, daily acts of speaking and writing.

BLACK MILK OF DAYBREAK: SEARCHING FOR THINKING SPACE AFTER AUSCHWITZ

I use the work of Paul Celan to illustrate the functioning and practical relevance of poetry as a method of discursive dissent, as a way of engendering human agency. Born in Bukovina in 1920, Celan became one of the most influential German language poets of the postwar period. Although he spent most of his adult life in Paris, Celan's poetry is marked most by his experience of living the second World War, as a Jew, under Soviet and then German occupation. He first managed to avoid arrest and then survived the later part of the war in a labor camp in Southern Moldavia. Both of his parents, however, died in German concentration camps.[19] Celan's entire work deals in some ways with the processes through which one can come to terms with such a disaster, with how one can pierce through the silence of language and speak once more.

Every single German word in the immediate post-War period was drenched in blood. Every word carried the crushing weight of the Holocaust. Language was not just an innocent bystander to the horrors of Nazism. Hitler, Goebbels and Himmler did not just happen to speak German. According to George Steiner "Nazism found in the [German] language precisely what it needed to give voice to its savagery." How could a simple word like 'spritzen,' Steiner illustrates, ever recover from "having signified for millions the 'spurting' of Jewish blood from knife points?"[20]

---

[18] Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" p. 97.

[19] For biographical accounts see Chalfen, Paul Celan and John Felstiner, Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[20] Georg Steiner, "The Hollow Miracle," in Language and Silence (New York: Penguin, 1967), pp. 140-3.

Dennis Schmidt considers this recognition from a wider perspective and argues, convincingly, that no language can ever speak without marking its relation to both history and culture, without evoking the memory of what it has spoken or of the anticipation it has permitted.[21]

How is it possible to speak again in the language of the butchers without being immediately sucked into its tainted linguistic vortex? Celan's poetry is a direct engagement with this highly political linguistic dilemma. For him, the German language "had no words to express what happened." Language, he stresses, "had to walk through its own loss of answers, through its terrible silence, through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech:"[22]

> Should,
> should a man,
> should a man come into the world, today, with
> the shining beard of the
> patriarchs: he could,
> if he spoke of this
> time, he
> could
> only babble and babble,
> over, over
> againagain.[23]

The point of Celan's poetry, then, is not to search for harmony and beauty, but simply to speak and live again, to lift the burdensome weight from some of the most tainted words, to create space for a more inclusive and humane politics. We thus see him shaking the German language, exploring the power of form, rattling at some of the links between words and meanings that are considered unproblematic, beyond reproach, beyond questioning. Some suggest that this is to "dissolve that which is irreparable....., to erase the dark image of horror and shame."[24] But this erasure is only an erasure of hegemonic historiography and of the destructive feeling of revenge. It does not aim at erasing history altogether. The crucial issue, indeed, is one of Vergangenheitsbewältigung, of coming to terms with history, of dealing with the horror of the past and finding more inclusive ways of looking at what happened. Poetry, then, fulfills the task of a critical memory, it assures a presence beyond death

---

[21] Schmidt, "Black Milk and Blue: Celan and Heidegger on Pain and Language," in A. Fioretos (ed), Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 117. See also Martine Broda, "Paul Celan, la politique d'un poète après Auschwitz," in J. Rancière (ed), La Politique des Poètes (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), pp. 215-227.

[22] Paul Celan, "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der Freien Hansestadt Bremen," in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III, pp. 185-6.

[23] Paul Celan, "Tübingen, Jänner," in Die Niemandsrose, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I, p. 226, tr. M. Hamburger in Poems of Paul Celan (New York: Persea Books, 1988/1972), p. 177.

[24] Gerard Vincent, Sous le soleil noir du temps: Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan (Lausanne: Éditions l'âge d'homme, 1991), p. 113. See also Alan Udoff, "On Poetic Dwelling: Situating Celan and the Holocaust," in Fioretos, Word Traces, pp. 320-351.

and beyond the current, historically delineated moment.[25] It remembers in the name of those who cannot remember, for, in Celan's words, "No one / bears witness for the / witness."[26]

By expressing the stories and voices that have drowned in the hegemony of dominant language games, Celan engages in critique of language as I introduced the term in the previous chapter. His poetic rethinking of the Holocaust is an expression of human agency, an everyday form of resistance that slowly transforms political practices by engaging with the construction and reconstruction of societal values. But Celan's poems are clearly not limited to this historically specific task. They also address the very dilemma of how to speak about something for which there are no words, how to give voice to those who have been silenced.

Hence, my analysis of Celan's poems deals not only with the state of the German language in the post-War period, but also with the larger issues that are at stake in the practice of linguistic dissent. One could, for example, apply the same type of logic and examine aspects of exclusion and inclusion in contemporary English: How to speak in a language that has structurally excluded women, the Other, anybody and anything that cannot be identified with the speaking subject? How to speak in a language that has historically evolved from the center of the world, first from the British Colonial Empire, then from the vantage point of American hegemony, and now as the new lingua franca of international political, economic and cultural interactions? How to express those silenced voices, those worlds that lie beyond the linguistic zone of exclusion that the global dominance of English has established? How to decenter the center through the language of the center? Celan's poetry shows us a way of dealing with these important and difficult issues, with how, as Heidegger puts it, "the mortal ones can learn, once more, how to live in language."[27]

I demonstrate the practical dimensions entailed in critique of language by focusing on two of Celan's best known poems, 'Deathfugue' and 'Stretto.' My task is not primarily one of interpretation, for both of these rather long poems have already received widespread attention. They are, indeed, among the most

---

[25] Durs Grünbein, "Zu Kieseln gehärtet: Über das lyrische Sprechen," in <u>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</u>, 30 September 1995, p. 50. See also Jacques Derrida, "Shibboleth for Paul Celan," tr. J. Wilner, in Fioretos, <u>Word Traces</u>, pp. 3-72.

[26] Celan, "Aschenglorie," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II, p. 72,

[27] Heidegger, "Die Sprache im Gedicht," p. 38. The relationship between Celan and Heidegger was, for obvious reasons, complex and highly problematic. Heidegger preoccupied himself intensely with Celan's poetry. Celan, in turn, was strongly influenced by Heidegger's writings on poetry. Celan's most important poetological text, "Der Meridian," may not refer directly to Heidegger. His name, however, is "written...in invisible ink throughout and across the text." (Véronique M Fóti, <u>Heidegger and the Poets</u>. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992, p. 99). One of Celan's best known poems, "Todtnauberg," expresses the hope that Heidegger may, after all, break his stubborn silence about the Holocaust. The poem talks about "a hope, today, / of a thinking man's / coming / word / in the heart, ..." Celan, "Todtnauberg," tr. M. Hamburger, <u>Poems of Paul Celan</u>, p. 293, 28.

interpreted and translated contemporary poems. Rather, I select a few passages from them to demonstrate, via the text and its interpretations, the potential for human agency entailed in poetic dissent. Needless to say, this truncation does violence to the structure, the rhythm and, indeed, to the very essence of these poems. Thus, my more limited task of demonstrating aspects of dissent entailed in those poems cannot replace the process of reading them closely.

'Deathfugue,' composed in the mid 1940s, is the poem that won Celan immediate and widespread recognition when it was published in 1952. It is also his most direct, explicit and accessible way of dealing with the Holocaust. The following opening stanza establishes the themes that then interchangeably reoccur in rhythmic form through the remaining parts of the poem:

> Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown
> we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
> we drink it and we drink it
> we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined
> A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
> he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair
>   Margarete
> he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are flashing he
>   whistles his pack out
> he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a grave
> he commands us strike up for the dance...[28]

There are many different interpretations of this poem. For Jerry Glenn 'Deathfugue' is a relatively realistic description of a concentration camp, narrated through the polyphonic voices of its victims. Concrete images, like a Nazi official (the man in the house who 'whistles his Jews'), take turn with more indirect, but still easily recognizable accounts of events (like 'he commands us strike up for the dance,' which, allegedly, alludes to the actual existence of orchestras in some camps).[29] Michel Hamburger interprets the poem as a release of Celan's personal anguish through a "distancing imagery and musical structure" that seems altogether incompatible, at least at first sight, with an event as atrocious as the Holocaust. But thinking space emerges precisely by contrasting the celebration of beauty with the commemoration of destruction.[30]

Celan's critics warned that this "aestheticizing" of the death camps would only help to turn the Holocaust into a form of art. Representative for this position is Theodor Adorno's notorious assertion that it is impossible to write poetry after

---

[28] Celan, "Todesfuge," in Mohn und Gedächtnis, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I, p. 41, tr. Hamburger as "Death Fugue," in Poems of Paul Celan, p. 61.

[29] Jerry Glenn, Paul Celan (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), pp. 69-70.

[30] Hamburger, "Introduction" to Poems of Paul Celan, p. 22.

Auschwitz, that even the attempt to do so would be barbaric.[31] Many disagree, then and now. John Caputo, for example, argues that even though 'Deathfugue' embodies the paradox of being beautiful, it does not bestow beauty or meaning upon the Holocaust. It is simply a gesture of morning that fulfills the above mentioned poetic function of memory, of recording a disaster in the heart.[32] It is a linguistic gesture of morning whose rhythmical structure and visual image was unique enough to leave a lasting mark on a collective societal consciousness. Celan, in this sense, has demonstrated that poetry goes on after Auschwitz, with or without the permission of Adorno and other philosophers or literary critics. Poetry simply happens, not as logos, not as meaning, but, as in the case of 'Deathfugue,' as a method of letting the disaster stand out, as a wail, a cry in the midst of silence, a lament in a void of meaning.[33]

But what is so special about the poetic form of mourning, of recording a disaster? What sets the polyphonic play of 'Deathfugue' apart from comparable prose accounts of the Holocaust? More than any other form of writing, poetry revolves around the usage of tropes: words that are bestowed with a temporary meaning which differs from their common signfication. Besides metonyms and synecdoches, metaphors are the most common and most important tropes in poetry. Having command of them, Aristotle already believed, is by far the greatest thing, "the mark of a genius."[34]

Metaphors transfer the common meaning of a word into a form of signification that only achieves meaning by way of a mental effort. 'Black milk of daybreak' is the first and one of the most central metaphors of 'Deathfugue.' Milk is feminine. It stands for life, birth, youth, nourishment. It is hope, the good life. In the mythology of the Old Testament, milk is the symbol of clarity, fertility and purity.[35] But Celan talks of black milk, an obvious oxymoron. The blackening of the milk alludes, some suggest, to the clouds of smoke that emerge from the crematories. Together with the man in the house who 'plays with the serpents,' this metaphor signifies alienation and evil.[36] Black, then, is death, the annihilation of the milk's comfort and nourishment. 'Daybreak' refers to the dawn of each day in the camp, the ever-recurring swallowing of black milk, the suffering, the lack of hope. The German word for daybreak (Frühe) also stands for early, as in early times. Thus, 'black milk of daybreak' can also be a metaphor for "the entire history of Jewish suffering; from

---

[31] Theodor W. Adorno, Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft (Frankfurt; Suhrkamp, 1955), p. 31.

[32] John D. Caputo, Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 183.

[33] Ibid., pp. 181-2.

[34] Aristotle, On the Art of Poetry, tr. S.H. Butcher (New York: The Library of Liberal Art, 1948), XXII, p. 31.

[35] Wolfgang Menzel, "Celan's Gedicht 'Todesfuge,'" cited in Glenn, Paul Celan, p. 72.

[36] Glenn, Paul Celan, p. 70.

the days of Babylonian captivity to the Nazi death camps."[37] These are, of course, not the only possible interpretations of the opening metaphor of 'Deathfugue.' Tropes cannot be narrowed down to a clearly delineated interpretation. They refuse single meanings, defy our temptation of squeezing a truth content out of verbal statements.

Metaphors ask the reader to identify a semantic link between the common meaning of a word and its trope. By exploring the tension between identity and difference, metaphors turn into discursive strategies that provide us with new ways of looking at the world. A metaphor then becomes, according to Paul Ricoeur, "the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality."[38] Metaphors are used in all practices of writing and speaking. Indeed, the previous chapter emphasized, via Nietzsche, that language itself is a way of producing reality through an infinite series of metaphors. Even texts deemed to rely on neutral and non-metaphorical language rely on tropes to present their positions.[39]

What sets poetry apart from most other forms of writing is its self-consciousness about the usage of tropes. Instead of masking them as non-figurative speech, poetry makes tropes an integral part of its stylistic effort to stretch the boundaries of language games. Some even argue that metaphors in poetry are qualitatively different from the ones employed in prose. Michael Oakeshott, for example, claims that words in a poem are no longer simply signs for other images. As opposed to prose, where the metaphor always remains a symbol because it merely makes use of natural or conventional correspondences, the language of poetry works differently. Here, metaphors become poetic images themselves. They do not explore "reality." They have no settled value that corresponds to some conventional or natural point of reference.[40] But Oakeshott has led us into a difficult terrain ahead of schedule. We can only venture safely onto this slippery surface with the security that a prior closer reading of Celan's poetry provides.

Elements of style and rhythm reinforce and intensify the power of tropes in 'Deathfugue.' Compare the above cited opening stanza with the following final lines:

---

[37] L.L. Duroche, "Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge,'" in Glenn, Paul Celan, pp. 73-4.

[38] Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, tr. R. Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977/1975), p. 7.

[39] See Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in M.J. Shapiro (ed), Language and Politics (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 195-214.

[40] Michael Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in Rationalism in Politics and other Essays (London: Methuen & Co, 1962), p. 235.

> Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
> we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
> we drink you at sundown and in the morning we drink and we
>   drink you
> death is a master from Germany his eyes are blue
> he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
> a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
> he sets his pack on to us he grants us a grave in the air
> he plays with the serpents and daydreams death is a master from
>   Germany
>
> your golden hair Margarete
> your ashen hair Shulamith[41]

The opening of the poem indicates the relentless recurrence of suffering through the drinking of black milk, mornings, afternoons, evenings, nights. The above passage shows how this circle is itself repeated again and again, in different forms, throughout the entire poem. Its monotony and lack of punctuation evoke the drudgery of life in a concentration camp, the resignation of the masses of Jews who are silently condemned to death.[42] But 'Deathfugue' does not just repeat, it alters and intensifies the repetitions at the same time. Black milk is now no longer referred to in the third person ('we drink it') but in the second one ('we drink you'), thus increasing the sense of despair which permeates the poem. In the second passage the refrain-like metaphor of drinking black milk is also abruptly interrupted by the phrase 'death is a master from Germany.' This sudden intrusion into the polyphonic play of the victims, which remains a key feature until the poem's end, reveals the increasing proximity of the victims to the oppressor and to death itself.[43] Despair is at its peak, and the only way out, the only form of freedom left is to escape the tortured mortal body and search for 'the breezes [w]here one lies unconfined,' to be granted a 'grave in the air.' The final lines of the poem then slow down, enter a state of transition, a trance where evil and suffering blur into daydreams, until, at last, death emerges from the victims' final words. The only task left is to give Sulamith, covered with ash, the last word and the silence after, the power of "holding unto what Nazism tried to erase: a rooted identity."[44]

THE PROBLEM OF ASSESSING THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF POETIC DISSENT

How is one to assess the political influence of a poem like 'Deathfugue,' the extent to which it may have engendered a slow transformation of societal values?

---

[41] Celan, "Todesfuge," p. 42, tr. Hamburger p. 63.

[42] Clarise Samuels, <u>Holocaust Visions: Surrealism and Existentialism in the Poetry of Paul Celan</u> (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), p. 101.

[43] Glenn, <u>Paul Celan</u>, pp. 75-6.

[44] John Felstiner, <u>Paul Celan</u>, p. 41.

There are no direct ways of assessing discursive dissent, for its impact on social dynamics is mediated through tactical and temporal processes. I have already outlined, especially in the Second Interlude, why there is no 'hard evidence' that can provide positive and unconditional support for a specific hypothesis about the working of poetic dissent.

A poem like 'Deathfugue' does not directly cause particular events, it does not visualize an opponent in space and time. A linguistic expression of dissent works in tactical manners, that is, it insinuates itself into its target - the population at large - without taking it over, but also without being separated from it. Even the agent becomes gradually blurred. Celan may well have written 'Deathfugue,' but its effect cannot be reduced to its author or even to the poem itself. Those who have read the poem, those whose constitution of the Holocaust memory has been reshaped by Celan's polyphony, may have passed bits of altered knowledge on to other people. Furthermore, Celan was, of course, not the only one who struggled with linguistic silences of the Nazi period and its aftermath. Countless other poets, novelists and playwrights have done so too. And there are even more agents, common men and women, faceless and innumerable, whose daily acts of speaking and writing have subverted the remnants of a linguistically sanctioned form of domination.

Discursive forms of dissent will always remain elusive. But this does not render ensuing manifestations of human agency less potent or real. Neither does this recognition invalidate efforts to assess the role of language in promoting processes of social change. It does, however, call for a more subtle and sensitive approach to the question of evidence.

In the case of 'Deathfugue,' convincing evidence for its impact on social dynamics can be found on countless fronts. The prominence of this poem contributed to Celan's reputation as one of the leading German language poets of the post-war period. When 'Deathfugue' appeared in the early 1950s, literary critics generally embraced it, as Hans Egon Holthusen did in the influential journal Merkur, as "one of the most splendid Zeitgedichte (period poems) we have."[45] The influence of 'Deathfugue' soon spread beyond the narrow circle of intellectuals who preoccupy themselves with poetics. Several generations of German high school children have learned 'Deathfugue' by heart. It has been anthologized countless times and today, half a century after the flowing of black milk, 'Deathfugue' represents an important critical memory of the Nazi period.

The tropes of 'Deathfugue' still stand as significant and widely-used cultural markers that signify the necessity for a continuous critical engagement with Germany's past. Metaphors, such as 'death is a master from Germany' or 'your

---

[45] Hans Egon Holthusen, in Merkur, 1954, as cited by Agnes Körner Domandi, Modern German Literature (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), p. 150.

ashen hair Shulamith' have served, for example, as titles for several anthologies and a recent prominent Holocaust television documentary.[46] Each episode of this six-hour series, broadcasted in April and May 1990, begins with a "full-screen image of Celan's face, then pans over death camps and monuments as his voice is heard reciting [Deathfugue] in its entirety."[47] Many other examples illustrate how the German public has, as John Felstiner underlines, absorbed 'Deathfugue' as a virtual institution. Its polyphony was recited in the German parliament in 1988, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Kristallnacht. Several composers rendered Celan's poem into vocal and instrumental combinations. By 1991, there were more than 100 musical compositions of Celan's texts. A Jewish dance group performed 'Deathfugue' in their repertory and several lines invoking Margarete and Shulamith appeared on paintings by Anselm Kiefer.[48]

For Felstiner the prolonged impact of 'Deathfugue' on German society and politics cannot be overestimated. It is one of these rare poems, he believes, that upsets assumptions and forces new choices:

> This astonishing piece of writing has drawn more passionate attention than any other poem from the war. What looms largest is its public career since 1952, when it came out in Germany. The <u>Guernica</u> of postwar European literature, "Todesfuge" has become a historical agent, accumulating its own biography...[N]o lyric has exposed the exigencies of its time so radically as this one, whose speakers - Jewish prisoners tyrannized by a camp commandant - start off with the words "Black milk of daybreak we drink it at [sundown]."[49]

Felstiner's claims are rather bold, but not unrealistic. Others agree and point towards the key role Celan played in post-War discussions about the possibilities and impossibilities of contemporary poetry to deal with an event like the Holocaust.[50] Even the pessimistic Adorno had to revise his earlier position and admit, although with several decades delay, that his hasty dismissal of poetry "may have been wrong." He even went as far as crediting Celan with writing poetry that achieves the near impossible: to resist the tendency of language to reify itself.[51]

Despite the overwhelming evidence of Celan's influence on German social and political dynamics, it remains difficult to determine how exactly 'Deathfugue' may have expressed manifestations of human agency. Celan's poetry is no heroic

---

[46] Dieter Lamping (ed), <u>Dein Aschenes Haar Sulamith: Dichtung über den Holocaust</u> (München: Piper, 1992); Berndt Jentzsch (ed), <u>Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland: Deportation und Vernichtung in poetichen Zeugnissen</u> (München, 1979).

[47] Felstiner, <u>Paul Celan</u>, p. 330.

[48] <u>Ibid</u>, pp. 288.

[49] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 26-7, 34, 70-1, 118, and "Introduction" to Chalfen, <u>Paul Celan</u>, p. xxvii.

[50] Monika Schmitz-Emans, "Paul Celan," in H. Steinecke (ed), <u>Deutsche Dichter des 20. Jahrhunderts</u> (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1994), p. 648.

[51] Adorno cited in Dennis J. Schmidt, "Black Milk and Blue," p. 120.

outburst of revolutionary energy, no act through which an autonomous subject, a clearly defined agent, single-handedly changed the course of history. Celan was part of a post-Holocaust discursive order, an order which was reflected in his poetry. And in his attempt to break through the linguistic and political boundaries of this order, Celan was far from alone. He was one of many poets - Nelly Sachs, Primo Levy, and Ingeborg Bachmann, amongst others, come to mind - who have cut through the fog of the Nazi legacy to created concrete possibilities for a more inclusive and empathetic German politics.

Aspects of human agency projected through a poem like "Deathfugue" can be conceptualized through the extensive body of knowledge that has emerged from attempts to understand the role of literature in social and political affairs. There are various treatises, Hans Magnus Enzensberger's is the most prominent among them, which deal with how post-war German poetry has revealed forms of domination that had been normalized through language.[52]   And there are even more extensive inquiries into the links between literature and Holocaust themes. Much of this literature is based on the premise, expressed in detail throughout the previous chapter, that social reality is decisively shaped through the manner in which if is represented through language. From this viewpoint, "Holocaust fact and Holocaust fiction are Siamese twins, joined at birth and severed at their peril."[53] Such a recognition is not meant to deny or diminish the brutal reality of the Holocaust. It is meant, as many commentators point out, as a form of political engagement, a plea for social transformation that can emerge from altering the route through which we approach a disaster of the magnitude of the Holocaust.[54]

A path-breaking study by James Young demonstrates convincingly how a poem like 'Deathfugue' shapes political practices. Young analyzes the construction of memory, meaning and understanding in Holocaust narratives. He emphasizes, as do the above authors, that the truth of the Holocaust does not lie beyond the ways we understand, interpret and write its history. The events of the Holocaust are, in this sense, "shaped post factum in their narration.[55] Young pays particular attention to the role of tropes in this process. Because the Holocaust cannot be know outside the figurative dimension of language, one must look for its political meaning within

---

[52] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Poesie und Politik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963). See also Wolfgang Kuttenkeuler (ed), Poesie und Politik: Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973) and the special issues of Text + Kritik on Politische Lyrik, Vol. 9/9a, June 1973 and October 1984.

[53] Lawrence L. Langer, Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 11.

[54] Lamping, Dein Aschenes Haar Sulamith, p. 276; Langer, Art from the Ashes, p. 3 and The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 1-30; Udoff, "On Poetic Dwelling," p. 324; Hans Schütz, Juden in der Deutschen Literatur (München: Piper, 1992), pp. 312-3; Randolph L. Braham (ed), Reflections of the Holocaust in Art und Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. v-vii.

[55] James E. Young, Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 1, 5.

the domain of tropes. This is why questions of metaphor, he stresses, have consequences that go far beyond literary texts.[56] The behaviors of Holocaust perpetuators and victims, as well as our reactions to them, depend on the tropes available to deal with the issues in question. Young points out, for instance, how the long-standing and linguistically entrenched tradition of anti-Semitism may have blinded much of the world to the actual gravity of the events, and therefore left many unprepared to face the Nazi threat.[57] Metaphor becomes political and masks politics when, for instance, German soldiers "who poured quicklime down the sewers in Warsaw to kill Jews in the uprising could write home that they were busy "liquidating vermin."[58] These examples show how collective imaginations can be subjugated by metaphor. But the very same figurative dimension of language also offers liberating potential.

By engaging with the metaphorical aspect of language and the ideational character of interpretation, authors of critical texts about the Holocaust can shape the course of future actions. The manner in which we linguistically constitute the past, influences our understanding of the present and shapes our choices for the future. This is why Young locates the most explicit potential for literature to transform social practices in the recognition that "particular kinds of knowledge lead to particular kinds of actions."[59]

In the specific case of post-war German politics, the consequences of engaging with language and interpretation could have led in two basic directions, one moving back towards the events of the Holocaust, and another one moving out of them into a world that is understood in light of this human disaster.[60] Celan's metaphorical reworking of the Nazi legacy through the polyphonies of 'Deathfugue' evokes one of the reasons why German politics has embarked on the latter route, or at least in its general direction.

GIVE IT THE SHADE: ADVENTURES AT THE EDGE OF LANGUAGE GAMES

Just when 'Deathfugue' became a major linguistic and political symbol for coming to terms with the Holocaust, Celan started to turn against his famous early poem. He considered it too explicit, too directly linked with the physicality of the events. By the time Celan received the prestigious Georg Büchner Preis, in 1960, the style of his writings had changed. His language grew more and more sparse. He deconstructed words into their syllables or created new words, especially compound words.

---

[56] Ibid, pp. 83-93.

[57] Ibid., p. 92.

[58] Ibid., p. 93.

[59] Ibid., pp. 84, 191-2

[60] Ibid., p. 93.

By stretching the boundaries of the German language further, Celan hoped to rewrite 'Deathfugue' in an even more convincing, more inclusive manner. This new, more radical phase in Celan's poetry contains great transformative potential, but it is also plagued by equally great difficulties and dangers. It illustrates the dilemmas entailed in embarking on adventures at the edge of language games. The immediate reaction of the German literary establishment to Celan's later poetry is revealing. Most critics considered his language as difficult, irrational, alienating and hermetic. His poetic message was perceived as cut off from reality and thus socially irrelevant.[61] His later poems were portrayed as outdated, not in tune with rising lyric traditions that attempt to speak in a language accessible to everyone.[62] One commentator, for instance, notes that many of Celan's poems are so strange that their meaning can be accessible only to readers who share the authors linguistic assumptions. This is, he explains, because Celan no longer operates in a language that deals with things, but in a meta-language, that is, a language that deals with language itself.[63] Notwithstanding the immediate dismissal of literary critics, it was the very difficulty and complexity of these poems that accounted for the emergence of an immense body of secondary literature after Celan's suicide in 1970.

The poem "Stretto," written in the spring of 1958, is generally considered to be one of Celan's most demanding poems. It is also regarded as his most successful attempt at rewriting the form and content of 'Deathfugue.' Like his other later poems, 'Stretto' has so far been too difficult to have an impact on social and political dynamics in Germany. But this remarkable poem nevertheless offers valuable insight into the workings of discursive dissent. It highlights the difficulties, and maybe the future potential, of working at the edge of language games. It provides theoretical insight into the functioning of linguistic dissent, insight that is useful far beyond the specific, difficult and highly intellectualized tropes of 'Stretto,' insight that may even shed light on the dynamics entailed in more mundane, everyday acts of speaking and writing. It is thus with this more widely perceived objective of probing the potential and dangers of discursive dissent that I now engage in a close reading of 'Stretto.'

The opening lines of 'Stretto' reveal immediately that Celan's treatment of the Holocaust now takes on a very different, much more abstract form than in 'Deathfugue':

---

[61] Friedrich Kröll, "Anverwandlung der 'Klassischen Moderne,'" in L. Fischer (ed), <u>Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1967</u> (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1986), pp. 258-9.

[62] Hermann Schlösser, "Subjektivität und Autobiographie," in K. Briegleb and S. Weigel (eds), <u>Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968</u> (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1992), pp. 406-7.

[63] Harald Weinrich cited in Karl Krolow, "Lyrik," in D. Lattmann (ed), <u>Die Literatur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland</u> (Zürich: Kindler Verlag, 1973), pp. 443-4.

*

Driven into the
terrain with the unmistakable track:

grass, written asunder. The stones, white,
with the shadows of grassblades:
Do not read any more - look!
Do not look any more - go!

Go, your hour
has no sisters, you are -
are at home. A wheel, slow,
rolls out of itself, the spokes
climb,
climb on a blackish field, the night
needs no stars, nowhere
does anyone ask after you.

*

Nowhere
does anyone ask after you - ...[64]

A detailed and influential interpretation of this poem by Peter Szondi brings us directly to the central issue. The first two lines inevitably raise a number of questions. What is meant by the terrain, the unmistakable track? Where are the answers? They are elusive, missing altogether. And this is Celan's main point. What matters at the beginning of 'Stretto,' according to Szondi, is not the possible meaning of the words employed, but precisely the fact that this meaning is open, that the reader is led into a context that s/he does not know, or, more precisely, is not supposed to know.[65] The reader is driven into an unknown terrain in which s/he is responsible for constituting the context of meaning. This participatory structure renders impossible any separation between the one who reads and that which is read. In other words, the reading subject merges with the subject of the poem that is read.[66]

---

[64] Celan, "Engführung," in <u>Sprachgitter</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. I, pp. 197-8, tr. M. Hamburger as "The Straightening," in <u>Poems of Paul Celan</u>, p. 137. The German title of this poem, "<u>Engführung</u>" is difficult to translate adequately into English. <u>Engführung</u> is a musical term, equivalent to the Italian <u>stretto</u> (which I retained as title) that refers to aspects of the compositions of fugues. It captures the complex musical structure of the poem and draws attention to the importance of repetitions, movements, plays of polyphony, transitions from voice to voice. But <u>Engführung</u> also has the more common meaning of "narrowing down" (as in Hamburger's translation of the title as "The Straightening"). In this sense it may refer to the search for a path, an opening of language that leads through the collective memory so narrowed down by Nazi death camps.

[65] Peter Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt: Versuch über die Verständlichkeit des modernen Gedichts," in <u>Celan-Studien</u> (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 48.

[66] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 49.

The tropes of 'Stretto' are more complex and difficult to grasp than those of 'Deathfugue.' The terrain one is driven into suggests a landscape, but not an ordinary one. It is a landscape in which grass is 'written asunder.' It is thus not a landscape of human dwelling, but a terrain of the trace, a written landscape, a text in which the grassblades turn into letters.[67] This textuality, we are told, casts shadows unto white stones. Are they gravestones? Grass, the symbol of vegetation, turned into a rigid and arid terrain? Green deadened into white stone, slipped into the dark and forgotten parts of our collective memories? Some surely think so.[68] But the text is less clear. Various tropes suggest that one is led into an ambiguous terrain that gradually reveals itself as a place of shadows, of silence, of mourning. We are in an hour that has not more sisters, in the last hour, the hour of death. And we are told not to read any more, but to look. And, indeed, not to look any more, but to go. To go where? Into the text.

Szondi emphasizes, once more, that we have entered a landscape of textuality that is not an object of reading, but that which is read itself. The reader thus stands not outside, but is driven into the textual terrain. This is to say that the poem is no longer mimesis, no longer a representation of something beyond itself. The word becomes a mimesis of itself because the text refuses to stand in the service of some external reality. The poem constructs and develops its own reality. A reality which, of course, always remains poetic reality.[69]

With this move from mimesis to poetic reality Celan follows a path that has been carved out well by preceding poets. Novalis and German Romanticism in general bestowed poetry and painting with a sense of autonomy. The French tradition then intensified this tendency. Baudelaire warned that poetry must under no circumstances ally itself with science or morality, for "it has no other objective than itself; it cannot have another objective."[70] The decisive turning point away from a perception of poetic language as representation is, however, usually associated with Stéphan Mallarmé. He argued, in a famous letter to the painter Edgar Degas, that "one does not make a poem with ideas, but with words."[71] This is to say that a poet should not search for motives exterior to words. Mallarmé's voice still resonates strongly a century later. Literary critics like Barthes draw attention to the "closed nature" of poetry, which encapsulates both the function and structure of language.[72] Sartre talks of poets as those who "consider words as things and not as signs."[73]

---

[67] Concurring on this interpretation are Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," p. 50 and Fóti, Heidegger and the Poets, p. 86.

[68] Klaus Weissenberger, Die Elegie bei Paul Celan (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1969), p. 48.

[69] Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," pp. 51-2.

[70] Baudelaire, "Préface aux 'Histoires extraoirdinaires d' Edgar Allan Poe,'" in Poèmes et Proses (Paris: Seghers, 1964), p. 144.

[71] Mallarmé cited in Joubert, La Poésie, p. 86.

[72] Barthes, Le degrée zero, p. 34.

[73] Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature? tr. B. Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949, p. 12

Heidegger goes even further and tries to "bring language as language to language."[74] Celan follows this trend but only up to a certain point. He agrees that a poem "speaks always only in its own, very own matter." Indeed, he wants to "think Mallarmé systematically through to the end."[75] This led Celan away from the realistic and prosaic language that characterized the approach of many contemporary poet critics of Nazism, like Kurt Tucholsky or Berthold Brecht.

But Celan refuses to go beyond the poem, to engage directly with concrete and daily political issues. Instead of positioning himself on either side of black and white, he reaches for gray-zones, openness, unpredictability and thinking space. While searching for silenced voices, Celan warns, in his poem "Sprich auch du," that this search must not simply replace one orthodoxy with another one:

> Speak, you also,
> speak as the last,
> have your say
>
> Speak -
> But keep yes and no unsplit.
> And give your say this meaning:
> give it the shade.
>
> Give it shade enough,
> give it as much
> as you know has been dealt out between
> midnight and midday and midnight...[76]

Here too, Celan walks on a well used path, a path that explores the complexities and gray-shades of life without having to come down on either side of the black-and-white divide that runs through most political debates. Many poets write poetry for its own sake, for the sake of art and nothing else. Two of the most influential contemporary poets, Seamus Heaney and Joseph Brodsky, stress again and again that poetry should refuse to serve political or moral objectives. Such political requirements, they argue, would debase language and thus lower the "plane of regard" from which we can gain a chance of looking at ourselves critically.[77]

But does the refusal to go beyond the poem mean that poets live in their own world, a world that is not relevant to our daily lives? Does this refusal annihilate possibilities of exerting human agency through discursive dissent? Not at all.

---

[74] Heidegger, <u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>, p. 242.

[75] Celan, "Der Meridian," pp. 193, 197.

[76] Paul Celan, "Sprich auch du," in <u>Von Schwelle zu Schwelle</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. I, p. 135, tr. M. Hamburger in <u>Poems of Paul Celan</u>, p. 99.

[77] Seamus Heaney, "The Singer of Tales: On Joseph Brodsky" in <u>The New York Times Book Review</u>, 3 March 1996, p. 31 and <u>The Redress of Poetry</u> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995); Paul Breslin, "Heaney's Redress," in <u>Poetry</u>, Vol. clxviii, No. 6, Sept 1996, pp. 337-351.

Language, as shown in the previous chapter, is always already politics. Celan's poetry becomes political precisely through its explicit apoliticality. By refusing to be drafted for narrow and short term political objectives, by attempting to 'give it the shade,' poetry acquires a subversive dimension. Only by speaking in its own matter, Celan points out, can poetry speak in another, an entirely different matter.[78]

Celan never perceives language as independent of historical reality. This is where he departs from some of the above positions. As opposed to Heidegger, he does not want to bring 'language through language to language.' Words in Celan's poems always retain their link with experiences that mean something specific. Much like reality cannot be understood outside language, Celan does not attempt to understand language outside reality. This, at least, is the belief of Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl.[79]

But Celan knows that reality never is. It has to be searched and conquered.[80] It has to be opened up to multiple ways of seeing. This opening can only occur through language, and it can never be reached immediately. Critique of language always is a long process, saturated with obstacles and contradictions, obscurities and frustrations. A passage from the middle of 'Stretto' leads us into this problematique:

    *

            Covered it
                up - who?
        Came, came.
        Came a word, came,
        came through the night,
        wanted to shine, wanted to shine.

        Ash.
        Ash, ash.
        Night.
        Night-and-night. - Go
        to the eye, the moist one.

    *

            Go
                to the eye,
                    the moist one - ...[81]

---

[78] Celan, "Der Meridian," p. 196.

[79] Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl, Poetik im Lichte der Utopie: Paul Celans poetologische Texte (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986), p. 58.

[80] Celan, "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker, Paris 1958" in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III, p. 168.

[81] Celan, "Engführung," pp. 199-200, tr. Hamburger p. 141.

This passage constitutes the exact center of 'Stretto,' which is organized in a scheme of 4 + 1 + 4. It signifies a crucial turning point that is even intensified within the passage through a shift from past to present tense. The poem literally leaps from past to its exploration of the present. But we are still in a world of margins and silences, where the 'nobody asks after you' from the beginning of the poem continues to resonate strongly. All questions are covered up. We do not have words to talk about that which needs to be talked about. Language still drowns those who long for a voice.

There is hope that words will come, come through the night, that they will break the silence and shine, that they will exert some sort of human agency. But then the aspiring word is once more suffocated by the return of the night, by the ashes, the overwhelming presence of Nazi death camps, the morbid crematoriums that extinguish all life and light. Not all is in vain, though, Fóti points out. She detects a new response to the initial commands of 'look' and 'go.' The poem now bears witness by going to the moist eye, whose weeping renders impossible luminosity and panoramic vision.[82] Others interpret this passage in a less optimistic way. Derrida hears above all a terrifying scream echoing back and forth between 'ash' and 'night,' a scream that recalls the all-consuming Holocaust, "the hell of our memory."[83] The crucial point for Szondi is that we have only just arrived at the turning point of the poem. It is still unthinkable that the word itself really comes, that it will shine in the night of sleeping words. At this point there is above all censorship and contradiction between, on the one hand, the world of the word that comes through the night in order to shine and, on the other hand, the world of ash, of absolute night, of "night-and-night, which knows nothing but itself."[84]

Out of the contradiction between the world of words and the world of ash and night emerges the necessity to push the boundaries of language games, to push them as far as it is necessary to be able to pierce through the night, to speak again about that which has been covered with ash. Thus, poetry must open up thinking space by asserting itself, as Celan believes, at its own margins.[85] The poem then signifies a "turn of breath," which Schmidt interprets as the struggle to breath, the call for voice, the body's effort to absorb the surrounding world and to extend itself beyond it.[86]

---

[82] Fóti, "A Missed Interlocution: Heidegger and Celan," p. 89. See also Weissenberger, Die Elegie bei Paul Celan, pp. 49-50.

[83] Derrida, "Shibboleth for Paul Celan," pp. 50-1.

[84] Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," pp. 70-4.

[85] Celan, "Der Meridian," p. 197.

[86] Schmidt "Black Milk and Blue," p. 155. Celan talks of poetry as a "turn of breath" (Atemwende) in "Der Meridian," p. 195. One of his later collections of poetry also carries this title. See Atemwende, in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II, pp. 9-107.

Most of those who write poetry or poetics know, as Celan does, how crucial it is to search for a 'turn of breath.' Indeed, the attempt to stretch language games may well be the one of the most important defining characteristic of poetry. Poets, some say, are those who reject the instrumentality of prose, subvert established language codes, transgress limits and penetrate forbidden thinking spaces.[87] A poet renders strange that which is familiar and thus forces the reader to confront what s/he habitually has refused to confront. For Kristeva, poetic language disturbs, transgresses rules, fractures meaning. In doing so it "breaks up the inertia of language habits" and "liberates the subject from a number of linguistic, psychic, and social networks."[88] Nicole Brossard argues likewise that poetic practices, such as shaking the syntax, breaking grammatical rules, disrespecting punctuation and using blank space, have a profound effect on readers. They offer new perspectives on reality and make room for alternative ways of perceiving life and its meanings.[89] A poetic creation, Octavio Paz even argues, is above all an act of violence done to language. It "is revolutionary by nature."[90]

WEIGHING DOWN THE NET: SOCIAL REALITY IN LIGHT OF ITS POETIC POSSIBILITIES

Celan, and poetry in general, has brought us back to the key problematique of the previous chapter. Does not poetry's violation of linguistic rules run the risk of ending up in a language that is socially irrelevant? Is poetry not evoking the worst fears of the later Wittgenstein by looking for a language void of flaws? Have we simply returned to a logical positivist position that draws a direct link between words and meanings, that engages in a futile search for a more perfect, more logical, more authentic representation of reality? This need not be the case.

Much like the later Wittgenstein, most poets reject a view of language as representation of reality. I have shown that ever since Mallarmé the poetic word is no longer mimesis, but reality, poetic reality. But does this equation of poetic words with things, rather than signs, not lead into another cul de sac, namely linguistic idealism? Do poets live in a dream world where objects outside the poem have no qualities of their own? Are we still ignoring Wittgenstein's warning not to abandon the crude, imperfect language of everyday life? Some poets may adopt an avant-gardist position that runs this risk. But nothing compels poetry to do so. Celan certainly refuses to detach poetry from concrete social practices, and so does the

---

[87] Joubert, La poésie, pp. 5, 55-59.

[88] Kristeva, Recherches pour une sémanalyze (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 178-9, tr. L.S. Roudiez in the introduction to Kristeva's Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 2.

[89] Nicole Brossard, "Poetic Politics," in C. Bernstein (ed), The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy (New York: ROOF, 1990), p. 79.

[90] Octavio Paz, The Bow and the Lyre, tr. R.L.C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973/1956), p. 3.

argument of this paper. If poets detach themselves and explore their own poetic reality, it is not to search for a perfect language or to ignore the multiple realities of social and political life. If a poet pretends that words are things, that the poem knows nothing but itself, s/he draws attention to the fact that words are arbitrary signs. Mimesis would amount to nothing but a reproduction of that which is. By refusing to go beyond the poem, the poet subverts the often unquestioned link between the sign and the referent, the non-linguistic reality that the sign designates. There is neither an idealist nor a positivist trait in this practice, but simply a desire to stretch language games beyond the narrow rules that they embody at a particular time and place.

Subverting the arbitrariness of the signification of signs entails, as Celan pointed out above, that a poem asserts itself at its own margins. This is both the strength and weakness of poetry. To be effective, a poet must operate right at the edge of language games. A step to the right and the poem gets sucked into the linguistic vortex of the dominant discourse, a step to the left and what looms is a fall into the abyss of incomprehensibility. In both of cases the poem fails as a discursive form of dissent. It is unable to exert human agency.

Poetry must go beyond what is. It must look for utopia. But the desire for utopia must stay within the possibilities of existing language games. This weighing down of poetic dissent may be against the intuition of radical resistance, but it is necessary in order to avoid the fatal step into the abyss to the left of the narrow cliff-walk. It is necessary to engender human agency from poetic dissent. Celan, in one of the poems that seek Atemwende, a "turn of breath:"

> In rivers north of the future
> I throw out my nets, which you
> weigh down, hesitantly,
> with shadows written by
> stones.[91]

The metaphorical power of this short poem captures one of the key aspects of Celan's engagement with language and social reality. One who throws out the net engages in an act of expectation. The hesitant weighing down of the net, Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasizes, does not signify doubt or inner indecisiveness. Rather, it expresses the subtle process of placing the net into the right position: too much weight and it will sink, not enough and it will drift on the surface of the river, unable to catch anything at all.[92] The unity of throwing out and weighing down captures the need to stretch language games while resisting the illusory temptation of eluding them altogether.

---

[91] Celan, "In den Flüssen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol, II, p. 14.

[92] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du? (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 35-9.

Only a carefully placed poetic net can capture voices of dissent that have the potential to transform social practices. Indeed, in his few poetological texts Celan emphasizes that poetry, while seeking freedom through its radical subversive behavior, is at the same time confined by the boundaries of existing language games. Thus, the language of poetry "attempts to measure the range of what is given and what is possible."[93] This means that a poem must be able to communicate. It cannot be obscure, it cannot seal itself off hermetically. It is, at least in the case of Celan, never far removed from the memory of pain and death and yet it must see beyond the narrow construction of this memory.[94]

Poetry is inevitably thrown into this tension between reality and utopia, between resisting language games and falling silent by overstepping their margins. The poem sees reality as process, rather than something single, static and unproblematic. Thus, utopia in Celan's poetry is not idealistic, not a dream that exists merely in our minds. Poetic utopia is a perspective on reality, a perspective that "views reality in light of its possibilities."[95] The final passage of "Stretto" brings us deeper into the practical aspects of this problematique:

At owl's flight, here,
the conversations, day-gray,
of the water-level traces

*
            (-- day-gray,
          of
        the water-level traces -

Driven into the
terrain
with
the unmistakable
track:

Grass.
Grass,
written asunder.)[96]

[93] Celan, "Antwort auf eine Umfrage," p. 167.

[94] Celan "Ansprache in Bremen," p. 195; See also Hamburger, "Introduction," p. 27; Schmidt, "Black Milk and Blue," pp. 114-6; Fóti, Heidegger and the Poets, pp. 105-6; Leonard Olschner, "Poetic Mutations of Silence: At the Nexus of Paul Celan and Osip Mandelstam," in Fioretos, Word Traces, pp. 369-70.

[95] Kohler-Luginbühl, Poetik im Lichte der Utopie, p. 266.

[96] Celan, "Engführung," p. 204, tr. Hamburger pp. 147-9.

At first sight, the end of "Stretto" seems to be a return to its opening, to 'the terrain with the unmistakable track.' But Szondi warns of such a simplistic interpretation. Consider that the final passage is written within brackets. This places the passage outside the poem's formal 4 + 1 + 4 structure. Thus, Szondi believes that the evocation of the poem's opening at its end is done primarily to draw attention to the links with the preceding part, especially the 'conversations' and the 'water-level-traces.'[97] But there is also the 'owl's flight.' Is it Hegel's owl of Minerva, which spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk?[98] Not likely, for Celan's search for utopia goes clearly beyond a mere interpretation of history. The owl's flight may evoke a twilight zone, the obscurities of the poem's opening terrain, the hour of transition between day and night.[99] The immediately following 'day-gray' intensifies this moment of transition, of obscurity. Not the brightness of the day is evoked, but its grayness. Is this the earlier mentioned task of the poet not to 'keep yes and not unsplit,' to 'give it the shade'? Be it as it may, we know for sure what is 'day-gray,' namely the 'conversations...of the water-level-traces.' Are these conversations that emerge from the depth of the earth, the depth of life, as the German original <u>Grundwasserspuren</u> (literally 'ground-water-traces') suggests? Is this the forgetting, the remembering, conversations about the basic condition of humanity?[100] The key point for Szondi is that the 'water-level-traces' and the 'terrain with the unmistakable track' are one and the same: the word.[101]

We have arrived back at the beginning of the poem. But while the beginning purposely deprived the reader of knowing the meaning of 'the terrain with the unmistakable track,' the ending lifts this suspension. After reading the preceding parts of the poem, the reader now knows what the elusive meaning is. It is, at least according to Szondi, the very reading of that which precedes.[102] The 'conversations, day-gray, of the water-level-traces' take off where Nazi gas-chambers imposed silence. The 'water-level-traces' break this silence, turn into conversation, like the water underneath the earth bearing witness for lost life and, at some point, bubbling up and spurting onto the surface of the earth again. By now language is transformed, for the meaning of spurting, of <u>spritzen</u>, no longer bears the weight of its tainted association with the flowing of Jewish blood from knife-points. Language has opened up and turned against the flow of its own, narrowly constructed legacy.

The spurting unto the surface of silenced conversations evokes another key concern of Celan. A poem, for him, is like a "message in a bottle" (<u>Flaschenpost</u>). It is sent out with the hope that some day it will be washed onto a shore, onto something open, a heart that seeks dialogue, maybe a receptive "you," a receptive

---

[97] Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," pp. 58, 108.

[98] G.W.F. Hegel, <u>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</u> (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 28.

[99] Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," p. 95-6; Gold, "Reading Celan," p. 206.

[100] Weissenberger, <u>Die Elegie bei Paul Celan</u>, p. 53

[101] Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," p. 108.

[102] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 108.

reality.[103] A poem, even if it always only speaks in its own matter, is dialogical by nature, because it also speaks in the interest of the Other. The message in the bottle leaves its author, embarks upon a undetermined dialogical journey with an undetermined dialogical task of finding the Other. The poem refuses to be tied down, continuously travels to include that which is strange, that which is different. Celan considers this 'turn of breath,' the extension toward the unfamiliar, the study and acceptance of otherness, as his "spiritual poetizing, if you will."[104] Many who have interpreted Celan's poetry since Szondi's path-breaking essay have drawn attention to this central issue. Emmanuel Levinas is probably the most prominent, but by far not the only commentator who pointed out how Celan's poetry searches for the Other, for an ethical and dialogical relationship with her/him/it. The poem itself then becomes, in Levinas' own idiosyncratic terminology, "an unheard-of modality of the otherwise than Being."[105]

The poem, according to Celan, "wants to reach the Other, it needs this Other, it needs face-to-face interaction."[106] But if it wants to speak to the Other, if it wants to facilitate conversation across day-gray boundaries, then the poem cannot be obscure, it needs to communicate. Given the oppressive nature of existing language games, this communicability may not be immediately recognizable. The poem must, after all, stretch language games in order to be able to speak to the Other. This is why Celan believes that poems "lead a subversive, subterranean existence."[107] The message in the bottle may not be picked up immediately. At the point of its release there may be no language, no cultural understanding to make sense out of the bottled message. It still only searches for dialogue, it still only hopes to be washed ashore one day. It only just started to travel along subterranean 'water-level-traces,' seeking conversation, seeking the Other, seeking an opening to spurt up and reach the surface of language games.

Indeed, as I mentioned before, Celan's poem 'Stretto' has not yet been able to alter discursive practices as powerfully as 'Deathfugue' did. It may be one of the most analyzed poems of this century, but its impact has been confined largely to intellectual audiences. But 'Stretto' has nevertheless provided valuable insight into the workings of critique of language. It represents the abstract potential for human agency, the vision of a future language game that breaks currently imposed silences. For now, though, the message of Celan's later poetry is still caught in a sealed bottle,

---

[103] Celan, "Ansprache in Bremen," p. 186.

[104] Celan, cited in Fóti, Heidegger and the Poets, p. 96. Celan, "Ansprache in Bremen," p. 186, "Der Meridian," pp. 196-198.

[105] Emmanuel Levinas, "De l'être á l'autre," in Noms Propres (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1976), pp. 59-66. See also Fóti, Heidegger and the Poets, pp. 105-12; Evelyn Hunnecke, Poésie et Poétique de Paul Celan, Doctorat d'Etat, Aix Marsaille I, 1987; Kohler-Luginbühl, Poetik im Lichte der Utopie, pp. 59-65.

[106] Celan, "Der Meridian," p. 198.

[107] Celan cited in Kohler-Luginbühl, Poetik im Lichte der Utopie, p. 59.

it still drifts somewhere on a desolate ocean, waiting to be washed ashore and picked up by a discursive practice that embodies dialogue, openness, transformability.

SUMMARY

This chapter has ended a journey during which I have theorized human agency by scrutinizing various practices of dissent. The particular route that I pursued led away from great revolutionary acts towards less spectacular but equally, if not more effective, forms of resistance.

Poetry served as a case study to demonstrate the potential for human agency contained in discursive forms of dissent. It is a potential that can only be unleashed through a long process. This is true of critique of language in general, whatever form it takes. There are no quick and miraculous forms of resistance to discursive domination. Discursive dissent can only work by digging, slowly, underneath the foundations of authority. It unfolds its power through a gradual and largely inaudible transformation of values.

An analysis of poetic dissent, I have argued, has relevance that transcends the often narrow and elitist social circles within which poetry holds sway today. I have thus tried to draw attention to the larger dynamics of discursive dissent by exposing the workings of poetry in two parallel manners.

At a practical level I showed how poetic dissent can be politically relevant, even though, or, rather, precisely because it refuses to be drawn into narrow political debates.   Paul Celan's engagement with the linguistic construction and reconstruction of the Holocaust demonstrates how poetry can deal with crucial political issues, how it can open up spaces to think and act. The manifestations of human agency that are unleashed through such poetic forms of dissent are elusive, primarily because one cannot identify a direct causal link between action and outcome. But this elusiveness does not render poetry, and discursive dissent in general, any less real or relevant. By engaging in discursive and linguistic struggles surrounding the aftermath of the Holocaust, Celan's poetry contributed to the emergence of a more inclusive approach to German politics.

At a more theoretical level, I investigated the precise functioning of poetic dissent in an attempt to illuminate the processes by which critique of language may be able to escape and transform the existing discursive order. It is through such an abstract analysis that the relatively elitist and esoteric domain of poetry is able to shed light on the working of more mundane forms of resistance embedded in daily acts of speaking and writing. In pursuing this line of inquiry I followed Walter

Benjamin's advice that to get to concrete and socially relevant forms of philosophizing, one must first walk through a desert of abstraction.[108]

The often abstract dimensions of poetic dissent epitomize the social issues at stake in the evolution of language games. Poetry does not solve the problem of linguistic domination, but it is unique - and offers valuable insights - insofar as it makes this problem the vortex of its existence. By asserting itself at its own margins, poetry demonstrates the potential and dangers entailed in critique of language. It demonstrates why any form of linguistic dissent that explores thinking spaces at the edge of language games must necessarily walk on a path that becomes thinner and thinner. Only a fine line separates radical linguistic dissent from incomprehensibility and the dangers of a logical-positivist search for a language void of flaws. If poetry is to retain its potential to exert human agency, then it cannot remove words from their social contexts. Linguistic forms of dissent can exert human agency only by accepting the constant risk of overstepping the edge of language games and plunging into bottomless social and political irrelevance.

---

[108] Benjamin cited in Adorno, Negative Dialektik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966), p. 15.

AGAINST CONCLUDING
THE QUESTION OF HUMAN AGENCY

> The power of what is erects the facades into which our consciousness crashes. It must seek to crash through them.
>
> Theodor W. Adorno, <u>Negative Dialektik</u>

I

This thesis has advanced suggestions about how to conceptualize human agency in a complex late modern world. I engaged in this endeavor through a genealogical inquiry into the theory and practice of popular dissent and a subsequent exploration of alternative, discourse oriented terrains of resistance. Throughout this intellectual journey I have aimed at making three distinct contributions to the study of human agency.

First: I have demonstrated, against a fatalistic determinism that permeates much of the literature on structures and discourses, that human agency can still be exerted, even in a complex and rapidly changing late modern world. I have suggested that the most promising potential for human agency is contained in practices of dissent that engage discursive struggles and engender a slow transformation of societal values. Yet, it is one thing to identify discursive forms of dissent. It is an entirely different thing to conceptualize them such that they can be positively endowed with the capacity to exert human agency. I claimed that such an endowment is indeed possible, but that endeavors to pursue it must be careful not to say more than what we could possibly know. In other words, one must not pronounce anthropocentric judgments about what lies beyond human comprehension, one must not impose preconceived ideas upon a far more intricate mesh of social phenomena.

Second: Confronting these difficulties, I have advanced a positive concept of human agency that is neither grounded in a stable essence nor dependent upon a presupposed notion of the subject. In proposing such a conceptualization, I opposed a body of literature which stipulates that stable foundations are necessary to assess human agency. I demonstrated, by contrast, that accepting the contingent character of foundations is the very prerequisite for an adequate understanding of human agency. A contingent foundation can be provided by a specification of operational schemes. As opposed to a theory that attempts to comprehend what human agency is, a specification of operational schemes is content with facilitating understanding of how human agency functions in a specific spatio-temporal context. It is a set of guidelines about how to approach the complexities that arise from posing the question of human agency in a non-essentialist way.

Third: I have tackled the above puzzles through an interdisciplinary approach, which is necessary to deal with circles of revealing and concealing that surround human agency. Such an approach has entailed constant moving back and forth not only between unconnected bodies of literature, but also between theory and practice, abstraction and everydayness, epistemology and ontology, space and time, discursive domination and possibilities for dissent that arise from fissures in them. Each of these sites is crucial. Each offers a unique vantage point, but none of them holds the key to ultimate insight. Indeed, every process of revealing is at the same time a process of concealing. This is to say that by opening up a particular perspective, no matter how insightful it is, one conceals everything that is invisible from this vantage point. The enframing that occurs by such processes of revealing, Heidegger argues, runs the risk of making us forget that enframing is a claim, a disciplinary act which "banishes man into that kind of revealing that is an ordering." And where this ordering holds sway, Heidegger continues, "it drives out every other possibility for revealing."[1] This is why I have moved back and forth between different, sometimes incommensurable, insights into the question of human agency. Such an approach recognizes that the key to circumventing the ordering mechanisms of revealing is to think in circles, not to rest too long at one point, but to pay at least as much attention to linkages between than to contents of mental resting places.

II

My attempt to conceptualize human agency through a specification of operational schemes has taken me, painted in very broad strokes, along the following circular trajectory of revealing and concealing:

---

[1] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," tr. D.F. Krell, in <u>Basic Writings</u> (New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1977), p. 332.

Discourses are powerful forms of domination. They frame the parameters of thinking processes. They shape political and social interactions. Yet, discourses are not invincible. They may be thin. They may contain cracks. By moving the gaze from epistemology to ontology, I explored the ways in which individuals can use these cracks to escape aspects of discursive domination. To recognize the potential for human agency that may open up in these cracks, I shifted foci again, this time from the level of Being to an inquiry into tactical behaviors. Individuals can draw upon the thinking spaces opened up by mobile subjectivities and engage in countless daily acts of dissent, which gradually transform societal values. Over an extended period of time, such tactical forms of dissent influence the evolution of discursive practices. I then scrutinized, by returning to epistemological levels, how these transformed discursive practices may engender processes of social change.

Moving along these elusive and constantly shifting terrains is to resurrect a notion of human agency from a discursive viewpoint. Yet, it is not a notion based on a causal understanding of human agency - an understanding that presupposes an autonomous agent and a clearly separable and identifiable object upon which agency is projected. It is not a notion that attempts to capture an essence of human agency, that searches for universal and ahistoric elements in people's attempts to forge their environment. It is not a notion that embodies claims to totality, that believes every process of social change requires an agent to trigger it. Many social dynamics are beyond the influence of human agency, and certainly far beyond our ability to understand them adequately. Aspirations that deny these limits to cognition must be put to rest, filed ad acta as social science fiction.

III

The elusive nature of human agency renders conventional concluding remarks impossible. This is why I am not recapitulating in detail the findings and arguments of each individual research step. To gaze beyond these partial insights, to raise them to a higher level by squeezing each of the fragments into an overarching whole, would annihilate the unique vantage-point from whence they shed light on the question of human agency. The result: a preconceived and subjective mental image imposed upon a set of idiosyncratic social dynamics, one more reifying act of concealing, the closing of the very thinking space I have tried to open throughout this thesis.

The following brief revisit of my research project is thus not to be seen as a synthesis of my findings, a final word on human agency. Rather, my revisit aims at illustrating the significance of my contribution for past, present and future understandings of human agency. In this sense, my concluding remarks address the implications entailed in recognizing that an understanding of human agency can

never be complete, that the very power of human agency is based on a constant process of becoming something else than what it is.

IV

I began my research with a relatively obscure sixteenth century text, Étienne de la Boétie's <u>Anti-One</u>. I tried to disclose the social consequences entailed in the constitution of meaning by observing how this marginal text has given rise to influential and widespread practices of popular dissent that embody a particular, relatively narrow, image of human agency. I conducted this inquiry as a Nietzschean genealogy. As opposed to a mere historical account, a genealogy is an attempt to pierce through the facades into which our consciousness crashes. This is to say, as one commentator emphasizes, that to create a future (and a more inclusive constitution of human agency), one must first come to terms with, confront and appropriate the past.[2]

One of the central themes that my genealogical analysis has revealed is the widespread modern inability to come to terms with the death of God. La Boétie exemplifies the radical element of early modern thought, the refusal to ground an understanding of the world in Christian faith alone. Unchained from this obligation, but still bound by the larger need to ground knowledge in a stable foundation, la Boétie and many of his fellow Renaissance humanists reached back to ancient Greek philosophy and reasserted human agency by linking it to a quasi-religious faith in the expression of free will. God was replaced with an unbounded trust in the ability of human beings, males as it was implied, to elevate themselves to the measure of all things. Intellectual trends in subsequent periods strongly challenged this vision, but continued to reaffirm the more fundamental need for grounding an understanding of human agency in stable foundations. Reason and science provided this base during the Enlightenment. Romanticism then shifted foci from detached objectivity to emotion, passion and self-expression. But its vision of the world, at least among the mainstream representatives of romantic thought, remained anchored in a stable foundation, not in God or in logos, but in an autonomous self and a masculine revolutionary hero who rises above the corruptness of his time to advance the cause of freedom and justice.

A genealogical inquiry into the assumptions that have guided modern understandings of dissent and human agency is an inquiry into the condition of late modern consciousness. Ideas about human agency which have emerged since the Renaissance remain influential. They continue to frame today's political and social practices. Late modern understandings of dissent revolve by and large around a

---

[2] Keith Ansell-Pearson, <u>An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 123.

humanist core that combines a romantic celebration of human agency with an Enlightenment trust in reason and science. As a result, one vision of human agency has come to prevail in mainstream societal perceptions, a vision that is based on a romantic and masculine image of heroic rebellion against authority, exemplified by the likes of demonstrating masses, striking workers, brick throwing students and fasting dissidents. This image of human agency has become further reified as attempts to assess its dynamics have become embedded in positivist epistemologies, in a desire to master the world and impose order upon its ever increasing complexities. Ensuing grand theoretical approaches to popular dissent, while drawing attention to some overt forms of repression, have often entrenched many of the more subtle, discursively based systems of domination (such as patriarchy).

V

Genealogical critique can open up crucial spaces to think and act by drawing attention to the narrow and arbitrary construction of social practices and political choices. In my case, I have tried to make room for alternative understandings of human agency by evoking the problematic aspects entailed in dominant approaches to popular dissent.

But genealogical critique is neither unproblematic nor sufficient by itself. By articulating critique in relation to arguments advanced by orthodox approaches, the impact of critical voices remains confined within the larger discursive boundaries that have been established through the initial framing of debates. Alternative conceptualizations of human agency must operate simultaneously at various levels to be successful in overcoming existing theoretical and practical dilemmas. Genealogical critique must be supplemented with a process of forgetting the object of critique, of theorizing human agency without being constrained by the images, agendas, issues and terminologies that have been preset by orthodox debates.

Part two carved out an escape route away from the claws of orthodoxy, and it did so through two parallel shifts. Instead of focusing on great revolutionary events, I tried to understand the slow transformation of values that precedes them. Everyday forms of resistance that bring about such discursive changes are mundane in appearance. Yet, the power they unleash may well promote human agency more successfully that the heroic acts of defiance which attract the attention of the media infused late modern world. This move towards a discursive understanding of domination and resistance was then complemented with a methodological shift from grand theories of dissent towards an approach that recognizes the contingent character of foundations, that deals with, rather than circumvents the death of God.

VI

The third and last part of this thesis explored discursive forms of dissent in an attempt to articulate a positive but non-essentialist notion of human agency. The difficulty of this process has consisted in advancing a general framework for understanding human agency without falling back into the temptation of anchoring such an attempt in stable foundations. To succeed in this endeavor requires a never ending balancing act between two equally fateful abysses. On one side looms a totalitarian essentialism that invariably reifies discursive practices of domination. A step towards the other side entails a fall into an epistemological relativism that offers no more ground from which to articulate critique and assert human agency.

Embarking on this inevitable tightrope dance is to ground an understanding of human agency in nothingness, or, to be more precise, in contingent foundations. It is to resurrect hope out of despair. The key to this enterprise lies in demonstrating that human agency is possible even after doing away with the illusion of autonomy which lies at the heart of modern thought, even after accepting that there cannot be authentic knowledge. My particular pursuit of this task, which took me along the interactive links between discourse and dissent, diverges from some of the most influential current approaches. Many leading commentators on social affairs argue, as Terry Eagleton exemplifies, that "a certain provisional stability of identity is essential not only for psychical well-being but for revolutionary political agency."[3] While recognizing the need for provisional foundations to articulate critique, my rethinking of dissent has located manifestations of human agency precisely in the fluidity of identity, in its constituted and multiple dimensions. Rather than sliding into "an irresponsible hymning of the virtues of schizophrenia," as Eagleton fears,[4] an exploration of the discursive struggles that surround the pluralistic nature of identity is the very precondition for human agency and for an adequate assessment of the processes through which its transformative potentials are unleashed.

VII

My exploration of alternative, discourse oriented forms of dissent has focused primarily on manifestations of human agency that are hidden in the written word and in language in general. An engagement with Paul Celan's poetry served to illustrate the larger issues that are at stake in articulating links between language, discourse and human agency.

Languages, from the vantage-point of the later Wittgenstein, are not just mediums of communication or ways of representing the world. They embody the

---

[3] Terry Eagleton, Ideology: An Introduction (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 197-8.

[4] Ibid, p. 198.

social relationship between people and their environment. Languages are disguised political practices, for they silently frame, enforce and entrench systems of domination. But languages also offer opportunities to criticize, resist and exert human agency.

To recognize that language is politics is to acknowledge that form and substance cannot be separated. The manner in which a text is written, a speech is uttered, a thought is thought, is integral to its content. There is no neutral form of representing the world, a form that is somehow detached from the linguistic and social practices in which the speaker or writer is embedded. Science and philosophy, empirical analyses and literature, mathematics and poetry, are all bound by the form through which they convey their ideas. Being built on specific grammatical and rhetorical structures, all of these stories and accounts, Michael Shapiro points out, implicitly advance political arguments. All of them, "no matter how much their style might protest innocence, contain a mythical level - that is they have a job to do, a perspective to promote, a kind of world to affirm or deny."[5] This is not to say that every account of, say social dynamics or historical events, is equally insightful or valid. But it is to recognize the political dimensions of language and to abandon the artificial separation between figurative and non-figurative speech, realist and non-realist genres.

All linguistic practices are metaphorical. But some tropes have been so extensively rehearsed and are so deeply entrenched in linguistic and cultural traditions that they appear as authentic representations of the real.

Several far-reaching implications arise from recognizing the links between form and substance, language and politics. On an intellectual level, such a recognition opens up a range of writing and reading strategies that have the potential to exert human agency. If, as the later Wittgenstein argues, the relationship between words and meaning is not authentic, if language is not to be seen as representing something that lies outside of it, then the writing and reading of a critical and form-conscious text should not be directed primarily at revealing an argument, a single meaning, a linear representation, a link between what is said and what the said represents. One must venture beyond a mere rhetorical rejection of logical positivism.

To break through the facades of deeply entrenched reading and writing strategies is to ease oneself into a different language game without looking for links to a world that has been objectified through a worn out set of metaphors. One must let go of old habits and follow a process of reframing meaning, a process that opens up new perspectives on realities we have rendered unproblematic, on political problems we have deemed insurmountable, on moral dilemmas we have silently entrenched. Celan's poetry is an example of such a journey into a different world of

---

[5] Michael J. Shapiro, "Introduction" to <u>Language and Politics</u> (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 2.

meaning. His is an attempt to stretch the boundaries of language games, an effort to scream out a fragment of truth - temporary, incomplete, impossible, ironic - through the fog of worn out metaphors:

> A roar: it is
> truth itself
> stepped among
> mankind,
> right into the
> metaphor-flurry.[6]

VIII

The poetic imagination does not hover above language. It cannot deliver authentic insight. If, indeed, the occasional poet unleashes the occasional roar of truth, its content will swirl up in a cloud of discursive dust and immediately blur into coalescing metaphor-flurries.

I have focused on Celan's poetry to illustrate, in both an abstract and concrete way, the potential and limits of discursive dissent. Poetry highlights the intricacy of interfering with the links between language games and social reality. It demonstrates that there are ways of breaking through the facades into which our consciousness habitually crashes. Because poetry is self-conscious about the substance of form and the metaphorical structure of language, it is able to shed light on processes by which the use of language can become a viable form of discursive dissent. It demonstrates how it is possible to reveal the gray shades of domination and resistance, how potential for human agency can emerge from questioning linguistically entrenched ideas, assumptions and social practices that have been placed beyond scrutiny.

It is above all at this abstract level that the implications of poetic insight transcend the relatively limited and elitist social circles within which poetry usually operates today. I have focused on the specific workings and the social impact of Celan's poetic engagement with the constitution and reconstitution of the Holocaust legacy. The process by which Celan's poetry has opened up spaces to think and act may be limited to specific linguistic, social and political dynamics in post-War Germany, but the larger lessons derived from this case study also shed light on the functioning of other, more mundane and daily forms of speaking and writing. All acts that interfere with discursive struggles have the potential to transform societal values and exert human agency. And all face a similar set of difficulties.

---

[6] Paul Celan, "Ein Dröhnen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 89, tr. P. Joris in Breathturn. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995), p. 215.

IX

Discursive forms of dissent can engender human agency only through a slow process of transforming values. This process is saturated with obstacles and contradictions. Celan, one more time:

> Threadsuns
> above the grayblack wastes.
> A tree-
> high thought
> grasps the light-tone: there are
> still songs to sing beyond
> mankind.[7]

No matter how successful, no matter how well they grasp the light-tone and shine above the grayblack wastes, discursive forms of dissent are never complete. There will always be discursive fog around us. There will always be 'songs to sing beyond mankind,' beyond the discursive framing of social practices here and now.

The need for discursive dissent will never cease. There is no emancipatory peak to be climbed. Dissent is the very act of climbing, doggedly, endlessly. It is not an event that happens once, a spectacular outburst of energy that overcomes the dark forces of oppression and lifts liberation into an superior state of perpetual triumph. "Everything becomes and returns eternally," Nietzsche says. "Escape is impossible!"[8] Even the fairest social order excludes aspects what does not fit into its view of the world. Inclusiveness lies in a constant process of disturbing language and rethinking meaning, rather than in an utopian final stage.

A discursive notion of human agency is grounded precisely in the recognition that there is no end to the circle of revealing and concealing, of opening and closing spaces to think and act. Revealing is always an act, not something that remains stable. Anything else would suggest a static view of the world, one in which human agency is anihilated, one in which the future can never tear down the boundaries of the present.

---

[7] Celan, "Fadensonnen," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II, p. 26, tr. P. Joris in <u>Breathturn</u>, p. 84.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, <u>The Will to Power</u>, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 545, § 1058.

Just as the interaction of domination and resistance has no end, efforts of coming to terms with them will never arrive at a stage of ultimate insight. Because discursive dissent operates through a constant process of becoming something else than what it is, a theoretical engagement with its dynamics can never be exhaustive. An approach to understanding human agency can remain useful only as long as it stays open and resists the temptation of 'digging deeper' by anchoring itself in a newly discovered essence, a stable foundation that could bring oder and certainty to a complex and turbulent late modern world.

Appendix

ORIGINAL TEXT OF TRANSLATED CITATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Gott ist tot: aber so wie die Art der Menschen ist, wird es vielleicht noch jahrtausendelang Höhlen geben, in denen man seinen Schatten zeigt. - Und wir - wir müssen auch noch seinen Schatten besiegen![1]

WEGGEBEIZT vom
Strahlenwind deiner Sprache
das bunte Gerede des An-
erlebten - das hundert-
züngige Mein-
gedicht, das Genicht.

Aus-
gewirbelt,
frei
der Weg durch den menschen-
gestaltigen Schnee,
den Büßerschnee, zu
den gastlichen
Gletscherstuben und -tischen.

Tief
in der Zeitenschrunde,
beim Wageneis
wartet, ein Atemkristall,
dein unumstößliches
Zeugnis.[2]

---

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, <u>Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft</u> (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1982/1882), p. 125.

[2] Paul Celan, "Weggebeizt," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986/1976), p. 31.

CHAPTER ONE

Cela eft ce viure heureufement? cela f'appelle il viure?... Quelle condition eft plus miferable que de viure ainfi, qu'on n'aie rien à foy, tenant d'autrui fon aife, fa liberté, fon corps & fa vie?[3]

[I]l falloit dire que la domination de plufieurs ne pouuoit eftre bonne, puifque la puiffance d'vn feul, deflors qu'il prend ce tiltre de maiftre, eft dure & defraifonnable ... c'eft vn extreme malheur d'eftre fubiect à vn maiftre, duquel on ne fe peut iamais affeurer qu'il foit bon, puifqu'il eft toufiours en fa puiffance d'eftre mauuais quand il voudra; & d'auoir plufieurs maiftres, c'eft, autant qu'on en a, autant de fois eftre extremement malheureux.[4]

Celui qui vous maiftrife tant n'a que deus yeulx, n'a que deus mains, n'a qu'vn corps, & n'a autre chofe que ce qu'a le moindre homme du grand & infini nombre de vos villes, finon que l'auantage que vous luy faites pour vous deftruire. D'où a il pris tant d'yeulx, dont il vous efpie, fi vous ne les luy bailles? comment a il tant de mains pour vous fraper, f'il ne les prend de vous? Les pieds dont il foule vos cites, d'où les a il, f'ils ne font des voftres? Comment a il aucun pouuoir fur vous, que par vous?[5]

[F]i on ne leur baille rien [les tirans], fi on ne leur obeit point, fans combattre, fans frapper, ils demeurent nuds & deffaits & ne font plus rien, finon que comme la racine, n'aians plus d'humeur ou aliment, la branche deuient feche & morte.[6]

Soies refolus de not feruir plus, & vous voilà libres. Ie ne veux pas que vous le pouffies ou l'esbranflies, mais feulement ne le fouftenes plus, & vous le verres, comme vn grand coloffe à qui on a defrobé la bafe, de fon pois mefme fondre en bas & fe rompre.[7]

Pour la Boétie comme pour Machiavel, l'autorité n'est fait que de l'acceptation des sujets: seulement l'un apprend au prince à forcer leur acquiescement, tandis que l'autre révèle au peuple la puissance de son refus. En d'autres termes, le remède de Contr'Un, dont nous connaissons aujourd'hui l'efficacité politique, c'est la résistance passive, la désobéissance civile, le refus de collaborer à un ordre que l'on réprove.[8]

---

[3] Étienne de la Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, ed. P. Bonnefon in Oeuvres Complètes (Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1967/1552), p. 49

[4] Ibid, pp. 1-2.

[5] Ibid., pp. 12-3.

[6] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[7] Ibid., p. 14.

[8] Pierre Mesnard, L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Siècle (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951/1935),, p. 400.

Si deux, fi trois, fi quatre ne fe defendent d'vn, cela eft eftrange, mais toutesfois poffible... mais mille, mais vn million, mais mille villes, fi elles ne fe defendent d'vn, cela n'eft pas couardife, elle ne va point iufques là... Doncques quel monftre de vice eft cecy qui ne merite pas ancore le tiltre de couardife...?[9]

C'eft cela, que les hommes naiffans foubs le ioug, & puis nourris & efleues dans le feruage, fans regarder plus auant, fe contentent de viure comme ils font nes, & ne penfans point auoir autre bien ni autre droict que ce qu'ils ont trouué, ils prennent pour leur naturel l'eftat de leur naiffance.[10]

Ces fix ont fix cent qui proufitent fous eus, & font de leurs fix cent ce que les fix font au tiran. Ces fix cent en tiennent fous eus fix mille, qu'ils ont efleué en eftat, aufquels ils font donner ou le gouuernement des prouinces, ou le maniement des deniers, afin qu'ils tiennent la main à leur auarice & cruauté... Grande eft la fuitte qui vient apres cela, & qui voudra f'amufer à deuider ce filet, il verra que, non pas les fix mille, mais les cent mille, mais les millions, par cefte corde, fe tiennent au tiran...[11]

CHAPTER TWO

STIMME DES VOLKES
Du seiest Gottes Stimme, so glaubt ich sonst
   In heilger Jugend; ja, und ich sag es noch!
     Um unse Weisheit unbekümmert
       Rauschen die Ströme doch auch, und dennoch, ...[12]

Pour vous qui avec foi aux destinées du genre humain, prenez courage, l'avenir ne vous faillira point. Vous serez persécutés, tourmentés, mais jamais vaincus.[13]

A certains moments de l'histoire, un grand souffle passe sur les masses; leurs respirations, leurs paroles, leurs mouvements se confondent. Alors rien ne leur résiste.[14]

---

[9] La Boétie, Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, pp. 5-6.

[10] Ibid., p. 22.

[11] Ibid., pp. 45-6.

[12] Friedrich Hölderlin, "Stimme des Volkes," in Gedichte (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1979), p. 84.

[13] Félicité de Lamennais, "Préface de 1835", in la Boétie, Le Discours de la Servitude Volontaire (Paris: Payot, 1978), p. 39.

[14] Simone Weil, "Méditation sur l'obéissance et la liberté," in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1991/1934-7), vol. II, p. 131.

CHAPTER THREE

Combien souffre ce monde, pour devenir celui qu l'homme, dêtre façonné entre les quatre murs d'un livre! Qu'il soit ensuite remis aux mains de spéculateurs et d'extravagants qui le present d'avancer plus vite que son propre mouvement, comment ne pas voir là plus que de la malchance? Combattre vaille que vaille cette fatalité à l'aide de sa magie, ouvrir dans l'aile de la route, de ce qui en tient lieu, d'insatiables randonnées, c'est la tâche des Matinaux.[15]

CHAPTER FOUR

Grosse, glühende Wölbung
mit dem sich hinaus- und hinweg-
wühlenden Schwarzgestirn-Schwarm:

der verkieselten Stirn eines Widders
brenn ich dies Bild ein, zwischen
die Hörner, darin,
im Gesang der Windungen, das
Mark der geronnenen
Herzmeere schwillt.

Wo-
gegen
rennt er nicht an?

Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen.[16]

[L]e pouvoir vient d'en bas; c'est-à-dire qu'il n'y a pas, au principle des relations de pouvoir, et comme matrice générale, une opposition binaire et globale entre les dominateurs et les dominés, cette dualité se répercutant de haut en bas, et sur des groupes de plus en plus restraints jusque dans les profondeurs du corps social. Il faut plutôt supposer que les rapports de force multiples qui se forment et jouent dans les apareils de production, les familles, les groupes restreints, les institutions, servent de support à de larges effets de clivage qui parcourent l'ensemble du corps social.[17]

----

[15] René Char, "Rougeur des Matinaux," tr. M. Worton as "Redress of the Dawnbreakers," in <u>The Dawn Breakers</u> (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992/1950), pp. 144-5.

[16] Paul Celan, "Grosse, glühende Wölbung," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II, p. 97.

[17] Michel Foucault, <u>La Volonté de Savoir</u>, Volume 1 of <u>L'Histoire de la Sexualité</u> (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1976), p. 124.

Da jener Berg! Da jene Wolke! Was ist denn dran 'wirklich'? Zieht einmal das Phantasma und die ganze menschliche *Zutat* davon ab, ihr Nüchternen! Ja, wenn ihr *das* könntet! Wenn ihr eure Herkunft, Vergangenheit, Vorschule vergessen könntet - eure gesamte Menschheit und Tierheit! Es gibt für uns keine 'Wirklichkeit' - und auch für euch nicht, ihr Nüchternen...[18]

FIRST INTERLUDE

Denn es ist gerade diese Geste der Totalbegründung, die alles und jedes *einem* Begriff, *einer* Theorie, *einer* Position zu subsumieren sucht oder vorgibt, es zu können, die jeden philosophischen "Meisterdiskurs" zu einer Herrschaftsform macht, zu einer intellektuellen Herrschaft des Selben, des Einen, in der kein Ort ist für die Sicht des Anderen, Heterogenen.[19]

CHAPTER SIX

Nur mit Repressivität ist der Staat nicht zu machen. Selbst Honecker war bestrebt, populär zu sein.[20]

Wer der Meinung ist, daß es nicht schaden könne, antidemokratische Fernseh- und Rundfunksender zu hören oder Westzeitungen zu lesen, öffnet sein Ohr dem Todfeind.[21]

La question n'est dès lors plus celle du GLOBAL par rapport au LOCAL, ou celle du TANSNATIONAL par rapport au NATIONAL, c'est d'abord celle de cette soudaine commutation temporelle où disparaissent non seulement le dedans et le dehors, l'étendu du territoire politique, mais encore, l'avant et l'après de sa durée, de son histoire, au seul bénéfice d'un INSTANT RÉEL sur lequel, finalement, nul n'a prise.[22]

---

[18] Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 83.

[19] Elisabeth List, Die Präsenz des Anderen: Theorie und Geschlechterpolitik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 11.

[20] Günter Schabowski, Das Politbüro: Ende eines Mythos (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990), p. 173

[21] Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, quoted in Gunter Holzweissig, Massenmedien in der DDR (Berlin: Verlag Gebrüder Holzapfel, 1989), p. 62.

[22] Paul Virilio, La Vitesse de Libération (Paris: Galilée, 1995), p. 31.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ce que Nietzsche appelle l'Entstehungsherd du concept de bon, ce n'est exactement ni l'énergie des forts, ni la réaction des faible; mais bien cette scène où ils se distribuent les uns en face des autres, les uns au-dessus des autres; c'est l'espace qui les réparit et se creuse entre eux, le vide à travers lequel ils échangent leurs menaces et leurs mots.[23]

_____

Das Dasein ist ein Seiendes, das nicht nur unter anderem Seienden vorkommt. Es ist vielmehr dadurch ontisch zusgezeichnet, daß es diesem Seienden in seinem Sein *um* dieses Sein selbst geht. Zu dieser Seinsverfassung des Daseins gehört aber dann, daß es in seinem Sein zu diesem Sein ein Seinsverhältnis hat. Und dies wiederum besagt: Dasein versteht sich in irgendeiner Weise und Ausdrücklichkeit in seinem Sein. Diesem Seienden eignet, daß mit und durch sein Sein dieses ihm selbst erschlossen ist. *Seinsverständnis ist selbst eine Seinsbestimmtheit des Daseins.*[24]

_____

S'il est vrai que partout s'étend et se précise le quadrillage de la "surveillance," il est d'autant plus urgent de déceler comment une société entière ne s'y réduit pas; quelles procédures poopulaires (elles aussi "minuscules" et quotidiennes) jouent avec les mécanismes de la discipline et ne s'y conforment que pour les tourner' enfin quelles "manières de faire" forment la contrepartie, du côté des consommateurs (ou "dominés"?), des procédés muets qui organisent la mise en ordre sociopolitique.[25]

_____

[C]oment il combatit contre les diables et fist brusler cinq chambres d'enfer, et mist à sac la grande chambre noire, et getta Prosperpine u feu, et rompit quatre dentz à Lucifer et une corone au cul...et mille aultres petites joyeusetez toutes veritables.[26]

_____

Lors, en soubriant, destacha sa belle braguette, et, tirnt sa mentule en l'air, les compissa si airgement au'il en noya deux cens soixante mille quatre cens dix et huyt, sans les femmes et petiz enfans.[27]

_____

[23] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, la Généalogie, l'Histoire," in Hommage à Jean Hyppolite(Paris: PUF, 1971), p. 156.

[24] Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), p. 12.

[25] Michel de Certeau, Arts de Faire, vol. I of L'Invention du Quotidien (Paris, Gallimard, 1990/1980), pp. xxxix-xl.

[26] François Rabelais, La vie très horrificque du grand Gargantua, père de Pantagrual, in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. I (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1962), p. 385.

[27] Ibid., p. 68.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Dies hat mir größte Mühe gemacht und macht mir noch immerfort die größte Mühe: einzusehen, daß unsäglich mehr daran liegt, *wie die Dinge heißen*, als was sie sind. Der Ruf, Name und Anchein, die Geltung, das übliche Maß und Gewicht eines Dinges - im Ursprunge zu allermeist ein Irrtum und eine Willkürlichkeit, den Dingen übergeworfen wie ein Kleid und seinem Wesen und selbst seiner Haut genz fremd - ist durch den Glauben daran und sein Fortwachsen von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht dem Dinge allmählich gleichsam an- und eingewachsen und zu seinem Leibe selber geworden; der Schein von Anbeginn wird zuletzt fast immer zum Wesen und *wirkt* als Wesen![28]

Was ist also Warheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen, kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden und die nach langem Gebrauch einem Volke fest, kanonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Warheiten sind Illusionen,von denen man vergessen hat, daß sie welche sind...[29]

Das Buch behandelt die philosophischen Probleme und zeigt - wie ich glaube - dass die Fragestellung dieser Probleme auf dem Missverständnis der Logik unserer Sprache beruht. Man könnte den ganzen Sinn des Buches etwa in die Worte fassen: Was sich überhaupt sagen lässt, lässt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muss man scheigen.[30]

CHAPTER NINE

Dichter sein in dürftiger Zeit heißt: singend auf die Spur der entflohenen Götter achten. Darum sagt der Dichter zur Zeit der Weltnacht das Heilige.[31]

Preguntaréis por qué su poesía
no nos habla del suelo, de las hojas,
de los grandes volcanes de su país natal?

Venid a ver la sangre por las calles,
venid a ver
la sangre por las calles,
venid a ver la sangre
por las calles![32]

---

[28] Nietzsche, <u>Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft</u>, p. 84, § 58

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Über Warheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn," in <u>Erkenntnistheoretische Schriften</u>, ed. J. Habermas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968/1873), p. 102.

[30] Ludwig Wittgenstein, <u>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</u> (London: Routledge, 1990/1922), p. 26.

[31] Martin Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter," in <u>Holzwege</u> (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 272.

———

Käme,
käme ein Mensch,
käme ein Mensch zur Welt, heute, mit
dem Lichtbart der
Patriarchen: er dürfte,
spräch er von dieser
Zeit, er
dürfte
nur lallen und lallen,
immer-, immer-
zuzu.[33]

———

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
wir trinken und trinken
wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Haar
                                    Margarete
er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne er
                        pfeift seine Rüden herbei
er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde
er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz...[34]

———

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
wir trinken dich abends und morgens wir trinken und trinken
der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland sein Auge ist blau
er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel er trifft dich genau
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft
er spielt mit den Schlangen und träumet der Tod ist ein Meister aus
                                    Deutschland

dein goldens Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith[35]

———

---

[32] Pablo Neruda, "Explico Algunas Cosas," in <u>Pablo Neruda: Five Decades</u> (New York: Grove Press, 1974), p. 56.

[33] Celan, "Tübingen, Jänner," in <u>Die Niemandsrose</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. I,

[34] Celan, "Todesfuge," in <u>Mohn und Gedächtnis</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. I, p. 41.

[35] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 42.

Verbracht ins
Gelände
mit der untrüglichen Spur:

Gras, auseinandergeschrieben. Die Steine, weiß,
mit den Schatten der Halme:
Lies nicht mehr - schau!
Schau nicht mehr - geh!

Geh, deine Stunde
hat keine Schwestern, du bist -
bist zuhause. Ein Rad, langsam,
rollt aus sich selber, die Speichen
klettern,
klettern auf schwärzlichem Feld, die Nacht
braucht keine Sterne, nirgends
fragt es nach dir.

*

          Nirgends
               fragt es nach dir - [36]

_____

          Deckte es
                    zu - wer?

Kam, kam.
Kam ein Wort, kam,
kam durch die Nacht,
wollte leuchten, wollte leuchten.

Asche.
Asche, Asche.
Nacht.
Nacht-und-Nacht. - Zum
Aug geh, zum feuchten.

*
          Zum
               Aug geh,
                    zum feuchten - [37]

_____

_____

[36] Celan, "Engführung," in <u>Sprachgitter</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. I, pp. 197-8.
[37] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 199-200.

In der Eulenflucht, hier,
die Gespräche, taggrau,
der Grundwasserspuren.

*

        (-- taggrau,
            der
               Grundwasserspuren -

Verbracht
ins Gelände
mit
der untrüglichen
Spur:

Gras.
Gras,
auseinandergeschrieben.)[38]

Sprich auch du,
sprich als letzter,
sag dein Spruch.

Sprich -
Doch scheide das Nein nicht vom Ja.
Gib deinem Spruch auch den Sinn:
gib ihm den Schatten.

Gib ihm Schatten genug,
gib ihm so viel,
als du um dich verteilt weißt zwischen
Mittnacht und Mittag und Mittnacht.[39]

In den Flüssen nördlich der Zukunft
werf ich das Netz aus, das du
zögernd beschwerst
mit von Steinen geschriebenen
Schatten.[40]

---

[38] Ibid., p. 204.

[39] Celan, "Sprich auch Du," in Von Schwelle zu Schwelle, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I, p. 135.

[40] Celan, "In den Flüssen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol, II, p. 14.

AGAINST CONCLUDING THE QUESTION OF HUMAN AGENCY

Die Macht des Bestehenden errichtet die Fassaden, auf welche das Bewußtsein aufprallt. Sie muß es zu durchschlagen trachten.[41]

Ein Dröhnen: es ist
die Warheit selbst
under die Menschen
getreten,
mitten ins
Metapherngestöber.[42]

Fadensonnen
über der grauschwarzen Ödnis.
Ein baum-
hoher Gedanke
greift sich den Lichtton: es sind
noch Lieder zu singen jenseits
der Menschen.[43]

---

[41] Theodor W. Adorno, <u>Negative Dialektik</u> (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966), p. 29.

[42] Celan, "Ein Dröhnen," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II, p. 89.

[43] Celan, "Fadensonnen," in <u>Atemwende</u>, <u>Gesammelte Werke</u>, Vol. II, p. 26.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ackerman, Peter and Kruegler, Christopher. Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1994.

Adorno, Theodor W. "Einleitung zum Positivismusstreit," in Soziologische Schriften I, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 8. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972/1969.

_____. "Der Essay als Form," in Noten zur Literatur, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 11. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974/1958.

_____. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 6. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973/1964.

_____. Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980/1951.

_____. Negative Dialektik. Fankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992/1966.

_____. Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft. Frankfurt; Suhrkamp, 1955.

Alexander, Meena. Women in Romanticism. London: MacMillan, 1989.

Allard, Gérald. La Boétie et Montaigne sur les liens humains. Québec: Le Griffon d'Argile, 1994.

Allison, David B. (ed). The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990/1985.

Anderson, Perry. "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," in New Left Review, No. 100.

Allen, J.W. A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century. London: Methuen, 1941/1928.

Ammer, Thomas. "Stichwort: Flucht aus der DDR," in Deutschland-Archiv, No. 22, November 1989.

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso, 1991/1983.

Ansell-Pearson, Keith. An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Arendt, Hannah. Crises of the Republic. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

Aristotle. On the Art of Poetry, tr. S.H. Butcher. New York: The Library of Liberal Art, 1948.

Ash, Timothy Garton. We the People: The Revolution of 1989. London: Granta / Penguin, 1990.

Atkinson, Rick. "Unity Costs Eastern German Women Dear," in Guardian Weekly, 16 April 1995.

Atwood, Margaret. The Handmaid's Tale. London: Jonathan Cape, 1985.

_____. The Robber Bride. London: Virago Press, 1994.

Bachelard, Gaston. La Dialectique de la Durée. Paris, PUF, 1989/1950.

_____. La Poétique de l'Espace. Paris: PUF, 1994/1957.

Bahrmann, Hannes and Links, Christoph. Wir sind das Volk: Die DDR zwischen 7. Oktober und 17. Dezember 1989. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics, tr. C. Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

_____. Rabelais and His World, tr. H. Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.

Barthes, Roland. Le degré zéro de l'écriture. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972/1953.

_____. Leçon Inaugurale de la Chaire de Sémiologie Littéraire du Collège de France. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978.

_____. S/Z. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970.

Bathrick, David. The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

Baudelaire, Jean. "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne," in Oeuvres Complètes. Paris: Gallimard, 1961.

_____. "Preface aux 'Histoires extraoirdinaires d' Edgar Allan Poe,'" in Poèmes et Proses. Paris: Seghers, 1964.

Baudrillard, Jean. "The Ecstasy of Communication," tr. J. Johnston in Hal Foster (ed), Postmodern Culture. London: Pluto Press, 1985.

_____. "Les Ilotes et les Élites," in Libération, 4 Sept 1995.

_____. "The Precession of Simulacra," in Simulations, tr. P. Foss, P. Patton and P. Beitchman. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

Bauer, D.M. and McKinstry, S.J. "Introduction" to Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Bauman, Zygmunt. Modernity and Ambivalence. Oxford: Polity, 1991.

Baynes, K., Bohman J. and McCarthy, T. (eds). After Philosophy: End or Transformation. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987.

de Beauvoir, Simone. Le deuxième Sexe. Paris: Gallimard, 1976/1949.

Beck, Ulrich. "Opposition in Deutschland," in B. Giesen and C. Leggewie (ed), Experiment Vereinigung: Ein sozialer Grossversuch. Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1991.

Bedau, Hugo Adam (ed). Civil Disobedience in Focus. London: Routledge, 1991.

Benhabib, Seyla. "Feminism and Postmodernism," in Feminist Contentions. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Benjamin, Walter. "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," in Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften 1. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995/1923.

Berghan, Sabine. "Frauenrechte im Vereinigungsprozess," in C. Faber and T. Meyer (eds), Unterm neuen Kleid der Freiheit das Korsett der Einheit. Berlin: Rainer Bohn Verlag, 1992.

Berlin, Isaiah. Four Essays on Liberty. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Bernstein, J.M. The Philosophy of the Novel: Lukács, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Biermann, Wolf. "Der grässliche Fatalismus der Geschichte," in Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Jahrbuch 1991.

Binas, Susanne and Zocher, Peter. "Eigentlich habe ich Hunger, eigentlich hab ich's satt...," in R. Blanke and R. Erd (eds), DDR - Ein Staat vergeht. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1990.

Bloor, David. Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Bobbio, Noberto. "Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society," in J. Keane (ed), Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives. London: Verso, 1988.

Bocock, Robert. Hegemony. Sussex: Ellis Horwood, 1986.

Bohley, Bärbel et al. 40 Jahre DDR...und die Bürger melden sich zu Wort. Frankfurt am Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1989.

Bondurant, Joan V. Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Bonnefon, Paul. <u>Montaigne et ses Amis</u>, Vol. I. Paris: Armand Colin: 1898.

Bouchardeau, Huguette. <u>Pas d'histoire les femmes</u>. Paris: Syros, 1977.

Boxer, Marilyn J. and Quataert, Jean H. "Restoring Women to History," in <u>Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present</u>. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Braham Randolph L.(ed). <u>Reflections of the Holocaust in Art und Literature</u>. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Braidotti, Rosi (with Judith Butler). "Feminism by Any Other Name," in <u>Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies</u>, Vol. 6.2+3, 1994,

_____. <u>Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy</u>. New York: Routledge, 1991.

_____. "The Politics of Ontological Difference," in T. Brennan (ed), <u>Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis</u>. London: Routledge, 1989.

Breslin, Paul. "Heaney's Redress," in <u>Poetry</u>, Vol. clxviii, No. 6, Sept 1996.

Broda, Martine. "Paul Celan, la politique d'un poète après Auschwitz," in J. Rancière (ed), <u>La Politique des Poètes</u>. Paris: Albin Michel, 1992.

Bronner, Stephen Eric. <u>Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists</u>. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994.

Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics," in C. Bernstein (ed), <u>The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy</u>. New York: ROOF, 1990.

Brown, Judith. <u>Gandhi and Civil Disobedience</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Bubner, Rüdiger. <u>Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft: Grundbegriffe praktischer Philosophie</u>. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982/1976.

Bürger, Peter. <u>Theory of the Avant-Garde</u>, tr. M. Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Butler, Judith. <u>Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'</u>. New York: Routledge, 1993.

____. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in J. Butler and J.W. Scott (eds), <u>Feminists Theorize the Political</u>. New York: Routledge, 1992.

_____. <u>Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity</u> (New York: Routledge, 1990), tr. as <u>Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter</u>. Frankfurt a.M., 1991.

Cameron, Deborah. <u>Feminism and Linguistic Theory</u>. London: Macmillan, 1985.

Canetti, Elias. <u>Masse und Macht</u>. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994/1980.

Caponigri, Robert A. <u>A History of Western Philosophy</u>, Vol. III. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963-71.

Caputo, John D. <u>Against Ethics: Contribution to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

_____. <u>Demythologizing Heidegger</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Carroll, John. <u>Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture</u>. London: Fontana Press, 1993.

Carter, April. <u>Direct Action and Liberal Democracy</u>. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.

Case, Clarence Marsh. <u>Nonviolent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure</u>. New York: Century, 1923.

Castoriadis, Cornelius. "Ontologie et Antropologie," seminar presented at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris, 26.10.1996.

Caviness, Madelaine H. "Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed," in Speculum: A Journal in Medieval Studies, Vol. 68, No 2, April 1993.

Celan, Paul. "Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der Freien Hansestadt Bremen," in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986.

_____. "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker, Paris 1958" in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III.

_____. "Antwort auf eine Umfrage der Librairie Flinker, Paris 1961" in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III.

_____. "Aschenglorie," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II.

_____. Breathturn, tr. P. Joris. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995.

_____. "Ein Dröhnen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II.

_____. "Engführung," in Sprachgitter, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I.

_____. "Fadensonnen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Worke, Vol. II

_____. "Grosse, glühende Wölbung," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II.

_____. "In den Flüssen," in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol, II.

_____. "Der Meridian," in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III.

_____. Poems of Paul Celan, tr. M. Hamburger. New York: Persea Books, 1988/1972.

_____. "Sprich auch Du," in Von Schwelle zu Schwelle, Gesammelte Werke, Vol.

_____. "Todesfuge," in Mohn und Gedächtnis, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I.

_____. "Todtnauberg," in Lichtzwang, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II.

_____. "Tübingen, Jänner," in Die Niemandsrose, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I.

_____. "Weggebeizt" in Atemwende, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. II.

de Certeau, Michel. Arts de Faire, Vol. I of L'Invention du Quotidien. Paris: Gallimard, 1990/1980, tr. S.F. Rendall as The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Chalfen, Israel. Paul Celan: A Biography of His Youth, tr. M. Bleyleben. New York: Persea Books, 1991/1979.

Char, René. "Rougeur des Matinaux," tr. M. Worton as "Redress of the Dawnbreakers," in The Dawn Breakers. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992/1950.

Chatterjee, Paratha. Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. London: Zed Books, 1986.

Chuang Tzu. Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters, tr. A.C. Graham. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986.

Connolly, William E. Identity \ Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

_____. Political Theory and Modernity. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993/1988.

Crawford, Mary. Talking Difference: On Gender and Language. London: Sage, 1995.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. Betrachtungen über die Revolution in Europa. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1990.

Dallmayr, Fred. Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.

_____. The Other Heidegger. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Dean, Mitchell. The Constitution of Poverty: Towards a Genealogy of Liberal Governance. London: Routledge, 1991.

Delacompté, Jean-Michel. Et q'un seul-soit l'ami: la Boétie. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

van den Haag, Ernest. Political Violence and Civil Disobedience. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972.

Deppe, R., Dubiel H. and Rödel U. (eds). Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991.

Derré, Jean-René. Lamennais, ses Amis, et le Mouvement des Idées à l'Époque Romantique. Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1962.

Derrida, Jacques. A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds, ed. P. Kamuf. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

_____. Of Grammatology, tr. G.C. Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976/1967.

_____. "Shibboleth for Paul Celan," tr. J. Wilner, in A. Fioretos, Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Desplat, Jacques Joseph. La Boétie: le magistrat aux nombreux mistères. Le Bugue: PLB Editeur, 1992.

Docker, John. Postmodernism and Popular Culture. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Donovan, Josephine. "Style and Power," in D.M. Bauer and S.J. McKinstry, Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Duggan, Lisa. "Making it Perfectly Queer," in Socialist Review, Vol. 22, No. 1.

Eagleton, Terry. Ideology: An Introduction. London: Verso, 1991.

_____. The Ideology of the Aesthetic. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Ellison, Julia. Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. Public Man, Private Women. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981

_____. Women and War. New York: Basic Books, 1987.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, Vol. IX, 1843-1847. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

_____. "Etienne de la Boéce," in The Complete Works, Vol. IX. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918.

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. Poesie und Politik. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963.

Eppelmann, Rainer. Wendewege. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1992.

Epstein, Steven. "A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality," in Sociological Theory, Vol. 12, No 2, July 1994.

Erbe, Günter. "Moderne, Avantgarde und Postmoderne: Zur neueren Rezeption in der Literaturwissenschaft der DDR," in M. Gerber (ed), Studies in GDR Culture and Society, Vol 6. Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1986.

Erler, Gisela et.al. Familienpolitik im Umbruch? München: Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1990.

Felstiner, John. <u>Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew</u>. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Femia, Jospeh V. <u>Gramsci's Political Thought</u>. Oxford: Claredon Press, 1981.

Ferguson, Kathy. <u>The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory</u>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Finch, Henry Leroy. <u>Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy</u>. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1977.

Flax, Jane. <u>Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West</u>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Fóti, Véronique M. <u>Heidegger and the Poets</u>. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. <u>L'Archéologie du Savoir</u>. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.

_____. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," tr. J.D. Gauthier, in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen, <u>The Final Foucault</u>. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988.

_____. <u>Folie et Deraison: Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique</u>. Paris: Gallimard, 1976/1965.

_____. "Governmentality," in G. Burchell et al. (eds), <u>The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality</u>. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1978/1991.

_____. <u>Les Mots et les Choses.</u> Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

_____. "Nietzsche, la Généalogie, l'Histoire," in <u>Hommage à Jean Hyppolite</u>. Paris: PUF, 1971, tr. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon as "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in <u>The Foucault Reader</u>, ed. P. Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984/1971

_____. <u>L'Ordre du Discours</u>. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

_____. "Politics and the Study of Discourse," in Burchell, <u>The Foucault Effect</u>.

_____. "Space, Knowledge, and Power," tr. C. Hubert in Rabinow, <u>The Foucault Reader</u>.

_____. "The Subject and Power," in <u>Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics</u>, ed. H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982.

_____. <u>Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison</u>. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

_____. "Truth and Power," in <u>Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings</u>, ed. C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980/1972.

_____. <u>La Volonté de Savoir</u>, Volume 1 of <u>L'Histoire de la Sexualité</u>. Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1976, tr. R. Hurley as <u>The History of Sexuality</u>. London: Penguin Books, 1978..

_____. "What is an Author," tr. J.V. Harari, in Rabinow, <u>The Foucault Reader</u>.

_____. "What is Enlightenment," tr. C. Porter in Rabinow, <u>The Foucault Reader</u>.

Freire, Paulo. <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, tr. M.B. Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1983/1970.

Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" in <u>The National Interest</u>, Summer 1989.

Fulbrook, Mary. <u>Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Fuller, Margaret. "Women in the Nineteenth Century," in <u>The Essential Margaret Fuller</u>, ed. J. Steele. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. <u>Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?</u> Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973.

Gandhi, Mohandas. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, tr. M. Desai. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1984/1938.

_____. Satyagraha, tr. V.G. Desai. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958.

_____. The Story of my Experiments With Truth, tr. M. Desai. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959/1927-1929.

Gauger, Hans-Martin. "Sprachkritik," in Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Jahrbuch 1991.

Gerhardt, Volker. "Philosophie als Schicksal," postscript to Nietzsche's Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1988/1886.

Giddens, Anthony. The Consequences of Modernity. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

_____. The Constitution of Society. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

_____. Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Girard, René. Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1961.

Glaeßner, Gert-Joachim. Der schwierige Weg zur Demokratie: Vom Ende der DDR zur Deutschen Einheit. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991.

Glenn, Jerry. Paul Celan. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973.

Gontarbert, Nadia. "Présentation," to la Boétie's De la Servitude Volontaire ou Contr'un. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

Gorbachev, Mikhail. Perestroika: Die zweite russische Revolution, tr. Gruppe U. Mihr. München: Droemer Knaur, 1987.

Goyard-Fabre, Simon. "Introduction," to la Boétie's Discours de la Servitude Volontaire. Paris: Flammarion, 1983.

Graham, Ruth. "Loaves and Liberty: Women in the French Revolution," in R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (eds), Becoming Visible: Women in European History. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks, tr. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1985/1929-1935.

Grass, Günter. Ein Schnäppchen namens DDR: Letzte Reden vorm Glockengeläut. Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990.

Gregg, Richard B. The Power of Nonviolence. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1934.

Grünbein, Durs. "Zu Kieseln gehärtet: Über das lyrische Sprechen," in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 30 September 1995.

Gysi, Jutta and Winkler, Gunnar. "Zur Situation von Frauen in den fünf neuen Bundesländern," in A. Lissner et.al., Frauenlexikon. Freiburg: Herder, 1991.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Die andere Zerstörung der Vernunft," in Die Zeit, 1991.5.17.

_____. Die nachholende Revolution. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991.

_____. "Die Normativen Defizite der Vereinigung," in Vergangenheit als Zukunft. Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 1990.

_____. "A Philosophico-Political Profile," in New Left Review, No. 151, May/June 1985.

_____. Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985

_____. "The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for new Thinking on the Left," in New Left Review, No. 183, 1990.

_____. Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990/1962.

_____. Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988.

Hale, John. The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance. London: Fontana Press, 1993.

Hall, P.C. (ed). Fernseh-Kritik: Revolutionäre Öffentlichkeit: Das Fernsehen und die Demokratisierung im Osten. Mainz: v. Hase & Koehler, 1990.

Hamburger, Michael. "Introduction" to Poems of Paul Celan. New York: Persea Books, 1988/1972.

Hansen, Olaf. Aesthetic Individualism and Practical Intellect. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Haraway, Donna J. Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science. New York: Routledge, 1989.

_____. Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Harding, Sandra. The Science Question in Feminism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Hartsock, Nancy. "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), Feminism/Postmodernism. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Harvey, David. The Condition of Postmodernity. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989.

Haug, Frigga. "Anmerkung zur Diskussion um die Kategorie 'Geschlecht,'" in Das Argument, No. 202, Vol. 35/6, Nov/Dec 1993.

Heaney, Seamus. The Redress of Poetry. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

_____. "The Singer of Tales: On Joseph Brodsky," in The New York Times Book Review, 3 March 1996.

Hegel, G.W.F. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986.

Heidegger, Martin. Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis). Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989.

_____. Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1981.

_____. "Die Frage nach der Technik," in Vorträge und Aufsätze. Pfullingen: Günter Neske, 1954, tr. D.F. Krell as "The Question Concerning Technology," in Basic Writings. New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1977.

_____. Identity and Difference, tr. J. Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

_____. "Letter on Humanism," tr. D.F. Krell in Basic Writings.

_____. "...Poetically Man Dwells...," tr. A. Hofstadter in Poetry, Language, Thought. New York: Harper & Row, 1971/1951.

_____. Sein und Zeit. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993/1927, tr. D.F. Krell as Being and Time (the introduction) in Basic Writings.

_____. "The Thing", tr. A. Hofstadter in Poetry, Language, Thought.

_____. Unterwegs zur Sprache. Stuttgart: Verlag Günter Neske, 1959.

_____. "Wozu Dichter," in Holzwege. Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977, tr. A. Hofstadter as "What Are Poets For?" in Poetry, Language, Thought.

Heller, Erich. "Rilke and Nietzsche," in I. Howe (ed), The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts. New York: Horizon Press, 1967.

Heller, Henry. Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991.

Held, David. Introduction to Critical Theory. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Helwig, Gisela. "Einleitung," to G. Helwig and H.M. Nickel (eds), Frauen in Deutschland. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993.

Hesse, Kurt. Westmedien in der DDR: Nutzung, Image und Auswirkungen bundesrepublikanischen Hörfunks und Fernsehen. Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988.

Hindess, Barry. Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

_____. "Liberalism, Socialism and Democracy," in Economy and Society, Vol. 22, No 2, August 1993.

Hirschmann, Albert O. "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic," in World Politics, No. 45, January 1993.

Hirschmann, Nancy J. "Freedom, Recognition, and Obligation: A Feminist Approach to Political Theory," in American Political Science Review, Vol. 83, No. 4, December 1989

Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. "Recasting the Public Sphere," in October 73, Summer 1995.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Stimme des Volkes," in Gedichte. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1979.

Holmes, George. "Humanism in Italy," in A. Goodman and A. MacKay (eds) The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe. London: Longman, 1990.

Holquist, Michael. Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World. London: Routledge, 1990.

Holub, Renate. Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1992.

Holzweissig, Gunter. Massenmedien in der DDR. Berlin: Verlag Gebrüder Holzapfel, 1989.

Horkheimer, Max. "Montaigne und die Funktion der Skepsis," in Kritische Theorie, Vol. 2. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1968/1938.

Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W. Dialektik der Auflkärung. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1991/1944.

Hunnecke, Evelyn. Poésie et Poétique de Paul Celan, Doctorat d'Etat, Aix Marsaille I, 1987.

Hutcheon, Linda. The Politics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1989.

Huyssen, Andreas. "Mapping the Postmodern." in New German Critique, Vol. 33, 1984.

Irigaray, Luce. Je, tu, nous: pour une culture de la différence. Paris: Grasset, 1990.

Iyer, Raghavan Narashimhan. The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Jaeckel, Monika. "Frauen im Vereinten Deutschland," in R. Süssmut and H. Schubert (eds), Bezahlen die Frauen die Wiedervereinigung? München: Piper, 1992.

Jaekel, Ursula. "40 Jahre Staatssicherheit - Ziele, Tätigkeit, Auswirkungen," in K. Löw, Ursachen und Verlauf der deutschen Revolution. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991.

Jacobs, Deborah. "Critical Imperialism and Renaissance Drama: The Case of *The Roaring Girl*," in D.M. Bauer and S.J. McKinstry (eds), Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Jakobson, Roman. Essais de linguistique général. Paris: Minuit, 1963.

_____. "Qu'est-ce que la poésie," in Huit questions de poétique, tr. M. Derrida. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977/1933.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in New Left Review, No. 146, 1984.

Jentzsch, Berndt (ed). Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland: Deportation und Vernichtung in poetichen Zeugnissen. München, 1979.

Jesse, Eckehard. "Die innerdeutschen Beziehungen under der christlich-liberalen Regierung," in E. Jesse (ed), Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1985.

Jolly, Juleps. Histoire du Mouvement Intellectuel au XVIe Sciècle, Vol. 1. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969.

Joubert, Jean-Louis. La Poésie. Paris: Armand Colin, 1988.

Kant, Immanuel. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Auflkärung?" in Werke, Vol IV. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922.

_____. Die Metaphysik der Sitten, in Werke Vol. VII. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922/1797.

Kelly-Gadol, Joan. "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (eds), Becoming Visible: Women in European History. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

King, Martin Luther. Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story. San Francisco: Harper, 1986/1958.

_____. Why We Can't Wait. New York: Penguin, 1964.

Kohler-Luginbühl, Dorothee. Poetik im Lichte der Utopie: Paul Celans poetologische Texte. Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986.

Kolakowski, Leszek. The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought. New York: Doubleday, 1968.

Kopstein, Jeffrey. "Chipping Away at the State: Workers' Resistance and the Demise of East Germany," in World Politics, Vol. 48, April 1996.

Körner Domandi, Agnes. Modern German Literature. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972.

Krenz, Egon. Wenn Mauern Fallen. Wien: Paul Neff Verlag, 1990.

Krell, David Farell. "The Question of Being", general introduction to Heidegger's Basic Writings. New York: HarperCollins, 1993/1977.

Kristeva, Julia. Recherches pour une sémanalyze. Paris: Seuil, 1969.

_____. Revolution in Poetic Language. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Kröll, Friedrich. "Anverwandlung der 'Klassischen Moderne,'" in L. Fischer (ed), Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1967. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1986.

Krolow, Karl. "Lyrik," in D. Lattmann (ed), Die Literatur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Zürich: Kindler Verlag, 1973.

Kundera, Milan. The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, tr. M.H. Heim. New York: HarperCollins, 1994/1978.

_____. Testaments Betrayed, tr. L. Asher. New York: Harper Collins, 1995.

Kuttenkeuler, Wolfgang(ed). Poesie und Politik: Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973.

de la Boétie, Étienne. Discours de la Servitude Volontaire, ed. P. Bonnefon in Oeuvres Complètes. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967/1552, tr. H. Kurz as The

Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude. New York: Free Life Editions, 1975.

_____. Mémoire touchant l'Edit de Janvier 1562. Paris: Editions Bossard, 1922.

Lakey, George. Strategy for a Living Revolution. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973.

de Lamennais, Félicité. "Préface de 1835," in la Boétie, Le Discours de la Servitude Volontaire. Paris: Payot, 1978.

Lamping, Dieter (ed). Dein Aschenes Haar Sulamith: Dichtung über den Holocaust. München: Piper, 1992.

Landauer, Gustav. Die Revolution. Frankfurt, 1907.

Langer, Lawrence L. Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

_____. The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Landweer, Hilde and Rumpf, Mechthild. "Einleitung" to Kritik der Kategorie 'Geschlecht', special issue of Feministische Studien, Vol. II, Nov. 1993, No. 2.

Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching, tr. D.C. Lau. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

le Bon, Gustave. Psychologie des Foules. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911.

Lemke, Christiane. Die Ursachen des Umbruchs 1989. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991.

Lerner, Gerda. The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Levinas, Emmanuel. "De l'être á l'autre," in Noms Propres. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1976.

de Ligt, Bart. The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution. London: George Routledge, 1937.

List, Elisabeth. Die Präsenz des Anderen: Theorie und Geschlechterpolitik. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993.

Loest, Erich. Die Stasi war mein Eckermann oder: mein Leben mit der Wanze. Göttingen: Steidel Verlag, 1991.

Löw, K. (ed). Ursachen und Verlauf der deutschen Revolution von 1989. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991.

Lukács, Georg. History and Class Consciousness, tr. T. Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971.

_____. The Theory of the Novel, tr. A. Bostock. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971/1920.

Lyotard, Jean-François. La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979.

_____. "Rewriting Modernity," in The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, tr. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991/1988.

de Man, Paul. Critical Writings, 1953-1978. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

_____. The Resistance to Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

_____. Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

_____. "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in M.J. Shapiro (ed), Language and Politics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984

Mannheim, Karl. Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology. London: Routledge & Kegan, 1953.

Marat, J.P. Les Chaînes de l'Esclavage. Paris: Imprimerie de Marat, 1790.

Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969/1964.

Marongiu, Jean-Baptiste. "Excès de Vitesse," in Libération, 21.9.1995.

Martin, Brian. "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power," in Journal of Peace Research, vol. 26, no. 2, 1989.

McGuinness, Kate. "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power: A Feminist Critique of Consent," in Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1993.

Meier Artur. "Abschied von der sozialistischen Ständegesellschaft," in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, No 16-17, April 1990.

Melucci, Alberto. Nomads of the Present. London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989.

Mellor, Anne K. Romanticism and Gender. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Mendus, Susan. Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism. London: MacMillan, 1989.

Menge, Marlies. "Ohne uns läuft nichts mehr": Die Revolution in der DDR. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1990.

Mesnard, Pierre. L'Essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVIe Sciècle. Paris: J. Vrin, 1951/1935.

Meuschel, Sigrid. "Revolution in the German Democratic Republic," in Critical Sociology, Vol. 17/3, Fall 1990.

_____. "Wandel durch Auflehnung: Thesen zum Verfall bürokratischer Herrschaft in der DDR," in R. Deppe, H. Dubiel and U. Rödel (eds), Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991.

Milder, Robert. Reimagining Thoreau. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Mill, John Stuart. "On Liberty," in Three Essays. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984/1859.

de Montaigne, Michel. "Advertissement av Lectevr," in la Boétie, Oeuvres complètes. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 19671552.

_____. Essais. Paris: Gallimard, 1950.

Moore, Barrington. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

Morse, David. Perspectives on Romanticism. London: Macmillan, 1981.

Morris, Colin. The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200. London: SPCK, 1972.

Moser, Tilmann. Besuche bei Brüdern und Schwestern. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992.

Mounin, Georges. Linguistique et Philosophie. Paris: PUF, 1975.

Murray, Les. Subhuman Redneck Poems. Potts Point, NSW: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1996.

Neruda, Pablo. "A Few Things Explained," tr. B. Belitt in Pablo Neruda: Five Decades. New York: Grove Press, 1974.

_____. "Toward an Impure Poetry," tr. B. Belitt in Pablo Neruda: Five Decades.

Nettlau, Max. Bibliographie de l'Anarchie. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968/1897.

Ngara, Emmanuel. Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel. London: Heinemann, 1982.

Nicholson, Linda J. (ed). Feminism/Postmodernism. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen. München: Goldmann Verlag, 1891/1885, tr. W. Kaufmann as Thus Spoke Zarathustra, The Portable Nietzsche. New York: Penguin Books, 1982.

_____. Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft. Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1982/1882, tr. W. Kaufmann as The Gay Science. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

_____. Götzen-Dämmerung. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969/1889.

_____. Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1988/1886.

_____. Morgenröte. Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1983/1881.

_____. "Über Warheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn," in Erkenntnistheoretische Schriften, ed. J. Habermas. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968/1873, tr. W. Kaufmann as "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in The Portable Nietzsche.

_____. The Will to Power, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

_____. Zur Genealogie der Moral. Frankfurt: Insel Taschenbuch, 1991/1977, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale as On the Genealogy of Morals. New York: Vintage Books, 1989/1887.

Oakeshott, Michael. "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in Rationalism in Politics and other Essays. London: Methuen & Co, 1962.

Oestreich, Gerhard. Neostoicism and the early modern state. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Olschner, Leonard. "Poetic Mutations of Silence: At the Nexus of Paul Celan and Osip Mandelstam," in A. Fioretos (ed), Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Olson, Mancur. The Logic of Collective Action. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Opp, Karl-Dieter et al. Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution: East Germany, 1989. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Parsons, Talcott. The Structure of Social Action. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1949/1937.

Pateman, Carole. "The Fraternal Social Contract," in John Keane (ed), Civil Society and the State. London: Verso, 1988.

_____. The Sexual Contract. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

_____. "Women and Consent," in Political Theory, Vol. 8, No. 2, May 1980.

Patton, Paul. "Foucault's Subject of Power," in Political Science Newsletter, Vol. 6, 1994.

Paz, Octavio. The Bow and the Lyre, tr. R.L.C.Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973/1956.

Pears, David. The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy, Vol. 1. Oxford: Claredon Press, 1987.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Politische Lyrik, Special Issues of Text + Kritik, Vol. 9/9a, June 1973 and October 1984.

Pollack, Detlef (ed). Die Legitimität der Freiheit: Politisch alternative Gruppen in der DDR unter dem Dach der Kirche. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990.

Plato. The Last Days of Socrates, tr. H. Tredennick. London: Penguin Books, 1969.

Putnam, Hilary. "Entretien" in Le Monde, 22.10.1995.

Rabelais, François. La vie très horrificque du grand Gargantua, père de Pantagrual, in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. I. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1962, tr. J.M. Cohen as The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel. Penguin Books, 1966.

Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

_____. Political Liberalism. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Ricci, David M. The Tragedy of Political Science. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

Ricoeur, Paul. The Rule of Metaphor, tr. R. Czerny. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977/1975.

_____. La Sémantique de l'Action. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977.

Rose, Gillian. The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno. London: MacMillan, 1978.

Rosenberg, Dorothy J. "Shock Therapy: GDR Women in Transition from a Socialist Welfare State to a Social Market Economy," in Signs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991.

Rosenblum, Nancy L. Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Rosenblum, Nancy L. (ed). Liberalism and the Moral Life. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Rothbard, Murray N. "The Political Thought of Étienne de la Boétie," in la Boétie The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude. New York: Free Life Editions, 1975.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Du Contrat Social. Paris: Flammarion, 1966/1762.

_____. Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes. Paris: Gallimard, 1985/1755.

Rude, George. The Crowd in History. London: Lawrence And Wishart, 1981.

Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in T. de Laurentis (ed), Feminist Studies / Critical Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Saiedi, Nader. The Birth of Social Theory. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1993.

Sainte-Beuve, C.A. Causeries du Lundi, Vol. XI. Paris: Gernier Frères, 1858/1856.

Salmon, J.H.M. Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century. London: Ernest Benn, 1975.

Samuels, Clarise. Holocaust Visions: Surrealism and Existentialism in the Poetry of Paul Celan. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993.

Sandel, Michael (ed). Liberalism and its Critics. New York: New York University Press, 1984.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. What is Literature? tr. B. Frechtman. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.

Sassoon, Anne Showstack.. Gramsci's Politics. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

Sattelmeyer, Robert. Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Sauer, Birgit. "Weder die Schönen noch die Hässlichen," in C. Faber and T. Meyer (eds), Unterm neuen Kleid der Freiheit das Korsett der Einheit. Berlin: Rainer Bohn Verlag, 1992.

de Saussure, Ferdinand. Cours de linguistique général. Paris: Payot, 1987/1915.

Schabowski, Günter. Der Absturz. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991.

_____. Das Politbüro: Ende eines Mythos. Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990.

Schädlich, Hans Joachim (ed). Aktenkundig. Berlin: Rowohlt Verlag, 1992.

Schiffmann, Zachary Sayre. On the Threshold of Modernity: Relativism in the French Renaissance. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Schlösser, Hermann. "Subjektivität und Autobiographie," in K. Briegleb and S. Weigel (eds), Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1992.

Schmidt, Dennis. "Black Milk and Blue: Celan and Heidegger on Pain and Language," in A. Fioretos (ed), Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Schmitt, Carl. Politische Romantik. München: Duncker & Humblot, 1925.

Schmitz-Emans, Monika. "Paul Celan," in H. Steinecke (ed), Deutsche Dichter des 20. Jahrhunderts. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1994.

Schödlbauer, Ulrich. "Die Modernitätsfalle der Lyrik," in Merkur, No 551, vol. 49, No 2, Feb 1995.

Schütz, Hans. Juden in der Deutschen Literatur. München: Piper, 1992.

Scott, James C. Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

_____. The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

_____. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Seigel, Jerrold E. Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Shapiro, Michael J. Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

_____. "Literary Production as Political Practice," in Language and Politics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

_____. Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Sharp, Gene. The Politics of Nonviolent Action, three volumes. Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973.

_____. The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle. Cambridge, Ma: The Albert Einstein Institution, 1990.

_____. Social Power and Political Freedom. Boston: Porter Sargent, 1980.

Skinner, Quentin. The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Skocpol, Theda. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Smart, Barry. Postmodernity. London: Routledge, 1993.

Sorel, Georges. Réflexions sur la Violence. Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1972/1908.

Spender, Dale. Man Made Language. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985/1980.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

_____. "Feminism and deconstruction, again: negotiating with unacknowledged masculinism," in T. Brennan (ed), Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge, 1989.

Di Stefano, Christine. Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Steiner, Georg. "The Hollow Miracle," in Language and Silence. New York: Penguin, 1967.

Stirner, Max. Der Einzige und sein Eigentum. Leipzig: Verlag Otto Wigard, 1845.

Stoppard, Tom. Arcadia. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Strong, Tracy B. "Language and Nihilism: Nietzsche's Critique of Epistemology," in M.J. Shapiro (ed), Language and Politics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

Sylvester, Christine. "Empathetic Cooperation: A Feminist Method for IR," in Millennium, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1994.

Swoboda, Jörg. Die Revolution der Kerzen: Christen in der Umwältzung der DDR. Wuppertal/Kassel: Onkenverlag, 1990.

Szondi, Peter. "Durch die Enge geführt: Versuch über die Verständlichkeit des modernen Gedichts," in Celan-Studien. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972.

Tarnas, Richard. The Passion of the Western Mind. New York: Ballatine Books, 1991.

Tarrow, Sidney. Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Taylor, Charles. Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995/1985.

Thiele, Leslie Paul. Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Thoreau, Henry David. "Civil Disobedience," in Walden and Civil Disobedience. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966/1848.

Thürmer-Rohr, Christina. "Denken der Differenz: Feminismus und Postmoderne," in beiträge zur feministischen theorie und praxis, Vol. 18, No. 39, 1995.

_____. "Zur Dekonstruktion der Kategorie Geschlecht," in FRAZ: Frauezitig, 1995 No. 1.

Tilly, Charles. From Mobilization to Revolution. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

Todorov, Tzvetan. Poétique, vol. 2 of Qu'est-ce que le structuralism? Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968.

Tolstoy, Leo. I Cannot Be Silent: Writings on Politics, Art and Religion. Bristol: Bristol Press, 1989.

_____. The Law of Violence and the Law of Love. London: Unicorn Press, 1959.

Tolstoya, Sofia. The Diaries of Sofia Tolstoya, tr. C. Porter. London: Jonathan Cape, 1985.

Touraine, Alain. Le Retour de l'Acteur. Paris: Fayard, 1984.

_____. Sociologie de l'Action. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965.

_____. La Voix et le Regard. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978.

Torpey, John C. Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Trinh, T. Minh-ha, Woman, Native, Other. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Tuck, Richard. "Humanism and Political Thought," in A. Goodman and A. MacKay (eds) The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe. London: Longman, 1990.

Udoff, Alan. "On Poetic Dwelling: Situating Celan and the Holocaust," in A. Fioretos, Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Ullmann, Walter. A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965.

Vail, L.M. Heidegger and Ontological Difference. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972.

Valéry, Paul. Variété V. Paris: Gallimard, 1945.

Vattimo, Gianni. The Transparent Society, tr. D. Webb. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Vincent, Gerard. Sous le soleil noir du temps: Trakl, Mandelstam, Celan. Lausanne: Éditions l'âge d'homme, 1991.

Virilio, Paul. Esthétique de la Disparition. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1989/1980.

_____. La Vitesse de Libération. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995

_____. Vitesse et Politique. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1977.

Walzer, Michael. Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

_____. The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics. New York: Athenum, 1968/1965.

Watson, Peggy. "Osteuropa: Die lautlose Revolution der Geschlechterverhältnisse," in Das Argument, No. 202, Vol. 35, No. 6, Nov/Dec 1993.

Weigel, Sigrid. Die Stimme der Medusa: Schreibweisen in der Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen. Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1989.

Weil, Simone. "Méditation sur l'obéissance et la liberté," in Oeuvres complètes, Vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1991/1934-7.

Weissenberger, Klaus. Die Elegie bei Paul Celan. Bern: Francke Verlag, 1969.

Welsch, Wolfgang. Ästhetisches Denken. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993.

_____. "Postmoderne: Genealogie und Bedeutung eines umstrittenen Begriffes," in P. Kemper (ed), Postmoderne oder der Kampf um die Zukunft. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988.

Wendt, Hartmut. "Die deutsch-deutschen Wanderungen," in Deutschland-Archiv, No. 24, April 1991.

White, Stephen K. Political Theory and Postmodernism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. Language, Thought, and Reality. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974/1956.

Wilson, A.N. Tolstoy. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations'. New York: Harper Torchbooks 1964.

_____. Philosophische Untersuchungen, in Werkausgabe Band 1. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993/1952.

_____. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, tr. C.K. Ogden. London: Routledge, 1990/1922.

_____. Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1930-1932, ed. D. Lee. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980/1931.

Wohlrab-Sahr, M. "Empathie als Methododisches Prinzip?" in <u>Feministische Studien</u>, Vol. 2, May 1993.

Wright, Charles. <u>Chickamauga</u>. New York: The Noonday Press, 1995.

Young, Brigitte. "Deutsche Vereinigung: Der Abwicklungsskandal an den ostdeutschen Universitäten und seine Folgen für Frauen," in <u>Feministische Studien</u>, Vol. 2, May 1993.

Young, James E. <u>Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Zagatta, Martin. "Kirche als Ersatzöffentlichkeit," in H. Wehling (ed), <u>Politische Kultur in der DDR</u>. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1989.

Zenker, Ernst Victor. <u>Anarchism: A Criticism and History of the Anarchist Theory</u>. London: Methuen, 1898.

Ziegler, David W. <u>War, Peace, and International Politics</u>. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Zinn, Howard. <u>Disobedience and Democracy</u>. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.