

Agent and Event: Rhetorical Dissent in the Context of Globalization

By

James Rushing Daniel

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(English)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2012

Date of final oral examination: 07/13/12

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Michael Bernard-Donals, Professor, English

Morris Young, Associate Professor, English

Christa J. Olson, Assistant Professor, English

Jim Brown, Assistant Professor, English

Bala Venkat Mani, Associate Professor, German

To Robert, Daphne, and Diana

*Table of Contents*

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Introduction // Aliaa.....	1
Chapter 1: Globalization is Silence.....	37
Chapter 2: Untitled, Unnamed: Rhetorical Anonymity in Hacktivist Resistance.....	77
Chapter 3: Bad Citizens: Ethical <i>Parrhesia</i> and Art Terror.....	117
Chapter 4: Theorizing the Rupture: WikiLeaks as Rhetorical Event.....	156
Coda.....	195
Works Cited.....	205

## *Acknowledgements*

I first heard about Ryszard Kapuściński from a guy I met in a bar six years ago. As we sat drinking kalimotxo in a backroom, he told me about *The Emperor*. Kapuściński subsequently became the subject of several of my early graduate papers and my first conference presentation. Since my first course, I've taught at least one of his essays every semester. It is from his writing that I think the questions of this project likely emerged. Through accounts of power, decadence, revolution, trauma, and the imprecise instrument of revolution, I became interested in authority and resistance and how these concepts have been transformed with the rise of globalization.

This project also began with the help of Carly Yuenger who, other than contributing significantly to my understanding of rhetoric, was the first person to turn to me and say, "You're talking about the nation state."

The members of my committee (Michael Bernard-Donals, Morris Young, Christa Olson, Jim Brown, and Bala Venkat Mani) have been exceedingly helpful and available as I've completed this dissertation. As I'm putting in the final touches, I note that it's got Michael Bernard-Donals' name all over it — Mike's help was instrumental in pushing me to develop familiarity with Nancy, Badiou, Benhabib, Melamed, Fraser, and others. I also want to thank Venkat. His mentorship, through his course on transnationalism, an RA position in CGES, the GSA conference, and HERMES, has lent so much to my thinking. I look back fondly to that night we walked through the Mouraria with Ellen Sapega and danced in the street. I thank him for his mentorship, encouragement, and friendship.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the department who have read and offered their time and insight into completing the project: Rebecca Lormier, Kim Moreland, Dave Stock, Chris Syrnyk, and Andy Karr. Particularly, I thank Annie Massa-Macleod for her long friendship.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents and my aunt Diana.

*Abstract*

This dissertation attempts to theorize the rhetorical operation of ruptures as forms of dissent. Regarding the current operation of dissent in the context of globalization, I argue that contemporary forms of dissent increasingly favor a form of activism that attempts to rupture rather than engage with the structures of power. I regard this form as a necessary evolution of dissent against structures of governance that increasingly limit the means of democratic or participatory engagement. As a consequence, rhetors are increasingly turning to means of intervention and interference. This dissertation attempts to rhetorically theorize these ruptures through the theory of the event as developed by Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy. As I argue, contemporary dissenters engage in a rhetorical process when they identify gaps or voids within a discourse of power and exploit those voids. This rhetorical process, I argue, involves a hermeneutic reading of the situation and the “making visible” of such voids as a means to create structural change within discourses or sites of power. As this is a means of negotiating power, rather than directly engaging with it, I view this practice as a valuable tool for rhetorical dissent calibrated to function in the context of globalization.

## Introduction // Aliaa

*We need to think about how thought can and must be surprised – and how it may be exactly this that makes us think. Or then again, we need to think about how there would be no thought without the event of thinking.*

-Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (2000)

*For them it was a Palace matter, and the Palace had always been inaccessible, unreachable, impenetrable, beyond understanding, on a different planet.*

-Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Emperor* (1983)

In the photograph, she is naked except for a pair of stockings, red slippers, and a decorative rose. The picture is black and white, but these accessories, the shoes and the rose, are saturated with color and draw the eye. These chromatic shocks, as the symbols of red lips, red lingerie, etc., seem to be attempts to heighten the sexual sensationalism of a scene deeply lacking in it (one notices the synthetic wood grain of an institutional cabinet behind her). Her pose is provocative if not “erotic,” her right leg balanced on the rung of a stool in a casual gesture of self exposure. The absence of expression on her face, her eyes glancing somewhere above the lens, contrasts with the insistent pose lacking in timidity, real or feigned. In contrast to her nakedness, this is the facial expression that might accompany a yearbook photo, a mug shot, a passport, or any variety of formal identification. Without knowing the context, one might (correctly) gather from her lack of performance and the insistence of her pose that this photograph is neither art nor erotica but rather a political statement.

The photograph is accompanied with the following text:

Put on trial the artists' models who posed nude for art schools until the early 70s, hide the art books and destroy the nude statues of antiquity, then undress and stand before a mirror and burn your bodies that you despise to forever rid yourselves of your sexual hangups before you direct your humiliation and chauvinism and dare to try to deny me my freedom

of expression.<sup>1</sup>

This text and self-portrait appeared on the blog of Aliaa Magda Elmahdy, activist and University of Cairo student, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. As an act of political defiance and a gesture of resistance in the vast corpus of dissent in the Egyptian chapter of the Arab Spring, Elmahdy's self-portrait became an instant controversy both among conservative pro-Murbarak factions and with many in the democratic opposition. With over two million hits within weeks of its release, the photograph, along with Elmahdy herself, became a symbol of the resistance movement.

Not surprisingly, conservative voices within Egypt were quick to condemn her action. Independent Egyptian news site *Bikyarmasr.com* reported on November 17<sup>th</sup> that legal action had been filed against Elmahdy by the Coalition of Islamic Law graduates citing her "violating morals, inciting indecency and insulting Islam." However, socially conservative voices within the opposition criticized her as well. As was noted in a November 17<sup>th</sup> article in the *New York Times*, the April 6<sup>th</sup> Youth Movement, an opposition organization of which Elmahdy herself was a member, distanced itself from her on ethical grounds claiming that none of their members engage in "such behavior." In the same article, group's spokesman, Tarek al-Kholi, was quoted as saying, "How can we have accepted the membership of a girl who behaves like this?"

Far more voluble than condemnation, however, were expressions of support, most of them from outside of Egypt and not directly affiliated with the revolution. Gay rights activist and senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Ashley Tellis was quoted in a November 21<sup>st</sup> article in the *International Business Times* as stating,

---

<sup>1</sup> "A Rebel's Diary," accessed May 14, 2012, <http://arebelsdiary.blogspot.com>.

“Nudity in her particular context is much more than a liberal act. It is a defiant political gesture which... is making a point about democratic values and the right to dissent.” In an article from November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the *Israeli News* reported that numerous Israeli women posed nude for a photo expressing solidarity with Elmahdy. In their photo, the Israeli women pose behind a banner in Hebrew and English reading, “Homage to Aliaa Elmahdi [sic]. Sisters in Israel.”<sup>2</sup> Elmahdy’s blog exhibits numerous other textual and visual responses created by supporters dramatizing Elmahdy as a resisting or liberated figure – in these images Elmahdy is depicted as an angel, a butterfly, the statue of liberty, emerging nude from the jaws of an alligator.<sup>3</sup> Another feature of the blog also links to sympathetic nude self-portraits by fellow bloggers in Iran, Denmark, and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

This self-portrait, the presentation of a naked young woman in the context of a highly conservative and religious society, I argue, may be understood through Jean-Luc Nancy’s construction of the surprise. In this instance, the surprise does not derive from the nudity itself as the abstraction of nakedness is not only unsurprising but intimately familiar. Nor does the surprise derive from the singularity of the event, the disrobing of the Muslim woman. An image popularized on an eroticist 1920s era French postcard, “*Femme Arabe avec la Yachmak*”<sup>5</sup> is remarkably similar in content – a veiled woman faces the camera, face concealed but breasts exposed. As this image can attest, the public dissemination of the image of a nude Muslim woman cannot be said to be unprecedented. Rather, the surprise

---

<sup>2</sup> “Nude Photos Freedom” accessed May 14, 2012 <http://nudephotosfreedom.blogspot.com>.

<sup>3</sup> “A Rebel’s Diary” accessed May 14, 2012, <http://arebelsdiary.blogspot.com>.

<sup>4</sup> “A Rebel’s Diary” accessed May 14, 2012, <http://arebelsdiary.blogspot.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriele Mentges, Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Cornelia Foerster eds., *Geschlecht und materielle Kultur: Frauen-Sachen, Männer-Sachen, Sach-Kulturen* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2000), 219.

of Elmahdy's lies in the conjunction of the identity of the subject, a young Muslim student, a citizen of Egypt, a woman, disseminating an image of herself as a gesture of dissent. It is specifically the use of the nude body whose exposure is transformed into a political act marshaled against a sexually, socially, and politically repressive authority that, as Nancy writes, "makes us think."<sup>6</sup>

But what thinking does this gesture, this surprise, prompt?

In this context, the substance of the surprise is disjunction, the slippage between anticipated action within the realm of common discourse and the alterity of the act that gives rise to the occasion of thinking. The act is calibrated to disrupt the situation by exposing precisely what the conservative authority attempts to conceal: the twinning of liberated female sexuality and a feminine political voice. In its inscription of these two points, the photograph offers a logic that troubles extant ways of thinking, particularly with regard to its intended conservative audience. It challenges discourses that assert that the body of an Egyptian woman should not be bared, sexualized, and available to be seen. It defies the conception that the photographed nude female body is always an instance of pure eroticization and submission to a male gaze. Furthermore, it asserts that nudity, rather than symbolizing the erotic, the vulnerable, or the clinical, may function as a political assertion. Lastly and most significantly, it exploits a known vulnerability in the conservative factions of both the governmental and oppositional groups in order to force a controversy over the subject of female sexuality. In so doing, it gives rise to new discourses and new modes of acting that cut across extant barriers. In the acts of solidarity shown by

---

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 165.

women in Israel and international bloggers, acts that take up the practice of baring the body as a political act, a new discussion with novel forms of political expression began.

However, Elmahdy's act does not offer these challenges strictly by way of visual or textual argument. Rather, her arguments are embodied, suggested within a language of gesture whose relationship to signification is inherently affective and unstable. Moreover, these arguments are forced upon the audience in presenting to the viewer a sight that, given the context, is not *meant to be seen*. The photograph operates as an eruption – it shocks the audience by providing them with a logic that is foreign to and radically inconsistent with that of the situation, forcing the thinking of politics, sexuality, and repression in conservative states in disjunction with the generally one-sided images presented to the media: young students congregating in Tahrir square and military suppression on the ground.

In its capacity to create rupture, incite controversy, and allow a subject to enter unexpectedly into a discursive scene already rife with speakers and authorities, I suggest, that Elmahdy's gesture is paradigmatic of an increasingly vital trope contemporary social discourse. Employing what could be called a tactic of surprise or exploitation, Elmahdy identified and acted upon a latent or dormant discomfort in her Egyptian audience. Publishing a photograph exploiting this discomfort, Elmahdy forced a debate by releasing a rhetorical artifact that would be widely disseminated, criticized, praised, discussed, tweeted, retweeted, and so on. I suggest that this image is not mere sensationalism but represents a vital shift in discourse and in logic of the status quo. Before Elmahdy, the discussion of feminism and female sexuality was not a part of the international

conversation regarding the revolution in Egypt. Afterwards, the question became one entirely relevant to the revolution.

In similar fashion, activists worldwide are using comparable tactics of anomaly and surprise to exploit vulnerabilities in repressive regimes and, in the same gesture, to harness media attention for political ends. Groups in the former Soviet republics are using cell phones, clapping, and nudity as forms of protests, American activists are occupying urban space, hacktivists worldwide are vandalizing public web pages, guerilla gardeners are seed bombing unused agricultural space, street artists like Banksy and Shepard Fairey are defacing and reclaiming urban architecture. Sweden's Pirate Party is the rising star of European politics, Iceland recently elected an anarcho-surrealist city council, and (until recently) the *indignados* blocked Spain's city centers. Though it is politically and intellectually dangerous to group the contemporary world's disparate movements as a single articulation, it is evident that creativity and invention mark these movements and that each attempts, in idiosyncratic ways, to compete for attention in an ever more crowded and fragmented public sphere. As this dissertation will argue, contemporary forms of political dissent increasingly follow the model of Elmahdy's radical politics – acts that, while rhetorical, must also be understood for their introduction of unthematizability and their capacity to disturb and surprise. Against strictly rhetorical interpretations, I do not regard the shock of Elmahdy's photograph merely as a species of logic or *pathos*, but as a far more complex experiential phenomenology, a process of force preceding and exceeding verbal/visual rhetoric, and the opening of a space where rhetoric can exist.

This strategy, in its evasion of traditional modes and avenues, takes place outside the traditional purview of civic or public discourse and functions as a synthesis between

individual agency and the participation of other human and non-human elements.

Functioning akin to Paul Virillio's dromic bomb,<sup>7</sup> an explosion that occurs and spreads outwards, carrying with it the force of information such that others are compelled to turn their heads and watch, Elmahdy's photo proliferates. The initial gesture of creating and posting the photo was carried forward by the multitude of visitors accessing, sharing, and discussing the photo. In this respect, the active spectatorship became the media event itself – rather than a form of direct protest, the protest issued from a single gesture that fanned out inciting response, creating controversy, enlisting sympathy, creating and changing discourse, and demonstrating a mode of practicable political language.

Regarding the growth of these extra or post-liberal modes of engagement, numerous vital questions arise. What is achievable through post-liberal modes of engagement? Are these forms necessarily more effective in the contemporary context than the modes of "intensification, contraction, and localization"?<sup>8</sup> If these forms are more effective, what conditions allow them to be so? What do they signify with regard to the greater socio-political climate? Most importantly, if these forms of agency indeed have utility in granting access, what does this signify regarding the state of liberalism and democracy worldwide?

The following dissertation seeks to explore these questions through an investigation of method. Specifically, the text will investigate the rhetorical potential of exploitive and unthematizable actions that allow rhetors to productively speak from the margins and effect discourse change. As I will argue, these forms are indeed more effective when read

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Crepuscular Dawn*, trans. Mike Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Alain Badiou. *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2012), 85.

against the familiar methods of mass protest in that they can succeed in negotiating global situations where standard, heretofore practicable modes of access are no longer possible. These tactics, I suggest, demonstrate a compromise on behalf of citizens and activists: a means of negotiating a political scene that necessarily revokes the values of liberalism.

Through an investigation of three paradigmatic activist groups, Anonymous, Voina [war], and WikiLeaks, I will elaborate how contemporary cutting edge activism utilizes tactics of surprise and disruption to circumnavigate the barriers to access erected by sites of power. I will argue that these groups employ a specific rhetorical tactic of surprise, what I will term “evental rhetoric” with reference to the concept of the event in the work of Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy. I will argue that successful activist groups who have managed to adopt strategies with which to speak from the margins have done so through the use of this tactic, a tactic that *aspires* toward evental change by identifying and exploiting holes in the logic of governing discourses and offering new logics in their stead that, like Elmahdy’s photograph, fan out across unstable public spheres like the blast radius of a bomb.

The following section of this introduction will elaborate the concept of evental rhetoric with regard to the predominating theories of the event. Specifically, this section will differentiate the ontological and dialectical understandings of the event offered in contemporary critical theory and will suggest how those theories may be applied to a form of rhetoric action. I will then situate this project’s theory of agency and agents within the fields of rhetoric and critical theory.

### *Evental Rhetoric*

Evental rhetoric, as it will be defined in this dissertation, is a mode of rhetorical discourse that aspires toward the radical transformation of discourse communities through

introducing the radically new. More specifically, this mode of discourse, in adopting tactics that are necessarily unfamiliar to audiences and foreign to the situations it enters, attempts to transform those situations according to the logic offered by the novel utterance. The event of Elmahdy's photograph and the responses it provoked, specifically the shock and support in the form of imitative action, is a pertinent and contemporary example of this form of rhetoric. In the sense that evental rhetoric attempts to introduce an instance of transversal change, much as Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the event is a moment of surprise followed by architectonic change and a moment of ontological beginning, evental rhetoric aspires to instantiate a discursive analog of this movement by introducing a statement that radically shifts the logical frame of a situation such that new engagements can occur. Regarding Elmahdy's example, the initial outrage provoked by her image may be understood as a successful example in that Elmahdy aspired toward the rupture and change of the discourse surrounding the Egyptian revolution. Likewise, the parroting of her action in support of women's rights and the rise of similar tactics internationally demonstrates (albeit in the realm of rhetoric) a transversal shift from one logic towards another.

In the concluding statements of a lecture entitled "The White Terror of World Order,"

Jean Baudrillard argues:

Opposition to global hegemony cannot be the same as opposition to traditional oppression. It can only be something unpredictable, irreducible to the primitive terror of programming, forces circulation, irreducible to the White terror of the world order. Something antagonistic, in the literal sense, that opens a hole in this Western agony. Something that leaves a trace in the monotony of the global order of terror. Something that reintroduces a form of impossible exchange in this generalized exchange. Hegemony is only broken by this type of event, by anything that irrupts as an unexchangeable singularity.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2010), 77.

In this postulation, Baudrillard argues that successful opposition to the contemporary constellation of global power must avoid established modes acting in order to avoid co-optation and anticipation by the logic of contemporary power. He suggests that they must instead attempt to function as unrecognizable acts of interruption. Dissent, he suggest, must not present itself *before* the structures of power in a known or knowable form – it must not reproduce the means or tactics of previous antagonisms as these may allow such resistance to be located, commodified, or entered into an exchange logic. Such visibility, Baudrillard suggests, would allow such revolt to be passed over, deflected by the totalizing structures global capital. Rather, as Baudrillard argues, such forms must function to rupture prevailing logic, existing not within but upon its structure, operating as global hegemony's true and unrecognizable Other. Baudrillard's suggestion of what such an act would entail relative to the situation it aims to disrupt, a currency that functions as an "impossible exchange,"<sup>10</sup> an act or trope whose meaning is not pre-determined in the extant constellation of meaning but a *new* entity, is more fully borne out in theories of the event.

The event, a concept used broadly across critical theory and analytical philosophy (Kim 1966; Deleuze 1990; Massumi 2011; Davidson 1969, 1980; Bach 1980; Bennett 1988; Anscombe 1957; Quine 1950), is both the most applicable and richest concept in contemporary thought regarding anomaly and radical change. Though significant disparity exists across the various theories of the event, a corollary among them constructs the event as a singularity, a unique trace of the outside into a system. For Alain Badiou, the event exists as a visitation upon a situation or world that transforms the situation according to a

---

<sup>10</sup> Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power*, 77.

logic that the event introduces. However, the event is neither agent driven (it cannot be willed into being by subjects), nor can it be said to be part of a situation or world – rather, the event is the event of subjectivity. Subjects do not instantiate events; they are made by them.

In Badiou's terminology, an event is a supplement "which compels us to decide a *new* way of being."<sup>11</sup> Providing such examples as the French Revolution and Galileo's development of physics, Badiou elaborates the event as a development that radically challenges the prevailing norms and logics of a given situation, a "beyond-the-law"<sup>12</sup> singularity. Critically, the event is not capable of being understood according to the prevailing logic of the situation that it has ruptured but rather employs and must be understood according to an entirely new logic that its appearance inaugurates. To follow in this new logic inaugurated by the event is an act Badiou deems *fidelity* – he provides the example of physics after Einstein entirely calibrated to Einstein's contribution.<sup>13</sup> This fidelity represents a "break"<sup>14</sup> in the logical order of a prevailing situation and the progression of an entirely new one regarding the relation of subjects to one another and to the reality of the situation.

According to Badiou, the event arrives through the naming of a void, or absence, in the logic of a given situation.<sup>15</sup> These voids may be understood as latent exceptions to a

---

<sup>11</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2001), 41.

<sup>12</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 68.

prevailing logic, points of potential that remain dormant until the moment when they are named and open the progression of a new logical model that follows from this turn in the presumptive logic of the situation. Because voids hold the potential for an exceptional logic to supersede the current one, the naming of the void is a moment of confusion and unthematizability as the logic introduced by the event is one that is incomprehensible according to the logical frame of the extant situation. Events, as such, are unknowable in their inception and only traceable through retroactive inquiry – only when the *truth* of the event has renegotiated the paradigms of the situation can it then be understood that an event occurred.

In this respect, Badiou's concept of the event as "a wholly new architectonic and thematic principle"<sup>16</sup> resonates with Thomas Kuhn's understanding of paradigm shift and the scientific revolution.<sup>17</sup> Kuhn's conception of paradigm shifts as "tradition-shattering complements to the tradition bound activity of normal science,"<sup>18</sup> are, similarly, moments of discovery and transformation that are radical in their inception and, potentially, orthodox in their maturity where the ontological concept of the event finds an analogue with practical traction. For Kuhn, such scientific revolutions are the result of moments of discovery by individual scientists. The nature of the truth discovered by a researcher, unlike for Badiou, is a process within the grasp of the subject attuned to latent contradictions.

---

<sup>16</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 68.

<sup>17</sup> See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 6.

It is in regard to this naming of the void that I suggest an application to rhetoric appears. However, important questions arise concerning whether an initially unthematizable event may be rhetorical in its emergence, or in its subsequent “truth.”<sup>19</sup> Can an event be employed rhetorically to interrupt or deterritorialize the prevailing logic of global hegemony? Can the truth following an event be rhetorical with respect to the discourses that emerge concerning the emerging thematic principle? Perhaps the most vital question, prompted by Baudrillard, concerns whether an individual or group may tactically bring about an event as a form of resistance. It is my contention that when the ontological aspects of the theory of the event are dropped, leaving behind a theory concerning a moment of transversal change issuing from the identification and “naming” of a void in the prevailing logic, it may be said that this process may indeed be practiced tactically.

In rhetorical terms, moments of ontological potential termed by Badiou as ‘voids’ may be understood, analogously, as moments of rhetorical potential in prevailing discourses. On a level of material structure and discourse, there are, as hacker culture has long borne out, weakness that may be exploited. These weaknesses may take the form of a literal vulnerable spot in a software program or a secret that may be discovered and taken advantage of.<sup>20</sup> A weakness could also take the form of a contradiction or latent exception to a dominant discourse that, when discovered and exposed, threatens to radically transform the discourse and force dominating parties to respond to the revelation of the

---

<sup>19</sup> In *Ethics*, Badiou defines the term truth as “the realm process of a fidelity to an event: that which this fidelity *produces* in the situation” (42). As such, the term refers to the presumptive reality or status quo that fidelity to the event creates.

<sup>20</sup> See Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

weakness or exception. Just as Elmahdy's photograph exploited a potential for an extreme gesture to garner condemnation, outrage, and support, I suggest that other weaknesses, holes, or moments of potential exist in other discourses that may be exploited for political gain. It is this striving to hermeneutically identify and act upon these moments of latent potential that, I suggest, contemporary activist groups who have broken through the protections of contemporary power structures to offer potent and influential critiques have done. Though they cannot, through active agency, enact events as such according to their understanding in the work of Badiou and Nancy, the groups *aspire* towards radical transformation. In seeking to bring to bear the exceptions, inventions, discoveries, or latent potentials that pre-exist within dominant discourses, these groups attempt to transform scenes through the introduction of new logics rather than through conventional modes of participation. This method is above all is a hermeneutics of potential action – a means of attunement to prevailing discourses with an eye toward these latent moments that hold the potential for transformation.

An additional point is necessary here regarding the *essence* of the surprise. The terms above, namely the void of the event and the space of the exploit, suggest a negative spatial quality for the place that is created by this exploit or rhetorical event. Regarding the surprise aspired to by these eruptive moments of dissent, the concept of space is an important one regarding the aftermath, the momentary unthematizability (shock, horror, disbelief, confusion) of the rhetorical event's arrival in which a new logic arrives creating a moment of radical ambiguity. This moment, what could be variously termed the event, the surprise, the rupture, may also be profitably understood through the concept of the *khora*.

Plato's *Timmaeus* constructs the concept as a space of ambiguity between sense and nonsense:

[T]here is a third nature, which is space, and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real; which we beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space, but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence.<sup>21</sup>

Plato's construction of the term suggests that it is a space beyond rational understanding, not perceived as through normal faculties and rational strategies, a space that is suspended between poles. The term is dealt with extensively by Derrida, who finds in the fundamentally indistinct concept a way of discussing language's inherent indirection. For Derrida, the *khora's* essential thing-ness, as "receptacle, imprint-bearer, mother, or nurse,"<sup>22</sup> is necessarily unstable, negative, contradictory, and as such, inherently resistant to language and philosophy. As a subject, this space and vessel confounds the ability to speak of it. The *khora*, as Derrida argues, is "neither this nor that, at times both this and that,"<sup>23</sup> and emerges from "a hybrid, bastard, or even corrupted reasoning."<sup>24</sup> As Caputo, Derrida's condenser, qualifies even more reductively, the *khora* "is just this aporetic, enigmatic, tongue tying-third thing,"<sup>25</sup> "a third thing... neither intelligible nor sensible, the discourse on which can be properly situated neither as *logos* nor *mythos*, certain or

---

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Jowett, trans., *Plato's Timmaeus* (State College: The Pennsylvania State University, 1999), 42.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, trans. Ian McLeod (Standord: Stanford University Press, 1995), 126.

<sup>23</sup> Derrida, *On the Name*, 89.

<sup>24</sup> Derrida, *On the Name*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

probable.”<sup>26</sup> The *khora*, then, is the between space where, to speak reductively, the normal rules and typologies no longer apply.

It is this *space*, this *aporia* of confusion and indeterminacy, where one finds oneself in the midst of the surprise. To take Elmahdy’s photograph once again as a minor but paradigmatic example, the eruption of the “that which is not mean to be seen,” the thing that confounds the logic of a situation, brings one into the space of the *khora*. This is such a space where the rules have been displaced, where one exists between old and new paradigms that, in terms of the example, is a space somewhere in-between the prohibition of nudity and the possibility of nudity to function as a political act. As the example seems to demonstrate, this transition, from something that is not yet thought of by an audience to something that is normalized, must go through the transitional stage where everything hangs in indeterminacy between poles. For those utilizing such a space towards rhetorical ends, the *khora* is what I understand as the space of surprise itself, a clearing away that allows for new paradigms to exist.

The discussion up to this point has merely dealt with the effects of the event — the following section will situate this project’s understanding of agency among three dominant theoretical conceptions of the term within the field, suggesting that while both traditional and emerging models deal substantively with the issue of agency, a compromise between the two must be further developed as a means to both understand the current conditions of dissent and theorize modes of generative rhetorical practice.

---

<sup>26</sup>Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 87.

### *The Agent*

In taking up a notion of agency as a means of identifying a gap and offering a critique with the capacity to rupture and transform contemporary discourses, an agency explicitly non-communitarian and not entirely given over to object oriented epistemologies, this work joins an emerging line of inquiry in the scholarship of rhetoric, new media, and critical theory seeking to investigate non-standard dissent. These investigations, both through an engagement with the potential of online activism and forms of dissent that function primarily through embodied action rather than through image or text, understand dissent and activism as projects that negotiate barriers erected by sites of power and with the diminishing consequentiality of the *agora* in contemporary life.<sup>27</sup> The forms of agency with which my work shares an affinity are those that are indebted to the exploration of complex systems of relationality, specifically regarding networks, but that do not go so far as to engage in theorizations of vitalism. Rather, the field's inquiries into agency that parallel my own seek to more substantively understand the role of the rhetorical agent as negating a complex network of actors primarily comprised of *human* subjects. While interested in the consequences of global interconnectivity and the role of technology in contemporary life, these theories are generally less interested in objects and materiality than the consequences of the network for human action (and generative theories thereof).

---

<sup>27</sup> My reference to this wing of inquiry in somewhat equivocal terms is the result of the decision to avoid, with Cloud (2001), the term "new social movements" or indeed "social movements." I have chosen not to employ this term, primarily, because these inquiries and my own investigation focus not on movements themselves but on rhetorical practices that may be utilized by the individual and the social movement alike. Secondly, the term "new social movement" suggests that it is the social movements themselves which are somehow qualitatively different from previous social groups. With my distinction, however, I aim to suggest that the composition and goals of such groups are irrelevant and that, rather, the global conditions and the methods of dissent are the elements which may be said to differ from previous occasions of dissent.

The project joins most significantly with Galloway and Thacker (2007), who argue for a theory of rhetorical engagement derived from hacking culture. The text explores the concepts of control and asymmetrical resistance in contemporary networked relations, arguing for a new conception of dissenting action. Like my own inquiry, Galloway and Thacker explore the potential of resistance to negotiate sites of power and governance, writing, “*To be effective, future political movements must discover a new exploit... The new exploit will be an ‘antiweb.’*”<sup>28</sup> As Galloway and Thacker suggest, opposition to vast political *dispositifs* of the global era must operate through guerilla-like, asymmetrical negotiation, “*discovering holes in existent technologies and projecting potential change through those holes.*”<sup>29</sup> Eschewing the concept of the *agora*, a space of meeting undergirded with rules governing the production of discourse, Galloway and Thacker suggest that activism must locate its own means of entering into the realm of discourse by, as they argue, operating through the strategy of a computer hacker who locates the opportunity to break through the protections of a site and exploits them. Rather than facing the interlocutor as an orator, Galloway and Thacker’s activist works in opposition to the structures of power, as the anti-globalization slogan states, “from below.”

This project also joins with the inquiry of non-discursive rhetoric articulated in Murray (2009), who calls for greater attention to the affective, visual, and embodied modes of rhetorical practice that abandon but nonetheless attend the rhetorics of linguistic signification. In investigating and calling for greater attention to those elements that attend or supplement the production of rhetoric but are not its essential linguistic substance – the

---

<sup>28</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 83.

visual, affective, tonal, and gesture bound elements – Murray attempts to expand the field beyond its implicit logocentrism. My work joins in this critique through investigating the non-discursive and exploitative aspects of rhetorical practice, like Elmahdy’s nudity, that attend but do not form the textual *content* of a rhetorical gesture.

My work additionally parallels investigations of the rhetorical praxis of dissent conducted by DeLuca (1999), who investigates the rhetorical strategies of so called “new social movements,” particularly focusing on environmental protest groups’ use of images to garner media attention. These images, what DeLuca terms “image events,”<sup>30</sup> contest “hegemonic discourses of industrialism and the received meanings of ideographs of progress, nature, humanity...”<sup>31</sup> Like Elmahdy’s alteration of the discourse of the revolution, DeLuca understands image events as visual disruptions, introducing logics that violently counter and shift predominating thought.

Like Muckelbauer (2008), my project is also interested in interrogating the intersections of tradition and innovation and questioning the concept of change from the perspective of a rhetorical theory informed by the European critical tradition. As Muckelbauer investigates overlooked aspects of Deleuze and Derrida to provide what he terms an “affirmative sense of change,”<sup>32</sup> my own project looks to Badiou and Nancy’s theories of the event to inform a rhetorical discussion of novelty and change as the goods of political and social dissent. Both projects attempt to deal with questions of the phenomenology of change and difference in the context of rhetoric through slightly

---

<sup>30</sup> DeLuca, Kevin. *Image Politics* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 51-2.

<sup>32</sup> John Muckelbauer, *The Future of Invention: Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and the Problem of Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 12.

different angles: Muckelbauer's through a largely Deleuzian perspective informed by the concepts of difference and repetition and mine through the event.

Less directly, my work explores a question posed by sinologist François Jullien in *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning Making and China and Greece* (2004), in which he investigates how indirectness in speech and writing, "detour," can grant access to publics and discursive situations.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, my own project, in investigating how substantive access may be acquired through means that subvert rather than confront extant obstacles of power, asks similar questions to that of Jullien's inquiry concerning the tactical and indirect engagement with loci of power. Though Jullien's explicit focus is equivocation in speech and mine involves equivocation as an entire methodology of dissent, both projects are interested in plumbing the depths of indirection as a paradoxically more direct path than the unequivocal approach.

This work breaks step with the preponderance of social protest, counterpublic, and subaltern theory within the field of rhetoric in regarding agency as disassociated from the concept of community. As I will establish in this section, many rhetorical and critical theory scholars attempting to understand the practice of speaking from the margins have theorized this process largely through the concepts of collectivization and constitutionalism. These scholars have argued that agency is acquired by a marginalized group through the cultivation of a position or space discrete from the dominant authority in which a group develops unique practices, norms, and a unique identity. This external space of identification functions to allow the marginalized subject to conceive of herself as

---

<sup>33</sup> François Jullien, *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

distanced from an authority and to thereby establish the means by which to act as an external critical agent. In the following section, I will elaborate how I see this model distributed across the field.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, greatly influential to rhetoric and composition though not within it, begins with figure of the ignorant, non-politicized, subject, marginalized and interpolated within a power structure, and seeks to equip this subject with the critical capacities to identify her position and begin the task of opposition. This task involves the acquisition of literacy in the discourses of marginalization such that objects (Freire's term for the powerless subject) may become "responsible subjects"<sup>34</sup> through the gaining of critical capacities.<sup>35</sup> Critical capacity, according to Freire, allows the subject to undertake a dialectical relationship with the forces of oppression such that she may combat the self-policing panoptic forces of oppression through "autonomy and responsibility."<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, the process issues from a transformation of recognition and subjectivity in which the subject realizes that she belongs to an underclass, a marginalized sphere, rather than the public itself, and works to extricate herself from this position.<sup>37</sup>

Charland (1987) provides a critical contribution to the lineage of understanding the formation of alternative subjectivities in arguing that publics are rhetorically constructed and offers a reading of how oppressed or marginalized subjects may subvert such marginalization through occupying oppositional sites of authority discrete from the

---

<sup>34</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000), 36.

<sup>35</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 68.

<sup>36</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 85.

majority body.<sup>38</sup> Charland is critical of the illusory freedoms of such tactics finding their liberatory potential a hollow venture, a zero sum replacement of one ideological position for another propelling “‘narratized’ subjects-as-agents into the world.”<sup>39</sup> However, despite his criticism, Charland presents an effective oppositional methodology for the cultivation of an oppositional sphere.

Similar rhetorical strategies have been conducted in rhetorical investigations of feminist and subaltern rhetorics. Olson (1997) discusses the rhetorical tactics of writer and activist Audre Lorde in her confrontation of the mechanisms of social and political silencing from a position of “multipl[e] marginal[ity].”<sup>40</sup> According to Olson, Lorde’s ability to speak from such a position derives from her adoption of an *ethos* of marginality, claiming this complex subaltern position, “human, but not male; woman, but not white; black, but not straight,”<sup>41</sup> and employing her perceived Otherness and risk to the majority position to become a symbolic agent of resistance. In similar fashion to Charland’s understanding of constitutive rhetoric, Olson recognizes Lorde as a figure who utilizes a decisive rupture with the normative logics of authority to occupy and cultivate a discrete identity. In Olson’s critique of Lorde’s rhetorical positioning, this outsider *ethos* provides the necessary critical capacity to become a critic from without the normative structures of gender, race, and sexuality. Critically, Lorde and her audience do not seek to engage with the discourse of

---

<sup>38</sup> Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987), 142.

<sup>39</sup> Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric,” 143.

<sup>40</sup> Lester C. Olson, “On the Margins of Rhetoric: Audre Lorde Transforming Silence into Language and Action,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997), 50.

<sup>41</sup> Olson, “On the Margins of Rhetoric,” 66.

power from their positions as powerless and heavily figured subjects within the normative logic but choose to become antagonistic figures against that logic once they have decisively delineated their position as no longer a part of it.

Reynolds (1993) offers a similar methodology of empowerment employing a spatial distinction of feminine social position. Reynolds reframes the concept of *ethos* from an individual rhetorical appeal to a socially constructed product. According to Reynolds, *ethos* as such represents “characteristics constructed by a group, sanctioned by that group, and more readily recognizable to others who share similar values or experiences.”<sup>42</sup> With this Post-Structurally inflected understanding of the concept, the rhetor is always already a proxy or an instantiation of a web of socially mediated signifiers appurtenant to herself such that *ethos* “shifts its implications of responsibility from the individual to a negotiation or mediation between the rhetor and the community.”<sup>43</sup> Reynolds mirrors the other rhetorical critics in asserting that power from marginal positions may be located without the renunciation of oppositional identity, but rather through the rhetorical employment of the position of exclusion.

Questions of oppositional praxis and solidarity, particularly in contexts of protest against state or transnational logics, are perhaps most explicitly explored in rhetorical counterpublic theory. Following Fraser (1992), numerous critics have continued similar critiques, notably Asen (2001), Cloud (2001), Benhabib (2002), Warner (2002), and Young (2002). With theoretical bonds to Habermas and Arendt, these critics draw upon public

---

<sup>42</sup> Nedra Reynolds, “*Ethos* as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority,” *Rhetoric Review* 11 (1993), 327.

<sup>43</sup> Reynolds, “*Ethos* as Location,” 328.

sphere theory and the critiques raised by Fraser to interrogate the normative discourse of a single and univocal public sphere. As Asen and Brouwer (2001) argue, “Counterpublic spheres voice oppositional needs and values not by appealing to the universality of the bourgeois public sphere but by affirming specificity of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or some other axis of difference.”<sup>44</sup> Counterpublicity, according Asen and Brouwer, is not a singular model of opposition but a spectrum differing “with regard to density, complexity, breadth, and access to resources and power; they may be episodic, enduring, or abstract.”<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, inquiries into various definitional and methodological investigations of counterpublics and counterpublicity offer diverse findings with regard to the counterpublic’s relationship to the state, its emergence, and its practice, but coalesce in assertions of its principal function as a space *in relation to* a site of authority.

Stockdell-Giesler (2010), in proposing a field of inquiry termed “outsider rhetoric” argues that the approach seeks to investigate even more deeply the hindrances of exclusion, considering outsider positions that “lack the institutionalization, order, leadership, and/or citizenship authority that formal organization in a social movement grants.”<sup>46</sup> Stockdell-Giesler argues that Outsider Rhetoric works to cultivate heterotopic spaces as critical reflections of dominant sites of authority - spaces of critical otherness exterior to

---

<sup>44</sup> Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer “Introduction: Reconfigurations of the Public Sphere” in *Counterpublics and the State*, edited by Robert Asen Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Asen and Brouwer, “Introduction,” 11.

<sup>46</sup> Anne Meade Stockdell-Giesler, “Introduction,” in *Agency in the Margins: Stories of Outsider Rhetoric*, edited by Anne Meade Stockdell-Giesler (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 11.

mainstream discourses where a critical *ethos* may be located and developed to “wield, undermine, or question power.”<sup>47</sup>

Taking up Stockdell-Giesler’s approach, Donnelly (2010) argues that arguments made by marginal figures must be sufficiently dynamic and transgressive in order to be substantive: “Outsider rhetorics must constantly test, challenge, and stretch the ‘acceptable speech’ boundaries defined by those in power.”<sup>48</sup> These rhetorics, he argues, must “push at the extremes in order to dismantle silences and force open spaces for discussion.”<sup>49</sup>

As this review attempts to demonstrate, the branch of rhetoric dealing with marginal agency has largely understood the project of dissent as necessarily a process of cultivating a “differential identity”<sup>50</sup> to emerge from subjugation. I view this method of cultivating agency as unsatisfactory in the global context for two reasons. First, the contemporary state based oppositional praxis largely articulated by rhetorical theory presumes the coherence and *discernibility* of a locus of authority against which the subject disarticulates herself; this is a reality no longer represented by the distributed authority of globalization. Secondly, as a consequence of this first difficulty, the cultivation of a differential identity would necessitate a veritable “apartheid,”<sup>51</sup> a withdrawal from communal and communicative life as such aspects are necessary extensions of the same

---

<sup>47</sup> Stockdell-Giesler, “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Donnelly, “Freedom of Speech and the Politics of Silence: The Case of Ward Churchill,” in *Agency in the Margins: Stories of Outsider Rhetoric*, edited by Anne Meade Stockdell-Giesler, (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>49</sup> Donnelly, “Freedom of Speech and the Politics of Silence,” 34.

<sup>50</sup> See Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), 48.

<sup>51</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 49.

global authority. Notably, both of these assertions have been countered by critics who have argued for the continued resilience of established modes of protest.

Concerning the first point, rhetorical theories of cultivating difference turn on two fundamental assumptions that, though functional at the national or local level, do not function in a global context: the existence of a singular site of authority and the capacity to perceive that authority *in its totality*. In Charland (1987), the creation of a unique subjectivity oriented towards a demand for self-sovereignty functions both as a rhetorical appeal in constituting an audience of *Québécois* who no longer believe themselves to be Canadian subjects, but also as a means of acquiring a majority vote for the creation of a new state. The movement identified the specific material gain of independence they seek from the dominant nation and identifies the means with which independence can be legally gained. The authority from which the *Québécois* seek independence is immediate, identifiable, bounded by borders, and committed to such democratic processes as referendums and the respect for popular mandates. The Canadian government was an authority that could be seceded *from*, as its power was understood to be limited to national power, and an authority to which rhetorical arguments could be addressed. As such, Canadian authority could be opposed and neutralized (in so far as it would no longer function as the sovereign of the *Québécois*) with the creation of an independent and discrete nation.

From such conflicts as discussed throughout the field, it appears that scholars view even complex or beleaguered struggles to attain agency as occurring within boundaries where power relationships and political norms are unambiguous. However, when conflicts with global valence are viewed in their complex situatedness within the power structures

of the contemporary world, the certainty with which nationally bounded dissent occurs vanishes. While sub-national conflicts identify authorities, areas of discontent, and define problems, methods, goals, and ways of becoming Other, global conflicts are thwarted by the inability to distinguish authority, understand the nature of discontent, conceptualize goals or methods that will be effective, or indeed understand from whom or what they must distinguish themselves from if such an act were even possible. As I will argue in the following chapter, this condition of ambiguity has become totalizing worldwide, irrespective of nation, with citizens unable to fully identify or oppose the various geopolitical forces that affect their lives. The tactical description of dissent as a cultivation of Otherness from a discrete authority no longer functions when considered in context with examples of global significance.

Regarding my second argument, the difficulty of withdrawing from a site of global authority, such opposition to and organization against an entire global apparatus of control would threaten to deepen the subjugation of the already marginalized subject or body and to limit the potential to mount a critical voice. Laclau argues that the claims to absolute group difference operate through a problematic universalist logic that functions both as a demarcation of group identity and as a means of separating that group from social space: “The assertion of one’s own particularity requires the appeal of something transcending it. The more particular a group is, the less it will be able to control the global communitarian terrain within which it operates.”<sup>52</sup> As Laclau suggests, the gains an assertion of autonomy affords are attenuated by the loss of a group’s capacity to exist within and utilize the available critical means of the common. When, as is the case in the context of global

---

<sup>52</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 48.

hegemony, the site of authority controls both common space and the channels of communication, the group that has asserted its total difference must utterly withdraw. As Laclau argues, “a pure logic of difference — the notion of separate developments — lies at the root of apartheid.”<sup>53</sup> According to Laclau, for a group to function as an absolute Other and to attempt to retain its marginal position of solidarity and identity, as advocated by Stockdell-Giesler, is comparable to resigning itself to “a perpetually marginalized and ghettoized existence.”<sup>54</sup> In practice, the Zapatista movement of Mexico’s Chiapas region conforms precisely to Laclau’s model as a site of opposition to global capital that has fatally exiled itself from the global terrain. More recently, the Occupy movement’s assertion of “We are the 99 percent” deictically groups all citizens of the world who are not among the world’s most elite billionaires to a single “ghettoized” underclass.

It should additionally be clarified that in my fidelity to Badiou, this project substantially breaks with the work of Foucault. Though I will address Foucaultian concepts (notably in chapter 3), my understanding of power and resistance is focused on the materiality of relations and silences, the political and social barriers of economy, technology, and literal rather than figurative policing, rather than ideology and bio-politics. A critical difference between the theoretical apparatus of this project and the work of Foucault lies in Foucault’s dismissal of the event, understanding the tendency to eventalize history as a fictive process of denying a historical continuum. Regarding the naming the event, a procedure that Badiou believes to be immanently possible, Foucault states, “There are too many diverse kinds of relations, too many lines of analysis, yet at the same time

---

<sup>53</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 49.

there is too little necessary unity.”<sup>55</sup> Foucault argues that the eventalizing of history is an essentialization, problematically isolating moments of rupture or novelty that could be broken down and understood within a greater historical continuity. Secondly, regarding the dual concepts of power and resistance, Foucault views power to be fundamentally embodied, exorcizing control over bodily functions and human relations through “those formidable disciplinary régimes in schools, hospitals, barracks, factories, cities, lodgings, families.”<sup>56</sup> For Foucault, because power is located in the disciplining of bodies and the engendering of subjects who will produce and exert power over themselves, revolutionary forms of resistance, specifically those deriving from Marx, myopically overlook that the essential location of power lies within the self and within one’s own practices.<sup>57</sup> As my own project looks toward globalization, particularly in its political, financial, and technological aspects as physical barriers to political agency, I look instead to the material instances of political and social change preferring a pragmatic approach to modes of resistance that have observable purchase in these areas.

One example of this is my use of Aliaa Elmahdy as an illustration at the start of this introduction. While I find value in the ability of an unexpected and incongruous act to rupture political discourse, a Foucautian would question the sexual and gender norms the work reifies. Namely, as means to confront power, Elmahdy disrobed in front of a camera, an act that could be quite validly interpreted as a reproduction of heteronormative views of

---

<sup>55</sup> Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and et al. (New York: The New Press, 2000), 228.

<sup>56</sup> Michel Foucault, “Body/Power” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 – 1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Parthenon Books, 1980), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, “Body/Power,” 59 – 9.

sexuality. Such a critique would attest that Elmahdy's sexualizing of herself in order to be heard reproduces a cultural view of women as sexual objects. Moreover, it could be asserted that while gaining a political voice, Elmahdy not only compromised her own position but that of other women as voiceless and sexualized. Such a critique is a highly valid one and, I strongly believe, should be made. However, as this project is interested in the modes and the consequences of voicing rhetorical critique, such an inquiry is one that I will not be taking up.

This project also breaks with another emerging theory of agency in the field that seeks to establish a material or object-oriented concept of agency. Though these theories of agency exhibit significant disparity, if a correlation may be drawn among them it is that they have generally minimized the concepts of intentionality and the human as a unique actor in global processes and instead pose a "post-human" agency independent of ideation. Such theories have posited that the concept of the human, and by association human goals and intention, has been historically over-determined relative to other non-human or indeed post-human actors. In posing a more complex and less human-bound explanation of action in the contemporary world, such theories pose themselves as more faithful to the lived realities of the interrelations between living and non-living things. Of these works, Jane Bennett offers the best accounting of the understanding of the concept of agency in relation to humans and material objects when she writes: "Agency is... distributed across a mosaic."<sup>58</sup> This conception of distributed agency, not the sole province of humans but shared across the myriad active, reactive, living, and non-living objects in a field of influence, effectively renders the conception of a human agency null and void.

---

<sup>58</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 38.

It is my contention that while these theories, particularly those of new and speculative materialism, object oriented philosophy, and actor-network theory, have offered compelling means of analyzing contemporary relations and processes, they are incompatible with a theory of rhetoric that seeks, at its core, to understand the human as a capable, thinking agent. By deconstructing human agency as an overdetermined and undertheorized process on par with the (re)active capacities of non-human objects, these theories have restricted their own application to a process of description. Namely, they have largely sought to frame processes operating in the contemporary world as a vast calculus of objects and humans that, while identifiable to a degree of certainty, ultimately extends beyond the realm of human understanding. While proponents of such arguments contend that the application of these theories has allowed for a more complex and authentic understanding of those agents, both human and non-human, that act upon the world, in positing such a “democracy of objects,”<sup>59</sup> these theorists have removed from their critique the possibility of an operational agency, a critique that allows and accounts for the occasion of a human actor identifying and meeting specific goals.

To clarify my own position, I do not contend that such a perspective is logically invalid as such. Quite the contrary – such scholars as Bennett (2010), Bryant (2011), Harmon (2002), and Latour (1993, 2005), and rhetoricians Hawk (2004), Rickert (2007), Hawhee (2005, 2009), and have offered valuable readings of processes whose agentive origin may arguably be distributed among a cast of human and non-human ‘actants.’ Bodies and objects certainly matter in the world and undoubtedly condition rhetoric in incalculable ways. My qualm with such scholarship, on behalf of rhetoric, is that to deny

---

<sup>59</sup> Levy Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2011).

the human a unique agentive capacity is to challenge the rhetorical project to an unacceptable, incapacitating degree. Rhetoricians, despite our numerous differences, must retain a belief in *human exceptionalism*, if not discounting then minimizing those who do not act, speak, or hear, in order to trace the function of individual or collective communication with regard to others. Because rhetoric as a discipline is both descriptive and generative, an attention to such materialism undoubtedly troubles our capacity to theorize practice-as-potential. Our field's prioritization of human actors allows us the ability to identify practices, as opposed to processes, in terms of cause and effect and to refine theories of *effective* communication. Without such an ability to posit a speaker as a *unique* agent qualitatively different from the material reality of the situation, rhetoric would be unable to isolate practice from process and lose its generative sphere of critique.

Materialist critics suggest that this is not the case. Bennett, for instance, has stated that it is "possible to say something about the kind of striving that may be exercised by a human within an assemblage... [the human] is but one actant operative in the moving whole."<sup>60</sup> As Bennett argues, to level the field between humans and objects is not to entirely eliminate the human and her efforts from the understanding of processes but only to greatly diminish her important relative to other things. Scot Barnett offers a similar call in "Toward and Object-Oriented Rhetoric" in which he argues that an attention to object-oriented philosophy obliges us to, "re/consider the very nature of rhetoric itself and to think carefully through the implications our missing masses suggest about rhetoric as both

---

<sup>60</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 38.

a human art and an ontological condition.”<sup>61</sup> An attention to the messy constellations of (re)active things, as Barnett suggests, certainly forces this questioning of the discipline’s tradition of discounting of the non-rhetorical.

To do this removes the fictive but necessary certainty on behalf of the rhetorician that it is a productive endeavor to study human writing and communication from the perspective of speakers. Bennett’s faith in the *possibility* of the tabulation of human agency as one factor in the broad machine of world processes is, strictly speaking, insufficient for the purposes of rhetoric. Given these theories, I suggest that rhetoricians are faced with the choice between an acceptance of vitalism, a deconstructed notion of agency, and the attendant complexity of an object-informed rhetorical practice, or a mercenary denial of such complexity in favor of a theory that links practice with result. It is not in the purview of this dissertation to provide a sustained defense of our discipline, as others have offered robust defenses (Vickers 1989; Booth 2004), but to argue that rhetoric as it has been conceived, as a human endeavor, should remain so as to remain a discipline capable of generative theorization.

Among the these three theories of agency, a theory that presumes membership within a collectivity as prerequisite to a means to speak, a theory ceding agency to a spectrum of human and non-human objects, and a theory in which the individual subject divorced from the necessity a group identity is the locus of speaking potential, I favor the third precisely because of my commitment to a dynamic theory that is both descriptive of practice and capable of demonstrating possible methods of action. A theory of agency that

---

<sup>61</sup> Scot Barnett, “Toward a Rhetoric of Everyday Things.” Review of *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects and Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* by Graham Harman. *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture* 7 (2010).

situates the individual subject at its locus, I argue, presents a viable compromise between a theory grounding the subject within the collective, thus limiting her potential to act independently and dynamically, and a theory that extends the agentic capacity among all objects. This dissertation will, as such, embrace a theory that prioritizes the subject acting in the context of globalization irrespective of whence this subject comes or who she speaks for. Rather, I will instead utilize a theory of the subject primed for application to the fragmented modern world.

In the following text, *Chapter One* will argue that the contemporary global scene is firmly grounded in a post-liberal model. Drawing primarily from the scholarship of Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, and Ulrich Beck, and citing examples of the diminishing democratic nature of formerly democratic sites and the growing inconsequentiality of these sites, this chapter will establish the democratic rhetoric of the contemporary age as out of step with the lived realities of a fractured and globalized world. With regard to the material realities of globalization that have distanced local citizens from the means of participation and the discourse of neoliberalism that maintains the fiction of democratic access while diminishing it worldwide, I will argue that heretofore dominant models of participation and access are longer capable of functioning alongside current theories of rhetoric. The critique of globalization's curbing of democratic potential will argue that "new" forms of activism are required to destabilize the contemporary deadlock of geopolitical power structures.

*Chapter Two* will investigate the "hactivist" group Anonymous regarding its deployment of "evental dissent" through its combined usage of a novel membership structure, passive membership, group *ethos*, and distributed denial of service attacks

(DDOS), which hinder the function of but do not damage online sites. This chapter will argue that these reversals of publicity, in particular the absence of the name and the ease of the group's deployment of passive opt-in participation, offer a radical and efficient re-writing of publicity as such. I will argue that through transmuting the presumption of "being there" and being known as prerequisites for speaking in a public, Anonymous exploits the very model of publicity for the contemporary global scene and offers a profound and provocative form of critique for contemporary conditions.

*Chapter Three* will analyze the Russian dissident group Voina, whose escalating oppositional projects in 2011 garnered international media attention and led to the arrest of the group's founding members. The chapter will detail Voina's reinvention of the model of *parrhesia*, understood in the later work of Michel Foucault as a means of "courageous veridiction."<sup>62</sup> Under Voina's reinvention, this form of ethical speaking becomes a form of self-preservation and defense of the act of dissent rather than an act of martyrdom. Understanding the group through the prism of evental rhetoric, I will argue that Voina substantively locates an exception in the model of *parrhesia* and emerges as a productive and prominent critic through having located a means to speak against the abuses of governance while concealing that position (at least temporary) through a carefully situated identity immune to punishment.

Lastly, *Chapter Four* will explore how WikiLeaks, through compiling an archive of leaked information, locates an exception in the fabric of contemporary discourse of dissent by combining the method of the leak with the technology of the digital, globally accessible

---

<sup>62</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of the Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 87.

archive. Returning to Badiou's theory of the event and the concept of the rupture, this chapter will investigate how WikiLeaks' exploitation of a global exception forces the debate of issues of interest and obligates geopolitical authorities in the realms of governance and economics to consider a world substantively transformed by the vanishing of secrecy. This chapter will more substantively orient Badiou's theory of the event, situated in ontology, toward a viable rhetorical theory utilizing the work of Galloway and Thacker, Rickert, Muckelbauer, and Biesecker. This chapter, in returning to the theory of the event, will clarify how the theory of rupture and ontological beginning is indeed an agentive process, a mediation between rhetor and material world, and a tool relevant to a theory of rhetoric operating through post-liberal means.

Each of the following chapters is an example of evental rhetoric conducted as an aspirational praxis. These chapters are not meant to establish a taxonomy of evental rhetoric, though they detail a variety of diverse tactics employed to introduce novel logics as a means to transform discourse situations. Rather, they are parallel examples of groups employing different means as an attempt to radically transform discourse situations and/or political scenes in which the agency of the subject is imperiled. These chapters will elaborate the tactical process of identifying and acting upon a moment of potential within the contemporary global scene. These case studies, in presenting the process of three contemporary groups identifying and acting upon these moments, attempt to demonstrate both the potential of contemporary rhetorical agency in exploiting exceptions to increasingly dominant contemporary discourses and the increasing obsolescence of agonistic, participatory, and reconciliatory methods of intervention.

## Chapter 1: Globalization is Silence

In the early 1990s, a collaboration began between French oil company Total, American owned Chevron, the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTTEP), and the Burmese government to build a gas pipeline from the Yadana oil reserves under the Andaman Ocean to neighboring Thailand. Myanmar, though it has recently taken steps towards democracy, was ruled by military junta from 1962 to 2011 and has long been the subject of criticism from human rights groups for its denial of basic liberties, forced labor, and state-sanctioned violence.<sup>63</sup> The country's isolation and subjection to various economic sanctions by the United States and the European Union, however, have not prevented foreign companies from exploiting from the nation's rich oil and gas reserves. Allegations from numerous human rights groups claim that the Burmese government, having providing security for the joint project, committed sustained violent human rights abuses over the past two decades toward the local populations, transgressions in which Total, Chevron, and PTTEP are alleged to be complicit.<sup>64</sup> Critics additionally allege that the profit from the internationally funded and managed project has been a substantial source of Myanmar's income, largely keeping the nation financially viable.<sup>65</sup>

Given this scenario and the interests involved, a common problem of ambiguity regarding the nature of authority and agency in the context of globalization becomes

---

<sup>63</sup> Earth Rights International, *Total Impact 2.0: A Response to the French Oil Company Regarding its Yananda Natural Gas Pipeline in Military Ruled Burma (Myanmar)*. (2009), <http://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/publications/total-impact-2-0.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Earth Rights International. *Total Impact 2.0*, 8-11.

<sup>65</sup> Earth Rights International. *Total Impact 2.0*, 8-19.

apparent. How might the allegedly unpaid and mistreated Myanmar workers who built and maintain the pipeline enact dissent? To what authority should they appeal and from what authority must they secede? Naturally the Burmese junta that brokered the deal with foreign oil companies and whose military perpetrated the abuses is the supreme authority in the region and the figure ultimately culpable for human rights violations. However, as Total, Chevron, and PTTEP entered into collaboration with a nation whose reputation as an authoritative regime was well established, and who, according to allegations, have been complicit in “forced labor, murder, rape, and crimes against humanity,”<sup>66</sup> these companies would appear to constitute a significant authority in their own right for managing the project and indeed securing the longevity of the junta. Additional questions arise as to whether the United States, France, and the European Union are complicit for allowing the companies to operate in and support the Myanmar regime while they themselves reaped the financial benefits of the profits made. Finally, as the allegations against Total and Chevron have been widely publicized, in addition to their other human rights and pollution related scandals, some might attribute responsibility to the customers of these corporations, both nations and individuals, who continue to purchase their products despite knowledge of their activities.

This example exposes a critical dilemma in the conceptualization of agency and dissent in the context of globalization. As the model of governance has transitioned from a discrete nation state model to a complex system of overlapping authority comprised of state and non-state actors, the problem of identification and access becomes acute. Citizens of contemporary communities confront the novel predicament of identifying the

---

<sup>66</sup> Earth Rights International. *Total Impact 2.0*, 17.

authorities that govern them and identifying the agoras of consequence before they can consider the project of advocacy or dissent. When situations such as those in Myanmar arise, citizens are faced with an agglomeration of power, an apparatus of exploitation that has no central authority, no democratic structure, and no democratic mechanism to allow for citizens under the authority to seek rights. Accordingly, this ambiguity, acutely relayed in the case of Myanmar but represented in numerous contexts across the globe, represents a contemporary crisis of agency. Citizens in two-thirds nations are exploited by overlapping systems of finance and complicit governments while citizens in the West exist within equally nebulous confluences of governmental and non-governmental actors face comparable confusion regarding which figures, organizations, and nations hold authority over them.

This chapter will discuss the two chief problems of global governance that imperil a functioning democratic praxis: the ambiguity of governance and the hegemony of neoliberal discourse. As I will argue, these two problems have significantly weakened the foundations of global democratic society despite the fact that the rhetoric of such a society remains. This argument will establish the need for a rhetorical praxis with the capacity to negotiate these issues. The chapter will begin with a critical introduction to globalization and its central concepts, namely the concept of agglomeration as detailed by Jean-Luc Nancy and the concept of the network explored in the work Manuel Castells. This will be followed with a discussion of the major scholarly investigations of the consequent transformations in the concepts of global justice and global citizenship. This chapter will transition to an investigation of neoliberal discourse, the rhetorical logic that has co-opted discussions of globalization and its contemporary political function. The chapter will then

conclude with a discussion of how the logic of neoliberalism presents numerous disjunctive challenges to the thinking and operation of deliberation, critique, and dissent, and will argue that there emerges the necessity of reconceptualizing both the methods and ends of contemporary dissent in the context of global and neoliberal barriers.

### *World-Becoming*

According to the majority of contemporary theorists of politics, economics, technology, and culture, the organizational logic of the contemporary global era represents a profound shift from previous historical periods. Though the nature of this shift and the particular aspects the contemporary world exhibiting transformation vary widely according to various theories, the majority posit a material and epistemological transition from the logics of modernity to an organizational system defined by global interdependence and the increasing redundancy of modern organizational structures and principles.<sup>67</sup> This contemporary state is described through a variety of terms and designations: hyper- (Lipovetsky 2005), post- (Lyotard 1984, Harvey 1989, Jameson 1990), liquid- (Bauman 2000), or second modernity (Beck and Grande 2007), post-industrial society (Bell 1973), network society (Castells 1996), or globalization. Though each term designates a unique relationship between the contemporary era and its modern antecedent, each offering distinct ways of accounting for the nature of the contemporary reality, all call for an essential reinterpretation of the material and epistemological foundation of contemporary life. Materially, these terms denote new levels of economic, political, and cultural proximity and interdependence, novel methods of interaction and production

---

<sup>67</sup> There are, additionally, numerous critics resistant to the argument of a paradigmatic break with modernist logic (Latour 1993, Laclau 2007).

while appealing for reassessments of power. Epistemologically they question the prevailing logic of such heretofore stable concepts as subjectivity, nationality, production and product, borders, justice, and culture, among others. In sum, despite variance among contemporary scholars' conceptualizations of the nature of the contemporary era's departure from modernity, the shift is broadly understood as a transition from a plurality of heterogeneous logics towards a singular global logic.

It is this material and epistemological telescoping, particularly in its relevance to the associated concepts of freedom and power and in its consequences for understanding democracy, participation, and communication in the contemporary world, that render consideration of globalization essential when theorizing the acquisition of rhetorical agency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will argue that while globalization has created heretofore unparalleled connections within the world, these shifts and discourses have manufactured a socio-political scene in which the voicing of rhetorical dissent is imperiled.

David Held describes globalization as a state in which "political communities and civilizations can no longer be characterized simply as 'discreet worlds.'"<sup>68</sup> Though scholars understand globalization as a multitude of parallel processes from the rise of technology, the establishment of free trade agreements, political coalitions, non-state based sites of global authority, and the redistribution of global authority from the sole province of nations into a vast number of interconnected overlapping agents, I will begin this discussion of globalization in terms of its broadest theoretical formulations taken from the analysis of the word itself: as a process of global and worldly *becoming*. In *The Creation of*

---

<sup>68</sup>David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 77.

*the World or Globalization*, Jean-Luc Nancy interprets the concept of convergence of formerly discrete worlds as a totalizing *agglomeration*: “The city spreads and extends all the way to the point where, while it tends to cover the entire orb of the planet, it loses its properties as a city, and, of course with them, those properties that that would allow it to be distinguished from a ‘country.’”<sup>69</sup> Nancy conceptualizes this growth as a complex process of reorientation and dislocation – the growing indivisibility of part to whole, *glomus* (sphere) to *globe*, a “disintegration”<sup>70</sup> and perversion of both forms such that the latter becomes subsumed by and indistinguishable from the former, and the consequential establishment of a singular global logic.<sup>71</sup> Nancy characterizes such a becoming in terms of the disjunctive metastases of the West across the globe such that it no longer recognizes its own presence in the world for its absolute agglomeration.<sup>72</sup> As such, the process of globalization may be understood to function as the ultimate transformation of the world as that which may be regarded from the outside, as object, to that which has subsumed its own outside to function as a unified totality, as subject.<sup>73</sup> There no longer exists an external vantage point from which to view the world. The most significant consequences for such a global transition, according to Nancy, lie in the overriding of territorial logics of power with respect to the rise of a unitary structure of authority, the absence of interstitial spaces between spheres of authority, and the stratification of heretofore spatially discrete

---

<sup>69</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>70</sup> Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 33.

<sup>71</sup> Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 34.

<sup>73</sup> Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 41.

localities of relative means (the so called “first” and “third worlds,” North and South) into a singular global structure dividing wealth and poverty. It is this contestation of a unitary logic and power structure that serves as the premise for contemporary analysis of globalization for many contemporary scholars.

According to network theory, the historical matrix of nation states as the ultimate arbiters of global power has transitioned to a complex system in which the state occupies the position of a node in a network in a general arrangement of actors.<sup>74</sup> Contemporary network society, as such, comprises “specific configurations of global, national, and local networks in a multidimensional space of social interaction.”<sup>75</sup> Such redistribution of authority entails profound consequences for the operation of communication, the flow of information, and the organization and function of power. According to Castells, power is no longer located in the capacity of the nation state to exert it over a particular community, but rather is distributed throughout the network and exists as a function of the nature of connections or relations shared between nodes.<sup>76</sup> Though Castells acknowledges that such networks are historical features of social organization and political economy, he argues that their contemporary geometry in global network society represents a hegemonic proliferation of innumerable connected networks of finance, labor, technology, communication, politics, and culture organized in a global system such as to “shape and control human life in every corner of the planet.”<sup>77</sup> According to Castells, such networking

---

<sup>74</sup> Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>75</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 25.

of networks represents a profound disjunction with the historical precedent of autonomy and discontinuity such that all aspects of contemporary life are interpolated into a systematic logic.<sup>78</sup> Such systematization, Castells argues, results in a profound reorientation of global temporality and the relation of being to becoming where the speed of information networks have placed society in “structural ephemerality: *being* cancels *becoming*.”<sup>79</sup> According to Castells, the world no longer exists within history but in an immutable global now without relation to past or future. The network, its facility and its power, have effectively established a new post-historical paradigm.<sup>80</sup>

Castells additionally theorizes that such structural shifts have created numerous fragmentations within established communities. Specifically, he argues that such rise of networked relationships has ionized global society and local identity fomenting a greater multiplicity and division of identities.<sup>81</sup> However, against arguments by prominent scholars of cosmopolitanism who have argued that the increasingly frequency and proximity of relations engendered by the communication revolution will engender the values of humanism and hospitality among the multitude of singularities, Castells suggests that such communication has become an entirely procedural system in which contemporary communications exists “on the basis not of shared values but of the sharing of the value of communication.”<sup>82</sup> The suggestion counters claims of leading cosmopolitan

---

<sup>78</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 25.

<sup>79</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 35.

<sup>80</sup> See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

<sup>81</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Castells, *Communication Power*, 38.

thinkers, many of whom claim cosmopolitan values as organic, increasingly present, and in need of political recognition to transition from lived values to transnational practice.<sup>83</sup>

The visions of world organization proposed by network theory, though dissimilar in certain respects and illustrative of advances in the composition of globalization, forward the premise that heretofore stable assumptions of discrete divisions between sites of power, cultures, and individuals must be radically revised with respect to the general consolidation of the contemporary world. Under the singular world logic both theories propose, numerous assumptions about being in the world and about the nature of human action and agency necessitate reevaluation from a global perspective. From these essential premises, scholars have explored numerous consequences for contemporary life in which the nation state no longer functions as the sole site of authority. Of particular interest to this investigation are the changing understandings of the nature of justice and citizenship as conceived under a global paradigm of authority. The following investigations of justice and citizenship attempt to understand how citizens and institutions are attempting to reconceptualize such heretofore stable concepts of governance and civic life in a state of ambiguity.

In *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (2009), Nancy Fraser explores the consequences of globalization for the concept of global justice, exploring the ambiguities and recalibrations necessitated by the loss of Westphalian political imaginary. Drawing from the contemporary disjunction of the nation state as a vanishing site of juridical legitimization akin to Castells' understanding of the role of the

---

<sup>83</sup> See Anthony Kwame Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), and Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

state as “guarantor,” Fraser explores both the radical ambiguity of the concept of justice as unmoored from national authority and the attendant necessity of a new global justice based on the assimilation of subjects into spheres of authority. Fraser’s argument turns on the capacity of the nation state as historically determinative of the frames of justice, specifically the delineation of subjects and the managing of the potential of participation and distribution within territories.<sup>84</sup> In the transition away from a Keynesian-Westphalian form of democratic justice, Fraser argues that it is incumbent upon theories of justice to re-conceptualize the nature of exclusion and rights with regard to subjects who, though they are not legitimate members of political communities, are nevertheless subjects of power structures that may be described as transnational.<sup>85</sup> As such, the nature of subjectivity in the contemporary global scene must be reconsidered with respect to the modern-day transnational conditions.<sup>86</sup> Fraser argues that this opening of the potential of transnational agency has allowed the emergence of protest movements in which dissidents are able to demand rights and subject status from sites of authority under which they are not citizens but nevertheless subjugated.<sup>87</sup> Just as protest movements critical of nation state actors have revealed the injustices of nation state based inequities, Fraser argues that these movements represent contemporary analogues to the inequities she terms “meta-political misrepresentation,”<sup>88</sup> the contemporary process of silencing or

---

<sup>84</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 16.

<sup>85</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 16 – 17.

<sup>86</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 22 -23.

<sup>87</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 26.

disenfranchisement of those who may be harmed by transnational decision making. Fraser argues that such new forms of misrepresentation issuing from a diverse array of sites of authority necessitate a complex and adaptable rearticulation of justice, taking into account “the possibility of multiple non-isomorphic structures”<sup>89</sup> of authority and the multitude of those who are affected by such structures, a theory deemed the “*all subjected principle*.”<sup>90</sup> However, as Fraser notes, such a theory must be both dialogical and institutional in nature, operating through deliberative processes and regulated through an empowered civil society with the potential make and enforce decisions such that its application may claim new legitimate authority.<sup>91</sup>

Many contemporary scholars have also explored the ambiguity of citizenship with the absence of nation states and national borders as terminal frames of power and identity. Specifically, scholars who have explored this aspect of globalization argue that the obviation of nation states initially suspends the meaning of traditional state-based citizenship but simultaneously potentiates new forms and articulations of global or transnational citizenship. Benhabib (2002) articulates this initial ambiguity: “We have entered a world in which liberal democracies will have to come to grips with the end of unitary citizenship.”<sup>92</sup> As Benhabib suggests, previous notions of community were founded upon a singular filiation enabled by a political boundary of control. Citizenship is thereby complicated by a world in which community membership is no longer singular but exists

---

<sup>89</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 39.

<sup>90</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 68-70.

<sup>92</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 180-1.

within a transnational web of overlapping identities and memberships that threatens the inherent integrity of previously established notions of citizenship. Given that the state, according to Butler and Spivak (2007), “is supposed to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship... that which forms the conditions under which we are juridically bound,”<sup>93</sup> it follows that the instantiation of multiple or overlapping citizenships threatens to render the concept contradictory or redundant. Étienne Balibar’s pronouncement that “citizenship is an institution that is inconceivable except in relation to the frame of the state,”<sup>94</sup> presents such a paradox of membership in a pluralized world of shifting and overlapping sovereignty. It indeed becomes a significant theoretical uncertainty in the current scholarship of globalization whether such flexible communities and citizenships, as affected as they are by the fluidity of sovereignty and capital, will continue as frames for regarding the modern world. Other scholars, notably Saskia Sassen, question whether the transnational shifting of nation state power will obviate citizenship by removing citizens from the spheres of obligations and rights: “If there is one theme that brings together today’s many different citizenship dynamics it is the lengthening distance between the citizen and the state.”<sup>95</sup> Sassen fronts the failures of modern civil society to adequately participate and be heard on a national level. However, as Castells has argued, the state is no longer the state as such, but a node of network power that is increasingly distant from the citizen and the community. This poses difficult questions as to whether

---

<sup>93</sup>Judith Butler and Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State?: Language, Politics, Belonging* (London: Seagull Books, 2007), 3.

<sup>94</sup> Etienne Balibar, *We The People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 182.

<sup>95</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Territory Authority Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 319.

the assurance of privileges and duties previously afforded by the state could function under the new global organization. Not all scholars, however, have abandoned the concept; a potential recuperation of state-based citizenship with respect to the transnationalism is articulated by Aihwa Ong in new forms of “flexible citizenship” in which, “Subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes.”<sup>96</sup> Ong’s observation suggests the extant practice of reinterpreting citizenship in the global context on the part of citizens.

Against these assertions of a need for a global re-imagining of resistance, two significant critiques have alleged that traditional pre-global modes of opposition still remain as viable means of opposition. Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) and Dana L. Cloud’s “Doing Away With Suharto— and the Twin Myths of Globalization and New Social Movements” (2001) charge that critiques alleging the necessity of rearticulating the means of dissent for the contemporary era overdetermine the capacity of globalization to limit and delimit the oppositional potential of contemporary subjects. Cloud and Sandoval charge that critiques of the difficulties of the acquisition of agency in the context of globalization function to incorrectly presume totalizing limitations that, according to the authors, are capable of being surmounted by resistance operating via the selfsame logic that has sustained it throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Sandoval’s text offers a critical response to Fredric Jameson’s *Postmodernism, of the Cultural Logic of Late Capital* (1984) in which Jameson argues that ““critical distance””<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>97</sup> Chela Sandoval, *The Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2000), 19.

between a dissenting subject and a hegemonic power structure is no longer possible under postmodern globalization due to its totalizing organizing of contemporary life. Sandoval counters this argument in turning to sites of colonialism and resistance, asserting that the “survival skills and decolonizing oppositional practices”<sup>98</sup> present practicable methods for global emancipation. Vital to Sandoval’s critique is an assessment of globalizing power as empire, a critique initially articulated in Hardt and Negri (2001), a system in which contemporary world citizens occupy the position of disempowered colonized subjects distanced from the site of authority. Unlike Jameson’s contention that the contemporary subject is interpolated into the global system of power from which there is no otherness that does not reproduce that power, Sandoval argues that the evolution of culture and global subjects has kept pace with the evolution of power. According to Sandoval, this evolution of subjects “makes accessible, to oppressor and oppressed alike, new forms of identity, ethics, citizenship, aesthetics, and resistance.”<sup>99</sup> This contestation allows Sandoval to assert that pre-global developments in critical consciousness and resistance, particularly in feminism, provide working models for the present.

Dana L. Cloud develops a similar argument against the overdetermination of global conditions to thwart traditional modes of resistance. Against the so called “New Social Movement” theory, a theory presuming the obviation of traditional modes of protest and organization, Cloud analyzes the 1998 Indonesian revolution to contend that these modes continue to hold significance in the contemporary world. Breaking with numerous scholars of globalization, Cloud asserts that discourse of globalization that aims to construct its

---

<sup>98</sup> Sandoval, *The Methodology of the Oppressed*, 33.

<sup>99</sup> Sandoval, *The Methodology of the Oppressed*, 37.

emergence as a totalizing break with pre-global logics ultimately functions to support the dominance of global capitalism and discourage resistance.<sup>100</sup> Rather, Cloud argues that the most effective rhetorical position, one that encourages rather than de-incentivizes resistance, understands globalization as fictive, ignoring the impositions of globalization critics and neoliberal advocates, instead working against the traditional state and economic based forms of control.<sup>101</sup> In analyzing the Indonesian revolution, Cloud emphasizes the proximity and materiality of the government corruption and economic crisis the revolution served to overturn, arguing that rhetorical critics must contribute to the realization of the possibility of identifying possible and practicable revolutionary goals rather than dismissing the enterprise. Concerning the rhetorical mode of resistance, Cloud argues that this form of rhetorical opposition must conceptualize “capitalism as a global system, but one that must be challenged by a similarly internationalized revolutionary movement.”<sup>102</sup>

Both critiques offer difficult challenges to theoretical inquiries that attempt to understand globalization both as a rhetorical imposition and as an undeniable material process that necessitates a revolution in modes and tactics of opposition. In large part, Cloud is correct to argue that many contemporary critics of globalization have discounted the importance of the nation state to a fault. Local democratic struggles and injustices certainly persist and are meaningfully confronted — the revolutions across the Middle East are a gratifying example of this. However, the example of the Yadana pipeline provides a

---

<sup>100</sup> Dana L. Cloud, “Doing Away with Suharto – and the Twin Myths of Globalization and New Social Movements,” in *Counterpublics and the State*, ed. Robert Asen Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 240.

<sup>101</sup> Cloud, “Doing Away with Suharto,” 240-1.

<sup>102</sup> Cloud, “Doing Away with Suharto,” 255.

unique context of exploitation and control that, though organized by a nation state, exists as a complex global apparatus for which, as yet, no mode of resistance yet exists. Though Sandoval and Cloud forward convincing arguments concerning the dangers of ascribing hegemonic power to global capital, the emergence of new and complex problems of authority and control are difficult to dismiss as purely fictive. I suggest that, in addition to the continued support and theorization of local democratic struggles, rhetorical scholars must also interrogate the most difficult problems presented by globalization, specifically those for which prevailing modes of resistance are indeed inconceivable. For the largest, most intransigent, or most diffused problems of globalization, I argue that new modes of resistance which could be said to reproduce the local sense of the world but on the global stage must be actively sought.

### *The Neoliberal Turn*

Through these theoretical explorations of the process globalization and its attendant material and epistemological consequences, a radical ambiguity becomes apparent with respect to how human civilization will and, more critically, *ought* to proceed into the global era. Resulting from these various processes, questions of the ways to re-conceptualize the foundational aspects of human life such as the nation, power, the citizen, the encounter, become vitally important as societies and subjects attempt to understand and assert their roles in the contemporary world. It is into this ambiguity that neoliberalism has entered and gained prominence as a means of reforming practices, values, and relationships within the current power upheaval. Farrell (1993) emphasizes that the role of rhetorical discourse within culture functions to promote responsibility and deliberative capacity on behalf of individual actors and the societies in which they exist.

According to Farrell, rhetoric “allows the rhetorician to become a more accountable moral agent – in other words, literally to cultivate *phronesis*.”<sup>103</sup> Oppositely, Farrell notes that in situations where decision-making is not deliberative or entirely weighted to a single argument, societies run the risk of “moral indifference” or “moral fanaticism”<sup>104</sup> respectively. It is against this Aristotelian notion of rhetoric as capable of promoting relational goods, specifically *phronesis*, that I wish to pose the history of neoliberal thought. As neoliberalism has univocally sought unchallenged dominance of over questions of political, economic, and social practice, worked toward greater privatization and lesser government, and conceptualized a notion of the citizen as rational, it has functioned to divest civic life of its relational goods.

David Harvey cites the origins of this revolution to four critical events during years 1978-1980, when Deng Xiaoping began the process of economic liberalization in China, Paul Volcker became Chairman of the Federal Reserve and precipitated a rigorous campaign against inflation, Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister of Britain, and Roland Regan became President of the United States.<sup>105</sup> Conceived as an organizational strategy to elude the conditions that led to the economic depression of the 1930s, and as an acknowledgement of the failures of communism and traditional capitalism, neoliberalism was seen as a means of liberating free economic processes from the various constrains under which it had previously been limited.<sup>106</sup> In the years following its genesis, this

---

<sup>103</sup>Thomas B. Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 98.

<sup>104</sup> Farrell. *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*, 98.

<sup>105</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>106</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 9-11.

entailed various processes of deregulation and liberalization: the combating of trade unions, tax reduction, the end of the welfare state in Britain, and the combating of inflation and the raising of the interest rate in the United States.<sup>107</sup>

Such institutions, according to neoliberal ideology, pose two significant problems for the operation of the free market: the limiting of free economic action and the undesirability of paternalism on behalf of governments. It is through this logic that Milton Friedman criticizes the function of such institutions as public housing, the minimum wage, and social security in his neoliberal salvo *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), arguing that such protections have “deprived us all of us of control over a sizable fraction of our income... [and] given birth to a large bureaucracy that shows tendencies of growing by what it feeds on.”<sup>108</sup> Concerning paternalism, Friedman suggests that bestowing mandated benefits upon certain demographics denies individuals the freedom to make individual decisions and puts the government in the position of making reasonable decisions on behalf of responsible individuals, a practice he uniformly rejects.<sup>109</sup> Following these initial shifts, Harvey argues, neoliberalism took on an increasingly political aspect with the rollback of restrictive policies and the implementation of measures to favor the free market, particularly under Ronald Reagan.<sup>110</sup> Harvey argues that over the intervening three decades such processes have resulted in the overwhelming “financialization of everything,”<sup>111</sup> the premise that all

---

<sup>107</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 23.

<sup>108</sup> Milton Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 189

<sup>109</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 178.

<sup>110</sup> David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 24-25.

<sup>111</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 33.

states and institutions should operate toward economic maximization. Through this process, Harvey argues that neoliberalism has become “hegemonic as a mode of discourse... it has become incorporated into the common sense ways many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.”<sup>112</sup>

It must be clarified here that globalization and neoliberalism are two distinct enterprises. While globalization, discussed previously, is a term used to explain the general consolidation and integration of the world through a multitude of processes, neoliberalism is both an ideology and a set of economic strategies that prioritize market liberalization, the promotion of free trade, the reduction of legal protections on the market economy, and privatization.<sup>113</sup> However, neoliberalism has become the de facto method and strategy of Western expansion and economic growth. Effectively, Western nations operate within and by way of globalization through the logic of neoliberalism such that production, growth, and trade can be most beneficial. Neoliberalism, consequently, is the *logic* by which Western nations act in the globalizing world and, as such, should, as Harvey suggests, be regarded as the hegemonic discourse that organizes political and economic action in the contemporary world.

It is therefore critical that the strategies of neoliberalism be understood specifically as a set of rhetorical motives and strategies rather than material consequences of globalization. Political theorist Wendy Brown articulates this reading, stating that neoliberalism “does not presume the ontological givenness of a thoroughgoing economic rationality for all domains of society but rather takes as its task the development,

---

<sup>112</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

dissemination and institutionalization of such a rationality.”<sup>114</sup> It is in such a rhetorical project, she argues, that that neoliberalism operates to organize our relationship to the logics of capital exchange and our capacity to imagine viable alternatives to mainstream global capitalism. Such managing of logic, or realism, may be said to be neoliberalism’s most central and effective argument. However, neoliberalism’s advent has additionally affected our relationship to such previously unambiguous terms as democracy, freedom, citizenship, and indeed race, gender, and subjectivity.

In contemporary critiques of neoliberalism, there emerge three chief charges against its rhetorical operation: 1) neoliberalism, in discourse and scientific methodology, utilizes a realist style that is “disingenuous as to its own ‘rhetoricity,’”<sup>115</sup> so called “capitalist realism,” 2), neoliberalism employs a circular logic that presents its own ends, namely market liberalization and the pursuit of economic self-interest, as the most effective means of combating uneven accumulation of wealth between the developed and developing worlds that it itself has instilled, so called “liberal communism,” and 3) neoliberalism, while ostensibly supporting democracy and freedom as goods, restricts their application. In the following discussion I will elaborate upon how such arguments have been observed.

The most fundamental argument of neoliberal rhetoric is cited as a defense of the various logics of liberalization and financialization as optimal economic processes.

Critiques of this argument have generally examined two elements of the claim: capitalism’s

---

<sup>114</sup> Wendy Brown. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>115</sup> James Arnt Aune. *Selling the Free Market: The Rhetoric of Economic Correctness* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2001), 42.

reflexive self-legitimizing discourse and the disjunction between the logical and scientific foundations neoliberal proponents claim and the processes they attempt to account for. I will discuss these two critiques in turn, first reviewing pertinent analyses of the ways in which capitalism engages in a process of rhetorical self-legitimization.

Drawing from the work of Robert Hariman, Aune (2001) charges that neoliberal discourse adopts a realist economic style as a means of self-legitimizing. Such a style operates, he argues, by “radically separating power and textuality, constructing the political realm as a state of nature.”<sup>116</sup> As such, power is constructed not as a positive or distinct entity but as a function of environment, an inaccessible influence. Critics most frequently cite the use of such style in neoliberalism’s processes of self-fashioning. In his 1997 essay “The ‘Rationality’ of Capitalism,” philosopher and psychoanalytic critic Cornelius Castoriadis rigorously interrogates how such methods proliferate capitalism’s self-fashioning such that economic discourse grounds itself through an explicitly rhetorical foundation of historical precedent and self-legitimizing logic. Castoriadis frames this critique with the claim that capitalism has been given license to set, define, and interpret the criteria for its own legitimacy, namely output and costs.<sup>117</sup> Unlike other social institutions, capitalism, he claims, is not undergirded or legitimized by extrinsic social factors such as tradition or myth but rather an autonomous system having gained the capacity to assert its own functioning and belonging.<sup>118</sup> Fisher (2009) argues that the fundamental strategies of neoliberal rhetoric may be best accounted for with the term

---

<sup>116</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 40.

<sup>117</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis. *Figures of the Thinkable* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 48-49

<sup>118</sup> Castoriadis. *Figures of the Thinkable*, 49.

“capitalist realism,” “the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system but also that it is now impossible to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it.”<sup>119</sup> Fisher, drawing upon the work of Žižek, Badiou, and Deleuze and Guattari, argues that neoliberal ideology functions to present itself in terms of an undeniable default premise, a condition of reasonability that would be illogical to critique for a lack of viable alternatives. This double bind, Fisher suggests, functions to manage our relation to consumption and materiality as well as our relation to global capital as a discreet system. Occupying the “horizon of the thinkable,”<sup>120</sup> this ideology, Fisher argues, territorializes the realm of the possible thereby defining and limiting the potential of alternative theorizations or criticism. The ethical consequence of capitalist realism, as Fisher argues, functions to eliminate the ethical component of value, inaugurating a “‘business ontology’ in which it is *simply obvious* that everything in society... should be run as a business.”<sup>121</sup> This self-evidence, Fisher claims, is reliant upon a fantasy structure in which, “resources are infinite... and that any problem can be solved by the market.”<sup>122</sup>

The second critique against capitalist realism charges the discourse’s use of scientific principles to defend its objective scientific rationalism to be a gloss on the inherent rhetoricity of economic principles describing irreducible aspects of human action and choice.

---

<sup>119</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Hants: Zero Books, 2009), 2.

<sup>120</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 17.

<sup>122</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 18.

The most rigorous charge against the capitalist rationalism's scientific premises has been leveled against the concept of *homo oeconomicus*, or rational choice, the premise that 1) individual human actors will predictably respond to incentives; 2) supply and demand exist in an inverse relationship; 3) resources will be allocated most efficiently if allowed to do so; and 4) costs of information and transaction must be taken into account.<sup>123</sup> As Aune argues, the principle employs rhetorical strategies that organize systematic ways of thinking about the nature of individuality and transaction that cannot be reduced to such principles. Firstly, Aune charges that the principle of rational choice problematically interpolates "object[s], person[s], and relationships," into a calculus of commodity.<sup>124</sup> In the creation of systematic organization of economic activity, the multitude of human motivation and the complex nature of relations between concepts are simplified into a narrow economic system that promotes univocal considerations of both the nature of economic exchange and the nature of human behavior. Moreover, Aune charges that these arguments self-legitimize with "quasi-logical and quasi-statistical data," leading to incorrect assumptions about objectivity with respect to human action and exchange.<sup>125</sup> Critically, he argues, such strategies are employed with regard to a variety of rhetorical ends such as eliciting moral indignation or ironic doubt in the service of the support or abandonment of programs and policies.<sup>126</sup> Lastly, Aune charges such arguments eschew sociological or historical research, allowing them, as Castoriadis charges, to create an

---

<sup>123</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 22.

<sup>124</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 36.

<sup>125</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 36.

<sup>126</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 37.

insular means of self-legitimizing.<sup>127</sup> This argument of historical and sociological myopia has been asserted by numerous other theorists. Polanyi (1944) asserts that the premise of rational objectivity with regard to economies of exchange remains unproven by economic history in which such behavior may be said to be the exception rather than the norm.<sup>128</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis forwards a more forceful argument asserting that capitalism's legitimacy has been acquired through problematic assertions of its own Darwinian resilience with respect to other forms of economic organization with capitalism's current dominance used to endorse its supremacy.<sup>129</sup>

Additional critiques against capitalist realism interrogate the ways in which capitalist discourse employs quasi-logical statistical and mathematical methods to attempt to normalize unaccountable phenomena and pose the logic of capitalism as a rational authority. Castoriadis locates these in the economic concepts of separability, mathematization, and equilibrium. The argument of separability, Castoriadis explains, primarily constructs the economic sphere as a discrete subspace unaffiliated and distinct from the social and political spheres.<sup>130</sup> As Castoriadis suggests, the argument allows the attribution of such goods as profits and results to specific actors or areas within an inherently complex system where such attribution cannot but be "conventional and arbitrary."<sup>131</sup> Such a strategy, he suggests, not only allows capitalism to define and control

---

<sup>127</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 37.

<sup>128</sup> Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* Boston: Beacon Press, 1944), 258.

<sup>129</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 51.

<sup>130</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 56.

<sup>131</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 57.

its own space of authority but provides the foundation for all further postulates for which the theory acts as guarantor.<sup>132</sup> Castoriadis' discussion of mathematization charges that capitalism, by way of its authoritarian logic, problematically conflates heterogeneous objects such that they may be financially countable in the economic marketplace.<sup>133</sup> Though Castoriadis accedes that such financial comparison may function reasonably within the space of a specific market, the capacity to compare such objects in different contexts, such as international markets or over time, becomes one of quasi-logical elision.<sup>134</sup> Such a strategy, Castoriadis argues, provides the grounds for various arguments concerning the comparison of various markets, productivity over time, and deliberative policy arguments.<sup>135</sup> Lastly, Castoriadis charges that equilibrium functions to facilitate "precise, univocal solutions"<sup>136</sup> in an inherently inexact project and to undergird the rationalist claim that capitalism is the only authority poised to right disequilibrium.<sup>137</sup> Rhetorically, this may be regarded as a central *topos* of capitalist discourse in which the prioritization of equilibrium allows for the multitude of deliberative policy arguments. As Žižek (2009a) observes, "the 'invisible' hand of the market, namely, a social field in which, by means of the Cunning of Reason, each following his or her own egotistic concerns, results in a mysterious equilibrium which works for the good of all."<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 57.

<sup>133</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 58.

<sup>134</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 58.

<sup>135</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 59.

<sup>136</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 61.

<sup>137</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 61.

<sup>138</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (New York: Verso, 2009), 384.

The second core critique of neoliberalism alleges that its proponents employ a circular logic with regard to the framing of global capital as both the problem and solution to global problems. Deemphasizing the various environmental, social, or political problems resultant from the proliferation of global capital, neoliberal defenders employ a rhetoric of “disease as cure” in which deregulation and the opening of formerly closed countries to neoliberal interests is posed as the solution to the problems of global capital. Žižek (2008) critiques this strategy, which he credits to the philanthropic wing of the World Economic Forum in such individuals as Bill Gates, George Soros, and Thomas Friedman, coined “liberal communists,” arguing, “the thing itself is the remedy against the threat it poses.”<sup>139</sup> Fisher further elaborates the conceit, arguing as disseminated fantasy “that western consumerism, far from being intrinsically implicated in systemic global inequalities, could itself solve them.”<sup>140</sup> Žižek additionally observes in such a strategy the spirit of contemporary neoliberalism that seeks to promote capitalism as an engine ““common good.””<sup>141</sup> Castoriadis locates this apparent paradox within the rationalist logic of neoliberal discourse that has conflated rationality with well-being, specifically “economic” well-being,<sup>142</sup> such that the promotion of rationalist thought and practice, the overarching project of neoliberalism, cannot but end in general well-being.<sup>143</sup> According to Castoriadis, such argumentation functions to ultimately limit the capacity of critics by conflating the

---

<sup>139</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*, (Picador: New York, 2008): 21.

<sup>140</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 15.

<sup>141</sup> Žižek, *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*, (London: Verso, 2009), 35.

<sup>142</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 48.

<sup>143</sup> Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 48.

various consequences of global capital, i.e. profit and global inequity, into the single end of well-being and thereby inoculate it against criticism. This argument is utilized throughout the various levels of neoliberal discourse from the writings of critic Thomas Friedman, in which he argues that the goods of globalization, “the tools, systems, energy sources, and ethics”<sup>144</sup> are those needed to improve the various problems it has engendered, to Klaus Schwab’s 2009 Welcome Address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in which he proposed insular solutions to the global economic crisis: “the financial community... is not only part of the problem, but is also an indispensable part of the solution.”<sup>145</sup> The various consequences of such an insular argument are apparent for the capacities of criticism and reflection, namely that debate concerning the ends of global capitalism, or the nature of its rational project, are subsumed into the general hegemony of the neoliberalism. As global capital is both problem and solution, the grounds for a popular or governance based solution that does not cite the market as the sole solution is rendered implausible.

The third fundamental argument of neoliberal discourse functions to prioritize freedom and democracy as the ultimate values maximized by the neoliberal project while systematically undermining democratic and deliberative practices. Specifically, critics argue that neoliberalism’s prioritization of rationality and logic functions to reposition the concept of government from a democratic space of interaction that values and encourages individual action, dissent, and debate to a system that threatens personal freedom. With

---

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat, And Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution - and How it Can Renew America*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2008): 5-6.

<sup>145</sup> Klaus Schwab. *Welcome Address*. 2009 World Economic Forum. Davos, January, 2009.

regard to personal agency, critics argue that neoliberalism's emphasis on rational action obviates individual deliberation. Brown (2005) suggests perversion of concepts is achieved through a dual argument of state marketization and the *homo oeconomicus*.<sup>146</sup> In noting that neoliberal theory, notably in the case of Alan Friedman, has mandated that the state, "*think and behave like a market actor* across all of its functions,"<sup>147</sup> Brown argues that state thereby is advocated to adopt a singular set of strict economic goals underneath the banner of rationality. This strategy, coupled with the previously elaborated notion of the *homo oeconomicus*, submits "all aspects of social, cultural, and political life... to such a calculus... [and] develops institutional practices and rewards for enacting this vision."<sup>148</sup> Dean (2009) critiques the consequences of these arguments citing that whereas heretofore established notions of liberalism established by Hobbes and Locke argue for the centrality of the rational subject to form the basis of government, neoliberals "see the subject as acting and reacting in accordance with various economic incentives and disincentives."<sup>149</sup> As she suggests, reducing the concepts of rationality, morality, and indeed the location of the rational society, neoliberalism functions to vest the locus of order and rationality in contemporary life to the system itself rather than its subjects. According to Aune, such a disparagement of democratic discourse and participation is a direct consequence of neoliberalism's denial of its own operation, adopting the realist style to pose its arguments as uninflected and thereby disparaging the goods of the agonistic and rhetorical democratic

---

<sup>146</sup> Brown. *Edgework*, 42-43.

<sup>147</sup> Brown, *Edgework*, 42.

<sup>148</sup> Brown. *Edgework*, 40.

<sup>149</sup> Jodi Dean. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 52.

process.<sup>150</sup> Aune elaborates that one such strategy under this rubric functions to characterize political critique of free market policy as “free rider[ism]”<sup>151</sup> or “rent-seeking behavior”<sup>152</sup> on behalf of special interests, characterized respectively as consumption without contribution and “income earned when supply is restricted.”<sup>153</sup> Specifically, these allegations cast interest groups demanding rights or policy changes with respect to free market policy, regardless of intent, as seeking financial profit rather than the specific demand that has been made. Such allegations on behalf of neoliberal defenders, Aune suggests, have allowed its proponents to dismiss democratic action in terms of rent-seeking behavior, both disabling democratic critique of free market policy and weakening the quality of public argument.<sup>154</sup>

Following from such critiques of neoliberalism’s strategies there have emerged numerous critics who charge that neoliberal discourse poses deep rhetorical implications for race, otherness, and the citizens of the developing world. In the following section, I will elaborate arguments by critics who note these developments in the application of neoliberal discourse.

### *Neoliberalism and Consequences*

In his critique of liberal politics and the excesses of global capitalism, Žižek (2009b) describes the devastation of the economy of Mali through the contradictory

---

<sup>150</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 45.

<sup>152</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 45.

<sup>153</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 45.

<sup>154</sup> Aune, *Selling the Free Market*, 56.

implementation of neoliberal policy by Western powers. As the result of neoliberal policies imposed upon the country by the international community, local producers were unable to compete with the subsidized goods produced in the United States and European Union. Of this ostensible incongruity, he argues, “there is no such thing as a neutral market: in every particular situation, market configurations are always relegated by political decisions.”<sup>155</sup> This example demonstrates the essential disjunction between neoliberal ideology and practice, as notably observed by Nobel Prize winner and former Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank turned critic Joseph E. Stiglitz. As Stiglitz argues, though advocated without qualification, neoliberal policy has never been practiced as suggested by its initial proponents in terms of near total deregulation but rather is always selectively and strategically enforced.

Stiglitz (2002) argues that neoliberal policies enacted by international economic institutions, specifically the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been contradictorily enforced in such ways as to repudiate the stated aims of neoliberalism and in ways that have placed international institutions in positions of sovereignty over developing nations. As Stiglitz states, “The Western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers, but kept their own barriers, preventing developing countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income.”<sup>156</sup> Such action, he argues, has wrought numerous disastrous consequences across the developing world, namely the weakening or collapse of currencies and banking systems,<sup>157</sup> diminished

---

<sup>155</sup> Slavoj Žižek. *First As Tragedy, then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), 16.

<sup>156</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 6.

<sup>157</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 7.

well-being,<sup>158</sup> and, in the case of Thailand, instituted reforms that have caused reductions in spending for health and education, thus resulting in increased rates of female prostitution and AIDS.<sup>159</sup> This selective enforcement, Stiglitz argues, is coupled with various anti-democratic authoritarian practices such as the holding of meetings regarding agreements with developing nations behind closed doors or with financial rather than political representatives,<sup>160</sup> enforcing rather than negotiating on the terms of loans,<sup>161</sup> and the practice of close authoritarian oversight of developing economies.<sup>162</sup>

Though this strategic deployment of neoliberal values and selective enforcement of rules cannot be said to be strictly rhetorical in application, Stiglitz's critique allows for a more critical reflection on the rhetorical aspects of neoliberal discourse. Primarily, these contingencies readily discredit most arguments concerning rational choice and its promotion of general well being. It becomes apparent that the various protections and forms of rent-seeking derided by neoliberals indeed sustain the operation of the free market, at least in the developed world. It is additionally apparent that free market policies would only function in a nation such as Mali if no protections existed to support the sales of goods in more developed nations. However, under the current distribution of power the effects of neoliberal discourse coupled with the uneven protection of Western goods have the effect of strengthening developed nations only at the expense of developing ones,

---

<sup>158</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 17.

<sup>159</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 80.

<sup>160</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 40.

<sup>162</sup> Stiglitz. *Globalization and its Discontents*, 30.

creating a system of dominance and control akin to colonial rule. As Žižek and Stiglitz suggest, the presence and reliance of the logic of exception in neoliberal discourse, the public support of policy arguments of universal deregulation while privately supporting policies that protect US and Western interests against two-thirds majority countries, is not anomalous but rather a fundamental (though seemingly contradictory) facet of neoliberal discourse – the inherent “beyond the law” logic undergirding a rhetorical project that demands universal policy implementation i.e. general deregulation.

The critique of self-exempting, the inherent bias and strategic practice to global capitalism, and its consequences for the understanding of the ethics of capitalism is a long simmering argument among critics and scholars. Proponents of capitalism’s benefits and values to the growth of society, a position held most notably by Deirdre McCloskey and Niall Ferguson, argue that the proliferation of capitalist logics has held univocal benefits for world society, instilling the values of competition and the striving toward economic excellence and moral virtue. McCloskey, whose *The Rhetoric of Economics* (1985) gave rise to the discipline’s critique of economics, argues that the bourgeois revolution propels virtuous ethical action and has unilaterally improved standards of living for both wealthy and poor. The expansion of markets, she suggests, promotes virtue rather than extinguishes it,<sup>163</sup> and has “enlarged the spiritual scope of human life.”<sup>164</sup> Similarly, Niall Ferguson credits the West’s key virtues (competition, science, property rights, medicine, the consumer society, and the work ethic) as potentiating its hegemonic rise over the rest

---

<sup>163</sup> Deirdre McCloskey, “Bourgeois Virtue,” *American Scholar* 63 (2) (Spring 1994), 181.

<sup>164</sup> Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can’t Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), xi.

of the world.<sup>165</sup> Such critics ignore the logic of the exception, arguing that capitalism generally instills positive values and that instances of profiteering or the breaking of the implicit rules capital are aberrances rather than norms and that regardless of whether practices may be seen as unethical they nevertheless are exonerated by their promotion of greater living standards and the capacity of individuals worldwide to engage in the acquisition of capital. As McCloskey writes, “Workers line up to get jobs at the Nike shoe company in Cambodia.”<sup>166</sup>

Other critics from various arenas of the humanities suggest that the condition of the critical exception is indeed not aberrance but a foundational aspect of contemporary economics and governance worthy of incisive critique. Giorgio Agamben notably espouses this through his elaboration of the concept of bare life, arguing that the decisive turn to a contemporary bio-politics lies in the exclusionary moment when bare life became politicized and excepted.<sup>167</sup> The excepting of the *homo sacer* as a body necessarily outside of the political, as *zoe*, as killable,<sup>168</sup> and the state of exception, the paradox by which the sovereign entity lies both within and beyond juridical order,<sup>169</sup> according to Agamben, are the two *exceptional* events that define the contemporary hegemony of bio-political power. Moretti (2010) adds to Agamben’s critique by charging, in stark contrast to McCloskey’s argument of the moralizing and socializing capacity of capital, that capitalist bourgeois

---

<sup>165</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011).

<sup>166</sup> McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity*, 424.

<sup>167</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>168</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 10 – 11.

<sup>169</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 15-17

culture encourages and rewards practices that skirt the “grey areas”<sup>170</sup> of quasi-legality, certainly immoral but not necessarily punishable. As Moretti argues, capital grows by expanding into new frontiers or markets where behavior can easily become “equivocal: not illegal, but not quite right either.”<sup>171</sup> He argues that actions that are advantageous to the financial entity go on because of a lack of explicit prohibition against them and that actions that begin tentatively, as accidents or experimental forays into illegality, may grow into foundational procedures that undergird a financial system.<sup>172</sup> Disagreeing with McCloskey’s unsubstantiated suggestion that “honesty *works*,”<sup>173</sup> Moretti provides examples of behavior that rides the grey area, as in Kenneth Lay’s selling of inflated Enron stock before the collapse of the company.<sup>174</sup> One might add to this the example with which the chapter began – a structure of exploitation in which the financeers, Chevron, Total, and PTTEP, could engage in exploitative financial practices in which human rights violations occurred but could continue under the protection of plausible deniability. Because the oil giants were not actively perpetrating the atrocities, merely providing the conditions for them to go on, the process could exist in quasi legitimacy. In this example, global corporations were not pursuing an agenda of moral virtue but skirting Moretti’s grey area, profiting through the narrowest distance from explicit criminal exploitation.

---

<sup>170</sup> Franco Moretti, “The Grey Area: Ibsen and the Spirit of Capitalism,” *The New Left Review* 61 (Jan-Feb 2010).

<sup>171</sup> Moretti, “The Grey Area.”

<sup>172</sup> Moretti, “The Grey Area.”

<sup>173</sup> Moretti, “The Grey Area.”

<sup>174</sup> Moretti, “The Grey Area.”

This logic of the exception's possibly most pernicious outcome may be that of the exemption of race. As Melamed (2006) argues, neoliberal discourse and policy inscribe official racisms into purported multiculturalism and exploit and degrade non-whites. She critiques the practice of neoliberal ideology to imbed racist ideologies within a purported anti-racist agenda maintaining a polarized global North and global South along both racial and economic lines that "deflect[s] and limit[s] awareness of the logics of exploitation and domination in global capitalism."<sup>175</sup> Analogously to the ways in which neoliberalism occludes its own rhetoricity via a rhetoric of inevitability, a similar concealment occurs with the deployment of the positing that the liberalization of markets will inevitably ameliorate racial inequalities. As Melamed argues,

Multiculturalism codes the wealth, mobility, and political power of neoliberalism's beneficiaries to be the just desserts of "multicultural world citizens," while representing those neoliberalism dispossesses to be handicapped by their own "monoculturalism" or other historico-cultural deficiencies.<sup>176</sup>

As such, neoliberalism functions to create new racist ideologies prioritizing the values of neoliberalism, i.e. market liberalization, trade law reduction, cooperation with international institutions, while racially indemnifying as backwards those who fail to adopt such values. These processes are concealed, she argues, in multiculturalism and the guise of "official antiracisms"<sup>177</sup> that obscure awareness of global capital's practices of control. The unique aspect of this form of racist structuring, Melamed suggests, lies in the fact that

---

<sup>175</sup> Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism," *Social Text* 24 (2006): 2.

<sup>176</sup> Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism," 1.

<sup>177</sup> Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism," 2.

these official antiracisms “tied to U.S. ascendancy”<sup>178</sup> have become forms of imbedding racist ideologies. One such form of this racism Melamed locates in free trade zones, or “new slave zones,”<sup>179</sup> in which colonial oppression is recreated through the exploitation and lack of legal protection for workers of color.<sup>180</sup> However, she additionally points to a more insidious form of imbedded racism that “deracializes official antiracism to an unprecedented degree, turning (deracialized) racial reference into a series of rhetorical gestures of ethical right and certainty.”<sup>181</sup> This form, she argues, not only obviates explicit discussions of race or racializing but additionally functions to derail critique of neoliberal policy.<sup>182</sup> Such rhetoric, she suggests, replaces discourse concerning race with that of culture such that the racisms imbedded therein defy critique on racial grounds.<sup>183</sup>

A stark example of these racisms may be found in a collaborative cosmetics campaign by MAC Cosmetics and fashion label Rodarte entitled “Juarez.” Utilizing the northern Mexican city notorious for its drug violence, rape, and femicide as inspiration for a make-up line, the campaign released products titled “Bordertown,” “del Norte,” “Factory,” and “Sleepwalker.”<sup>184</sup> One such product depicted on the LatinaLifestyle website as of July 2012 seems to resemble pavement streaked with blood, red streams seep across a grey

---

<sup>178</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 2.

<sup>179</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 13.

<sup>180</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 13.

<sup>181</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 14.

<sup>182</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 16.

<sup>183</sup> Melamed, “The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” 19.

<sup>184</sup> Sergio González Rodríguez, *The Femicide Machine*, Trans. Michael Parker-Stainback (Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2012), 92.

surface flecked with black. Additional promotional materials campaign included photographs of models in lacey Mexican inspired garments and adorned in death-like makeup.<sup>185</sup> Following the public release of the campaign, an outpouring of criticism prompted MAC Cosmetics to issue an apology, change the name of the product, and offer a significant donation to charity.<sup>186</sup> Rather unsurprisingly, MAC has since sought to clarify the campaign as an explicit effort to raise awareness of the violence in northern Mexico rather than to capitalize or make light of the ongoing tragedy.<sup>187</sup> Somewhat ironically, the company already donates significantly to AIDS research and animal rights and largely establishes its public image as a socially conscious brand.<sup>188</sup>

That MAC employed the signification of Juarez as a murder site, developing a morbid aesthetic sense primarily to enhance a product line and only secondly to promote awareness of human rights, indexes deep racisms embedded with a purported anti-racist social justice agenda. The reliance of the company upon this aesthetic as a marketing tool, one that aestheticizes and sexualizes the victims of the Juarez massacres while officially purporting to advocate for their cause, is standard double movement of neoliberal discourse, at once subordinating and exploiting while officially advocating cosmopolitan values. In this instance, the white consumer is at liberty to both consume the project, flaunting the aestheticized violence as an edgy and ultimately prurient gesture while purportedly practicing a form of social responsibility. The practice, through the dual

---

<sup>185</sup> Rodríguez, *The Femicide Machine*, 92.

<sup>186</sup> Hollie Mcay, "MAC apologizes over controversial makeup line," *New York Post* July 19, 2010.

<sup>187</sup> "Mac-Rodarte Apologize for Ciudad Juarez Inspired Makeup Line" accessed June 21, 2012, <http://www.latina.com/beauty/news/mac-rodarte-apologize-ciudad-juarez-inspired-make-line>.

<sup>188</sup> "Mac AIDS Fund" accessed May 14, 2012 <https://www.macaidsfund.org/#/fund/mission>.

movement of celebration and subordination, actively reduces the potential of the object of the campaign, the Juarez woman, to speak as the campaign effectively speaks for her while also silencing her by reveling in the violence against her. In this respect, the consumer of the product, like the chain of consumers of Yananda oil, becomes complicit in the subjugation and silencing of the victims of the apparatus. Mexican critic and journalist Sergio González Rodríguez argues for this stark reading of association between capital and violence, writing: “MAC joins the drug traffickers, the... powerful, and the authorities... [the marketing campaign] reflects that global culture had arrived at an incredible degree of amnesia and indifference.”<sup>189</sup> As I have argued, Rodríguez suggests that in utilizing the Juarez femicides as a symbol and a marketing ploy, MAC enters into an ecology with the various perpetrators of violence, sanctioning the violence and discursively supporting it while not engaging in the literal process of violence.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have suggested that the dual processes of globalization and neoliberal hegemony have effectuated major shifts in the organization of world power and necessitate a radical reformulation of the roles, potentials, and challenges with regard to discourse and subjectivity in the contemporary world. Namely, the consequences of globalization have resulted in the silencing of the voice of the contemporary world citizen. With neoliberal discourse’s rhetorical self-legitimizing, dismissal of critics, and efforts to destabilize rhetorical norms and the processes of deliberation and critique, the organization of the contemporary political and economic scene poses significant challenges to the mounting of dissent against contemporary sites of power. Most critically, it has

---

<sup>189</sup> Rodríguez, *The Femicide Machine*, 94.

created a margin to which all without geo-political agency, that is to say most of us, have been deposited. Those on the outside are, by turns, spoken for, relegated, or structured in ways that trouble traditional means of voicing dissent. The triumph of rationality and the practice of reducing democratic and popular action as unrealistic, “rent-seeking,” and anathema to economic growth, present would-be critics of neoliberal rhetoric with the challenge of identifying means of critique capable of evading such pitfalls. Moreover, these global shifts, typified by the example of the Yadana pipeline, have created conditions of ambiguity unique to the contemporary global configuration. Beyond the difficulty of raising a political voice, there exists the secondary problem of to whom that voiced should be addressed. In the case of Myanmar, the overlapping of national, financial, and global power structures functions to create a voiceless subject in that there is no clear locus of authority to resist or too many figures to single out a single authority.

Regarding these complexities, this dissertation suggests that strategies calibrated to address a single authority no longer function in the context of globalization. Rather, the most effective modes of dissent are those that introduce arguments or texts that have the capacity to proliferate from the rhetor’s intervention to create situations rather than to address single authorities. Like DeLuca’s image events or Galloway and Thacker’s concept of the exploit, functional forms of dissent are those that operate in the absence of single figures of authority and that can function in the complex networks established by globalizing shifts. Such forms of dissent calibrated for contemporary conditions are those that *negotiate* and *transform* conditions of power and discourse, relying on *subversion* rather than confrontation and *exploitation* rather than argument. In so doing, these forms

of resistance actively reformulate notions of publicity and methods of dissent as to avoid cooptation and dismissal.

In the following three chapters, I will devote attention to three contemporary dissent groups who have identified modes of exploitation and radically inventive forms of engagement as a means to bypass the blockages and ambiguities named in this chapter in order to directly engage with conditions of disempowerment. These groups, Anonymous (Chapter 2), Voina (Chapter 3), and WikiLeaks (Chapter 4), are examples of a rhetoric that strives toward the transformation of conditions, deterritorializing spaces claimed by governmental or financial authorities, black boxes protected from the intrusion of the local. Though each of these groups are arguably examples that failed to achieve lasting and substantial change (as I will subsequently discuss), each demonstrates the capacity to transform (if not revolutionize) discourses and discourse communities through the identification and employment of evental rhetorical strategies.

## Chapter 2: Untitled, Unnamed: Rhetorical Anonymity in Hacktivist Resistance

In the previous chapter, I elaborated what I view to be the two most significant factors limiting the agency of contemporary global citizens: the material shifts of governance and finance distancing individuals from sites of authority and the discursive changes in neoliberal discourses limiting agency. Regarding tactics employed to negotiate these limitations on agency, the following chapters will elaborate the means with which these strictures are productively, and often problematically, negotiated by rhetorical actors. In the first analysis chapter of this text, I will devote attention to the first of three examples of evental rhetoric in which a group employs radical and novel tactics as a means to challenge a site of power.

This chapter will investigate the use of anonymity as a rhetorical tactic by the hacktivist group Anonymous, among the most potent dissident voices across the contemporary Internet world. As the chapter will argue, though anonymity as a rhetorical tactic transforming the *ethos* of a writer has significant historical precedent, anonymity in online communities, specifically as employed toward the ends of dissent, marks a decisive turn in the capacity of activism to offer an effective and eruptive means of rhetorical engagement. As Brown (2009) argues, regarding the content of Wikipedia, online *ethos* in anonymous or collaborative forums, such as that of Wikipeda, operates quite differently from offline forms. Namely, there is a far greater emphasis (and by dint of this, malleability) of *ethos*. I suggest that Anonymous' the malleability of *ethos*, intensification of *pathetic* appeals, and substantive break with social and textual conventions point to a powerful instance of rhetorical rupture.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of how the concepts of the name and the signature have been taken up in post-structuralist discourse and how those concepts translate into the rhetorical practice of strategic anonymity. I will argue that philosophical constructions of the name and the signature, particularly those following the linguistic turn, understand the event of naming as a procedure introducing an individual, concept, or object into epistemological schemas. These theories suggest that to deny the name would cede that which goes unnamed into a nebulous undifferentiated realm beyond our capacity to relate or understand. As I will subsequently show, in rhetorical contexts such a deferral of naming may be advantageous for a variety of rhetorical tasks where power and the force of argument may be achieved through the generality and ambiguity that attends the unnamed. However, legal and social precedents as well as the innate practical difficulties of remaining unnamed trouble the strategy's rhetorical application. Moreover, the rhetorical goods achieved through ambiguity are also attended by disadvantages – the loss of specificity in argumentation, the loss of the ability to speak as a member of a polity, and the singularity of the invented *ethos* of the anonymous rhetor. Ultimately, the theoretical concepts offered by the absence of the name, I will suggest, offer both problems in application and rhetorical disadvantages in public settings.

I will apply this rhetorical and philosophical reading of anonymity in analyzing Anonymous' attempts to employ anonymity as a rhetorical strategy to challenge various authority figures. I will suggest, by way of the theoretical and rhetorical lens established in the first section, that Anonymous', while presenting radical and novel modes of engagement, critically fails through the impracticability of maintaining pure anonymity in the Internet era and through the use of what ultimately proves to be an imprecise strategy.

*The Name – Concept into Application*

Of significant interest to post-structuralist thinkers is the concept of the name, specifically in its capacity to construct meaning by localizing identity and authorship in the signature, or attribution, of an author. For post-structuralists, engaging in critiques deconstructing the linearity of writer to text, the name serves as a subject ripe for deconstruction as its tethering of writer, as subject, to text is an inherently problematic and fictive attribution that shuts down the project of thinking through impossible relation of signifier to signified. At the same time, critics suggest that the gesture, though problematic, is an inherently pragmatic one expected of the author.

As Derrida argues in “Signature, Event, Context,” the written signature serves to establish two simultaneous conditions: the “non-presence” of the signer and her “having-been” present at some previous *present*.<sup>190</sup> According to Derrida, though the mark functions as a trace of the author, denoting her absence at the time of reading, it also establishes the transcendental presence of the signature-event. The moment in which the signature is perceived is tethered through the mark, through its “absolute singularity,”<sup>191</sup> to the signer and to the instance of signing. This tethering is the promise and function of the signature, a record of the author’s identity and her “having-been” there, and it is precisely this function in which the signature has been employed in political and judicial contexts. In signing a petition, a legal document, or a constitutive text, the subject establishes her presence by way of the written signature. The name stands and stands in for the subject. It

---

<sup>190</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 20.

<sup>191</sup> Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 20.

identifies her, holds her place, holds her accountable, and sanctions her entrance into a public.

Lyotard (1988) writes, “Names transform now into a *date*, *here* into a place, *I*, *you*, *he* into Jean, Pierre, Louis... A phrase, otherwise deprived of deictic marks, presents Rome instead of *over-there*.”<sup>192</sup> As Lyotard argues, the name localizes subjects and objects within systems of meaning, undifferentiating space and identity from the errata of experience. The name codifies this data of experience into discrete and countable units. In such a schema, to remain anonymous is to remain in a pre-figurative pre-linguistic space in which presence cannot be accounted for. As the name “Jean” collapses the limitlessness of another human consciousness into that which can be accounted for in a term, a shorthand, the attempt to understand that being who is called “Jean,” though he may infinitely complex, can be completed. Jean is not infinite or indistinguishable to his observer, but may be accounted for in total by the name. To be unnamed, oppositely, is to deny this finitude, to remain open and to exist as an undifferentiated presence the understanding of which cannot be completed.

From these two critical treatments of the signature, as problematic locative gesture and as event, the absence of the signature would seem to be a significant denial both of expectation and of linguistic function. Derrida suggests that the unsigned document would resist the fictive practice of uniting a writer with text but would also resist the temporal practice of asserting the author’s presence. The text would be left open having been denied an expected material and temporal fixity. To not sign would presumably renounce the

---

<sup>192</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press), 39.

means with which we use to locate, again problematically, a text within a system of meaning. In Lyotard's reading, the name is that which locates and, more significantly, differentiates an object from an infinite expanse of undifferentiated space and identity to something that is accountable, something that may be accorded a space within a schema. To deny this, for Lyotard, would deny the knowing of such an object, according it with a presumably infinite alterity.

Regarding Derrida's and Lyotard's treatments of the name and the signature together, the moment of the signature is the unique temporal constellation of an author and a text bound by a profoundly unique moment in which the author signs her name. It is a singularity, an irreducible temporal kernel in which a text is *authored* by its signatory and the moment when that which is general becomes particular. The signature (or moment of naming) as "singularity" may also be understood as a unique moments of beginning, of transformation, and accordingly may be approached via Badiou and Nancy's theories of the event. For Badiou, the event (as I argued in the introduction) is the singular ontological moment, the site of subjectivization and coming into being that has no analogue. Because of the unique relation between the text and the signatory in the precise moment of signing, the moment of the signature is a singular moment of coming-into-being. Though the signature, for quite formal reasons,<sup>193</sup> cannot be understood as an event as such, it is nonetheless a moment of unique creation. With the moment of the signature, the signature, the author, and the text are united.

Read through the work of Badiou and Nancy, the imputation of the signature is a moment of beginning that fundamentally transforms the text. Through the creation of a

---

<sup>193</sup> As Badiou argues in *Ethics*, the event is relegated specifically to realms of art, politics, science, and love (133).

relation of meaning between text and author and unorphanning the text, the text, effectively, becomes subject to the event of its signature. Once signed, the text can only ever be *of* the author and of the signature, interpolated and signified by it. The significance of this relation lies in what is implied by the absence of the signature. To not be signed, named, or authored, would effectively deny this relation and isolate the text both from its relationship to its author but to its foundational existence as subject to the signature. Similarly to Lyotard's understanding of the name as the locative gesture, the absence of the signature event would analogously submit the unrelated to an organizing logic.

Regarding practical applications of these models, it is evident that a strategic employment of namelessness could potentially be of benefit to a rhetor. On the first count, regarding Lyotard's understanding of the name's function to locate the object or individual, namelessness would allow freedom from situated *ethos*. Rather, *ethos* would theoretically be entirely the province of the rhetor herself – entirely situationally constructed. Moreover, it would also be theoretically possible to evade all attempts at categorization and judgment from audiences. Lacking all means with which to understand the rhetor's identity and unable to link the rhetor with other notions or conceptions in a chain of meaning, the audience would be unable to place the rhetor within a system of meaning. Here, the relevance to the *khora* is evident in that the space between the unnamed and the named is a space of absence and ambiguity. Between an event and its structuring within language there could be said to be an absence of standard logic and only the vague realm of sensation of undifferentiated immensity, doubt, and absence. Lastly, anonymity would, according to these theoretical constructions, provide an ambiguity that could be employed in a variety of different appeals beyond its application to *ethos*.

Translated from the realms of abstraction to that of language-in-use, the phenomenology of the signature and its absence confront social convention and materiality in communicative settings. Specifically, a review of theoretical and historical examples demonstrates that namelessness in practice, while often employed rhetorically as a means of either aspiring towards an entirely new iterable or mass *ethos* or merely as a means of evading punishment, is often impracticable. Social convention, as a central means of the difficulty in maintaining anonymity, in written documents, journalism, political discourse, and most forms of online writing, dictates the identity of the writer to be made public. In understanding rhetorical and legal application, it becomes clear that the demand for and function of the signature is orthodox in interpretive communities. Zaeske (2003) argues that the women's anti-slavery petitioning movement allowed otherwise voiceless and marginalized subjects to enter the political scene and assert both their citizenship and political authority. Petitioning, both as a rhetorical form and as a document that required the establishment of consensus among citizens, allowed for the politicization of women through such means as the formation of networks between women who were politically minded but not involved in the public sphere and the public proliferation of their arguments in the press and other public venues.<sup>194</sup> According to Zaeske, the act of petitioning, in the absence of a vote, allowed women to assert that they indeed "possessed the right of petition and that they were citizens."<sup>195</sup> Zaeske argues that, as such, women

---

<sup>194</sup> Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2-4.

<sup>195</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 4.

were able to employ the petition as a means to move from the margins to the forefront of public debate.<sup>196</sup>

Central to Zaeske's critique is the deployment of the name as a means of asserting citizenship and political right. Though women did not have the vote, they were citizens nonetheless and could assert that citizenship in the political realm through collectivizing and argumentation, specifically through the collectivizing of names. The signing of the name effectively functioned to assert personhood, allowing the women in the movement to claim a degree of agency within public space. Though not explicit in Zaeske's work, her critique suggests that for the women of the abolition movement, this publicity was in large part secured through the material presence of the name itself — for these women, the name represented a place within a community and though it did not permit the right to vote, it functioned as a marker of membership and personhood that allowed the cultivation of rhetorical agency from a position of marginality.

Scott Richard Lyons' *x-marks: Native Signatures of Dissent* (2010) similarly considers the complex identity issues and political dynamics associated with Native American treaty signings. As Lyons argues, the x-mark, in its original elicitation, inherently took place in a "context of coercion"<sup>197</sup>; treaties themselves invariably meant the surrender of land rights, political power, autonomy, and status,<sup>198</sup> while the x-mark itself, as opposed to a signature, showed Native Americans assenting to a practice they are unfamiliar with in a language that was not their own. However, Lyons reads the x-mark as a more complex rhetorical

---

<sup>196</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 5.

<sup>197</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, *x-marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>198</sup> Lyons, *x-marks*, 1.

gesture than pure coercion — the mark denotes a limited choice in a context of control. He also seeks to locate in the mark a conscious and deliberate act, referring to the mark's meaning as "the native assent to the new."<sup>199</sup> Ultimately, Lyons seeks to understand the x-mark as a negotiation in a context of power inequity in which the marginalized subject takes a tactical stance with regard to new ideas, "consciously connecting those ideas to certain values, interests, and political objectives, and making the best call you can under conditions not of your making."<sup>200</sup>

Like Zaeske, Lyons seeks to understand the signature in the context of marginality and limited political access. However, unlike the petition authored by marginalized subjects, a signature in a treaty functions as a binding promise between parties, one that necessarily entails the simultaneous acquisition and renunciation of power: "power and a lack of power. Agency and a lack of agency."<sup>201</sup> By signing a treaty, the subject voluntarily interpolates herself into its terms, rendering herself both public, known, and accountable, the recipient of rights and the subject to laws. Analogously to Zaeske's reading of the signature, the signature in the treaty functions in creating a subject position similar to citizenship. As such, any promise must rely upon the name and the personhood of its signatories.

These examples are illuminated when contrasted with the signature's legal precedent. In 17<sup>th</sup> century England, anonymity, in the context of attempted extortion or

---

<sup>199</sup> Lyons, *x-marks*, 34.

<sup>200</sup> Lyons, *x-marks*, 70.

<sup>201</sup> Lyons, *x-marks*, 2.

blackmail as well as in the expression political sentiments, was criminalized.<sup>202</sup> The signature's absence was criminalized first with the Black Act of 1723 in which, "any person who 'shall knowingly send any letter without any name' (or with fictitious names) 'demanding money, venison, or other valuable thing' became guilty of felony without benefit of clergy."<sup>203</sup> Notably, the Act, in its early period of enforcement, sent more than one anonymous writer to their death.<sup>204</sup> However, laws against letters or public writing without signature, ranging from opinions published in newspapers, known as *gazetting*,<sup>205</sup> or letters expressing even the most abstract political sentiment were considered crimes and could be punished as sedition.<sup>206</sup> It is critical to note in these instances that, particularly in the case of expressing political opinion, it is not the content of the writing that renders the author a criminal but the absence of the signature. The act of evading accountability and entering into the space of public discourse itself constitutes the crime.

As these examples suggest, the social and political requirements of the signature function to demand its inclusion. The potential afforded of the absence of the signature, both for rhetorical and legal purposes, is significantly opposed by legal and social precedent requiring that the individual be named as a prerequisite for entering into a public. The signature functions to establish one's *ethos* as a member or subject with regard to a specific community or site of authority. Effectively, the signature has been understood

---

<sup>202</sup> E.P. Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* eds. Douglas Hay et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 304.

<sup>203</sup> Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 283.

<sup>204</sup> Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 286.

<sup>205</sup> Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 270.

<sup>206</sup> Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 287.

as a guarantee, both of the “having been there” of the signatory, as argued by Derrida, and of the right of the individual to be allowed to speak or make legal promises. To evade this mandate, even in the absence of clear seditious content, constituted an illegal act in defying the requirement of publicity being sanctioned by the signature.

The prohibition on evading the name or the signature, by token of the mandate, may have rhetorical significance in that there may be controversy created when the name is withheld. Precisely because the name is so functional and expected, in situations where the name is notably absent various forms of controversy may arise. In cases of informants or whistle blowers who remained anonymous, most notably Woodward and Bernstein’s infamous informant Deep Throat but also more recently the anonymous authors of *Primary Colors*(1996) or *O: A Presidential Novel* (2011), publishing anonymously created public curiosity over the identity of the author. As I will discuss in my analysis of Anonymous, the use of such expectation and precedent of name to foment controversy is a significant factor rhetoricizing an inherent relation to the name.

An additional difficulty in maintaining anonymity lies in the social reality that the individual is rarely in control of her own namelessness. Events, individuals, or objects that substantively enter into public consciousness and remain there are invariably named. Anonymous murderers are often given names (Jack the Ripper, most famously), new diseases are given appellations (avian bird flu, SARS), celestial bodies, storms, and events are given similar treatment. Names are invented to describe things that are convenient for a speaker to refer to. These terms not only allow a speaker to conceptualize a diverse and initially undifferentiated mass, but also to have a sense of certainty over that object, event, or person. The name “9/11” as one typical instance provides a shorthand for such an

appellation where a complex series of events and players are accounted for in a single name. As Wittgenstein explains in *Philosophical Investigations*, a name signifies an “*element of reality*”<sup>207</sup> that may have “component parts.”<sup>208</sup> These parts, Wittgenstein suggests, are accounted for in the short hand of the name and it is this principle that allows the facility with language.<sup>209</sup> Instead of naming a chair’s composite parts or enumerating the different squares on a chess board, the words “chair” and “chess board” account for the constituent elements of the object. In this sense, language functions to facilitate naming and relating to things. In the example of 9/11, quite different and more complex than a chair, an event that is made up of a multitude of constituent parts, many of which (like the actions that occurred onboard the airplanes themselves) remain unknowable to anyone referring to the event. Moreover, because 9/11 was a participatory event rather than an object capable of being analyzed or perceived by two individuals at the same moment, it is rife with subjective nuance – one spectator’s 9/11 will obviously be quite different from another’s. Nevertheless, the term 9/11 can take account of all subjectivities, elements (known and unknown) and their complex associations to make generic reference to the events of the day. The nature of the association of such a name with others in chains of meaning (complex sentences)<sup>210</sup>, the precise relation of name to object in language games, is beyond the scope of this argument, it is clear that the name, according to Wittgenstein’s argument, includes an aggregating function that allows language to take place. Nevertheless, on the

---

<sup>207</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1958), 29.

<sup>208</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29.

<sup>209</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1958).

morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, before the term “9/11” came to be used as shorthand, there was a period of several hours in which no formal name existed to refer to what was in progress.

The period of ambiguity, the moment between the appearance of a novel object or event and the moment when that object or event becomes the province of language and knowledge is where, I suggest, philosophical inquiry into the name and the practical realities of anonymity meet. The locative functions suggested by Derrida and Lyotard are aspects of language necessary to using a language that relates to reality. Though rhetors may aspire towards utilizing namelessness for argumentative ends, the implicit need of a descriptive language force that which is unnamed to be named. However, as moments of novelty demonstrate, as in the case of 9/11 or that of the rupture of Elmahdy’s photograph, there is an extra-linguistic period that attends namelessness that may approximate the vastness and ambiguity of Lyotard’s undifferentiated “over there.”

As this discussion has attempted to argue, the effects of anonymity as suggested through the locative functions of the name and the signature as discussed by Derrida, Lyotard, and Wittgenstein are necessarily impracticable in real world rhetorical settings – they are both thwarted by convention and transient when they do indeed exist. The state of namelessness, because of its inconvenience to an audience, is actively undermined by the need, social and linguistic, to be named. There are only transient moments like those on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup> when the events were referred to as “an attack,” where the name is deferred and the event lacking the name is, by turns, vast, unwieldy, and abstract. Forms of strategic namelessness may aspire towards a post-liberal model of non-discursive dissent – what this dissertation has termed evental rhetoric. In appearing publicly without

a name, even if such appearing is only temporary, the nameless rhetor may attempt critique not possible in the named contexts of commonplace contemporary publics. Given the blockages of contemporary globalization (as discussed in the previous chapter), anonymity is one method to combat the strictures that exist between contemporary citizens and sites of power. In postponing the event of naming, a rhetorical strategy employing tactical anonymity may gain access to closed sites, negotiating the marginalized identity of a speaker as a powerless subject and instead acquire a political voice.

In the following section I will analyze how the “hactivist” group Anonymous strategically utilizes anonymity as a means of gaining access restricted discourse communities and sites of power. Through utilizing anonymity as a means to create a spectacle, transform *ethos*, and offer appeals utilizing the ambiguity of size and membership, Anonymous has been nominally successful in puncturing public discourse. However, as this chapter will also argue, Anonymous fails significantly because the tactic of namelessness is necessarily transient. As this section has argued, because of the material needs and social conventions requiring the name, Anonymous is unable to maintain the rupture of anonymity, not to mention the associated arguments, because of its acquisition of an *ethos* provided externally and through its actions. As I will argue, “Anonymous” becomes a name just like any other.

#### *Expect Us: Anonymous’ Rhetorical Anonymity*

Anonymous is a self-described “hactivist” collective responsible for numerous acts of Internet sabotage against such targets as The Church of Scientology, various credit card companies, the government websites of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and the security firm HBGary. The group’s origin differs significantly from that of WikiLeaks, Voina, or other

groups with explicitly dissident projects who emerged as a means to give voice to political aspiration in that Anonymous emerged (and according to critics, continues to be)<sup>211</sup> out of a culture of pranksterism. Anonymous' development is known to lie (as many Internet origin stories increasingly are) with a 14-year-old teenager with advanced computer skills. This particular teenager was Christopher Poole, an Internet user from New York, who cloned a Japanese message board, 2chan, to accommodate Western English speaking users.<sup>212</sup> Poole's site, 4chan, contained a number of themed boards on a variety of topics and one miscellaneous board, /b/, which garnered the most avid and eccentric following of the site's message boards.<sup>213</sup> Here users posted a high volume of offensive and humorous anonymous messages and images under the moniker of "Anonymous," modeled after the Japanese site 2chan.<sup>214</sup> It was this posting practice on Poole's site that led to the development of the group Anonymous, a group that has since combined a humorous and anarchic sensibility to enact a variety of cyber attacks referred to as "Operations" or "Projects" against various targets.

The group's transformation from disparate members of an essentially insular online community confined to a message board to a critical body occurred in 2008 with "Project Chanology," a campaign against the Church of Scientology that included distributed denial of service (DDoS)<sup>215</sup> attacks, email and telephone harassment, street demonstrations, and

---

<sup>211</sup> Vanessa Grigoriadis, "The Accidental Activist: Part II: 4chan's Chaos Theory" *Vanity Fair* April 2011.

<sup>212</sup> Parmy Olson, *We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous, and the Global Cyber Insurgency*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012), Kindle edition.

<sup>213</sup> Olson, *We Are Anonymous*.

<sup>214</sup> Olson, *We Are Anonymous*.

<sup>215</sup> DDoS attacks are an emerging form of disruption in which a targeted site is disabled by a flood of Internet traffic.

the hacking of Church computers.<sup>216</sup> Following a highly ridiculed viral video of Tom Cruise discussing the religion, members of /b/ encouraged the message board to launch an offensive against the Church. Responding members launched a multi-phase attack, slowing traffic to websites, engaging in various online pranks, threatening the organization, and, when the organization retaliated through legal channels, antagonizing the organization's lawyers.<sup>217</sup> Through this first major offensive, the essential elements of the *ethos* and the tactical methodology of the group to be known as Anonymous crystallized. Through the nature of their attacks, the group seemed to be motivated less by a political or ideological agenda, but rather a gleeful and juvenile taste for destruction. Their employment of offensive name-calling and bullying against the Church of Scientology and their lawyers, using terms like "nigger," "whore," "faggot,"<sup>218</sup> and so on, displayed a joyful insensitivity out of step with the standard discourse of political dissent. This sensibility also seemed to inform the group's tactics as much as their rhetoric in that their choice of target was unmotivated by a desire for rights or justice but rather as the expansion of a campaign of ridicule against a target with no connection to /b/ users. Much like the real world deployment of flash mobs (in their apolitical sense) as a form of pranksterism, this campaign against the Church of Scientology seemed little more than a sustained and highly committed evolution of 'lulz.'<sup>219</sup> In this seeming intensification of a prank, the group was

---

<sup>216</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Hackers declare war on Scientologists amid claims of heavy-handed Cruise control," *The Guardian*, February 3, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/feb/04/news>.

<sup>217</sup> Olson, *We Are Anonymous*.

<sup>218</sup> "4chanarchive - /b/ - scientology raid? | source is 4chan." accessed 06/28/2012, [4chanarchive.org/brchive/dspl\\_thread.php5?thread\\_id=51051816](http://4chanarchive.org/brchive/dspl_thread.php5?thread_id=51051816).

<sup>219</sup> As PCMag.com states on its encyclopedia board, lulz is "Internet speak for "lots of laughs." LULz is the plural derivation of the acronym LOLs ("laughs out loud"). Another form is "LOLz." LULz is sometimes used to

quick to expand their critique to any involved party (such as the Church's legal counsel) and mercilessly attack that target. This combination of brutal and offensive attacks under the direction of a seemingly juvenile and random logic significant only for its opposition to secrecy and authoritarianism lent the group an aura of danger and unpredictability. Through this sensibility and anonymity, Project Chanology presented Anonymous, in its first operation, as a dangerous figure on multiple accounts – it was unpredictable, vengeful, and unaccountable.

In December of 2010, Anonymous once again gained significant media exposure after a series of distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks against PayPal, the Swiss Bank Post Finance, MasterCard, and Visa.com.<sup>220</sup> The attacks, acknowledged to be part of the larger anti-corporate effort "Operation PayBack," were undertaken against these sites for denying service to the embattled WikiLeaks organization and its founder Julian Assange.<sup>221</sup> In 2011, the group again gained subsequent attention for the theft and release of emails belonging to technology security company HBGary. This operation, arguably the group's most aggressive and successful operation, went beyond previous projects that targeted groups whose agendas were deemed antithetical (some more so than others) to that of Anonymous or hacker culture. Moreover, while previous attacks created media events and caused significant disruption online, these were ultimately innocuous in that they left

---

express excitement about another person's misfortune or after getting away with a prank." (retrieved June 26, 2012, [http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia\\_term/0,1237,t=LULz&i=63607,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,1237,t=LULz&i=63607,00.asp)).

<sup>220</sup> Robert Mackey, "'Operation Payback' Attacks Target MasterCard and PayPal Sites to Avenge WikiLeaks," *New York Times*, December 8, 2010 accessed Feb. 21, 2011.

<sup>221</sup> Josh Halliday and Charles Arthur, "WikiLeaks: Who Are The Hackers Behind Operation Payback?" *The Guardian* December 8, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/dec/08/anonymous-4chan-wikileaks-mastercard-paypal>.

virtually no lasting damage. With the attack on HBGary, however, the group targeted an organization, and particularly a specific individual, CEO Aaron Barr, who posed a direct threat to hacker culture and to Anonymous specifically. Additionally, rather than engaging in its usual multipronged attack of disrupting traffic and unloading a barrage of threats and insults, this operation involved hacking emails to recover what ultimately proved to be incriminating documents exposing unethical and potentially illegal activity. The release of these documents, unlike previous project, resulted in practical real world change in that they prompted the resignation of Anonymous' target, HBGary's CEO Aaron Barr.<sup>222</sup>

Through coverage of its actions, Anonymous has emerged publicly as a mischievous activist group with a vague purpose and tactical agenda, markedly divergent from formal protest groups, but also utterly unlike globally positioned activist groups such as the International Workers of the World (IWW) or the Zapatistas. Not as dedicated or experienced as the aforementioned groups, Anonymous has appeared as part prank, part potent dissident network, operating erratically with no formal leadership, political agenda, or official spokesperson. As such, the group has often been troublesome to define and indeed it has been often questioned whether the name Anonymous represents an existing group or is merely a signature used by unaffiliated activists to appear as an organization. The group has been variously called "an Internet gathering,"<sup>223</sup> "an amorphous, opt-in entity,"<sup>224</sup> a "pool of consciousness,"<sup>225</sup> "eine zeitweilige Interessengemeinschaft,"<sup>226</sup> "a

---

<sup>222</sup> Olson, *We Are Anonymous*.

<sup>223</sup> "ANON OPS: A Press Release December 10, 2010," accessed March 27th, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=31>.

<sup>224</sup> "ANONYMOUS PRESS RELEASE - 16/12/2010" accessed March 27th, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=51>.

headless monster,”<sup>227</sup> and “just an idea.”<sup>228</sup> Formally, it may be said to exist as a loose organization of computer users who frequent specific message boards, carry out acts of dissidence against corporate or authoritarian targets, and operate anonymously under the single title as would a formal organization. Anonymous operates much more analogously to a brand name than a physical organization, a stamp denoting an associated group of objects under an often-vague aesthetic and cultural *ethos*.

In its dissident project, the majority of Anonymous’ actions have followed a similar process. The group identifies a target or project, issues a “press release” or manifesto calling its members to take action against the specific target, and subsequently bombards the target with DDoS attacks until the site is taken offline. These attacks operate via a program called the “Low Orbit Ion Cannon” (LOIC) in which computer users can “volunteer” their machines by downloading a program allowing hackers within Anonymous employ the computer without the user needing to participate.<sup>229</sup> Consequently, a DDoS attack requires very few active participants who have advanced computer skills, relying instead on

---

<sup>225</sup> “Press Release: Who are Anonymous & What Anonymous Represents,” accessed March 27th, 2011, <http://www.thehackernews.com/2011/02/press-release-who-are-anonymous-what.html>.

<sup>226</sup> “A temporary community of interest Offener Brief von ANONYMOUS - 16/12/2010,” accessed March 27th, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=55>.

<sup>227</sup> Michael Stone “Anonymous Targets American Israel PAC: Operation Palestine” *Examiner.com*, March 27th, <http://www.examiner.com/anonymous-in-national/anonymous-targets-american-israel-pac-operation-palestine>.

<sup>228</sup> “Open Letter from ANONYMOUS - 17/12/2010,” accessed March 27th, 2011 <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=65>.

<sup>229</sup> Ryan Singel, “Joining Pro WikiLeaks Attacks is as Easy as Clicking a Button” *Wired.com* December 10, 2010.

ideologically sympathetic computer users to merely opt-in while the operation can be taken over by more advanced and/or committed members.<sup>230</sup>

In the following analysis, I seek to demonstrate that through the combination of anonymity and tactical strikes against sites of global governance, Anonymous exemplifies how anonymity may be successfully employed as a global method of dissent. While I acknowledge that anonymity as a mode of dissent has been long utilized, and indeed long criminalized, I argue that anonymity in the digital age, and specifically the form utilized by Anonymous, presents new potential for a global and rhetorical application. Because the reach of anonymous missives far outpace the localized context and because of the fragmented nature of the public sphere and the rise of the digital commons, contemporary anonymity has emerged as a stance capable of reaching countless readers and sites of power. As such, anonymity has the potential of allowing a global critique were dissident voices may speak, making themselves accountable, and, significantly, without the necessity of local citizenship. At the same time, Anonymous' failures, notably fragmentation, lack of cohesion, inability to sustain a lasting media presence, and becoming branded, demonstrate that while anonymity may rhetorically function well for a period of time, the rupture of anonymity is an inherently temporary one. The name and an associated identity must inevitably appear (as I have mentioned earlier, due to social convention and materiality) and territorialize the anonymous entity.

In this project, the group Anonymous employs namelessness in two distinct capacities. The first could be called rhetorically constructed anonymity. Though Anonymous' members are factually anonymous in that they do not reveal their names, the

---

<sup>230</sup> Singel, "Joining Pro WikiLeaks Attacks is as Easy as Clicking a Button."

mystique of anonymity is actively constructed by the group. As such, anonymity becomes not merely the state of namelessness but rather a form of hybrid celebrity in which anonymity is the basis of iconicity. The most pertinent contemporary examples of this form include Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, graffiti Artist Banksy, and electronic musician Burial. Not merely a form of establishing celebrity, this method of emphasizing anonymity allows for a unique rhetorical tactic: the capacity for *ethos* to be entirely determined by the rhetor, or more specifically, the ability to tactically omit aspects of situated *ethos*. Anonymity allows the rhetor to be entirely responsible for her *ethos*.

This form of anonymity is coupled with a second form in which anonymity functions as a *topos* for constructing arguments otherwise unavailable to public groups or individuals. Specifically, anonymity may be used toward the following capacities: 1) the purely functional capacity to evade (or prolong) detection and prosecution,<sup>231</sup> 2) the power to appear numerous and univocally committed, 3) the ability utilize metaphors of infiltration, and 4) the ability to evade co-optation and ad hominem attacks through the concealment membership, leadership, and demographics, and 5) the capacity to cultivate an “iconic” for of anonymous *ethos*.

#### *Size and Commitment*

The most readily employable advantages granted by the use of anonymity are the associated benefits of being able to appear both numerous and univocally committed to a

---

<sup>231</sup> Because DDoS attacks have been criminalized in the United States and the UK, law enforcement agencies regard Anonymous as a criminal organization. As such, the most immediate and functional use of anonymity allows the group to evade arrest and prosecution and thereby prolong their ability to operate. This use of anonymity is vital to the group’s longevity, but not strictly speaking rhetorical. As such, it will not be addressed in this discussion.

cause. As Thompson argues in describing the blackmailing practices of 18<sup>th</sup> century England, these tactics are well worn:

Even small-time blackmailers tried to present themselves as one of a 'gang' or confederacy' those who wrote in support of more general grievances presented themselves as one of a confederacy thirty or ninety or several thousand strong, bound by the most solemn oaths to revenge their wrongs.<sup>232</sup>

As Thompson's wry humor suggests, though this is an available tactic, it is rarely a particularly persuasive one. Unlike a signed a petition that collects and identifies countable supporters or a live protest in which individuals gather in a physical space, anonymous dissent functions to only to suggest membership and adherence without calculable participation. In the case of Anonymous, rhetorical gestures in written and visual communication are employed to suggest both without identifying individual members or indexing real names.

The group's primary strategy for achieving the rhetorical appearance of robust membership is achieved through the use of the deictic "we," particularly within stock phrases. Nearly all of Anonymous' videos and posts contain the same opening address, "We Are Anonymous,"<sup>233</sup> the signoff, "We are Anonymous. We are legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us,"<sup>234</sup> and generally avoid the first person singular pronoun through communications. Primarily, this form of address suggests collective authorship of the document as pronouns used through suggest that the authorship is not attributable to an authority or representative but rather to the totality of the group. This works to suggest

---

<sup>232</sup> Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 269.

<sup>233</sup> "Open Letter from ANONYMOUS - 17/12/2010," accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=65>.

<sup>234</sup> "Open Letter from ANONYMOUS - 17/12/2010" accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=65>.

a large and ultimately incalculable membership and that such membership is unified, speaking as one. The appeal employed, analogous to that of amassing a large group of protesters in a physical space, is that of intimidation in writing and is easily accomplished and easily embellished. The content of Anonymous' stock phrases, particularly its sendoff, reinforces this suggestion by attempting to establish the group as a militaristic guerilla force. "Expect us" is likewise an attempt at intimidation, suggesting future retribution by an incalculable force.

Anonymous additionally uses overt declamations of its membership to bolster this appeal. In what has become Anonymous' most viewed video, a voice, modulated to both disguise the identity of the speaker and to appear as if several voices are speaking at once, makes the following threat to the Church of Scientology: "We're getting bigger every day-- and solely by the force of our ideas... If you want another name for your opponent, then call us Legion, for we are many."<sup>235</sup> In addition to employing the deictic "we," the video makes overt reference to the group's size and growing membership. This intimidation appeal is nearly identical to the group's suggestions of collective authorship, the only difference being that such suggestions are unambiguous rather than merely suggestive.

A final method of establishing size and commitment operates via explicit clarifications by Anonymous members as to how the group is intended to be interpreted. An example of this self description from Encyclopedia Dramatica, a Wiki often frequented by Anonymous users, defines the group as: "a Panopticon in reverse. A group where

---

<sup>235</sup> "Message to Scientology" [video]. 2008, accessed Feb. 21, 2011. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC6Kv9yiLiQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC6Kv9yiLiQ).

everyone is invisible and appears to speak from the center.”<sup>236</sup> With this gesture, the description seeks to clarify how Anonymous functions with regard to individuals speaking as or for the collective. However, the gesture, an attempt to manage how the rhetorical construction of anonymity functions, reduces the effect of such appeals by explaining their intent rather than allowing the suggestions from the texts and messages themselves to function as they are clearly intended to. As such, attempts to refine and clarify the rhetorical function of Anonymous’ strategy attenuate the group in this regard. Taken together, these three strategies operate on varying levels of ambiguity to suggest the existence of a significant membership without individual identification. The group, however, is unable to present this assertion naturally; the multiple strategies show themselves to be rhetorical strategies rather than the natural discursive consequence of a large and committed membership. In transparent rhetoricity, the group cannot but signal that they are attempting to index the affective consequences of a hoard speaking with one voice. With regard to such constitutive language, the group’s strategy far more resembles the more mundane constitutive strategies of publics or counter-publics that what the group aspires to be, namely a *non-public*.

Absolute commitment is a secondary rhetorical attempt of the deictic “we.” As the signoff phrase, “We are Anonymous...,” ends the majority of Anonymous’ various forms of written and visual forms of communication, documents containing it present themselves as if either written collectively or by an individual and as such, Anonymous attempts to present itself as a group with absolute ideological commitment from its members. From Thompson’s discussion of blackmail, this functions as the implicit suggestions of the

---

<sup>236</sup> “Anonymous” *Encyclopediadramatica.com*, accessed March 29, 2011.

“solemn oath.” This tactic, however, is the aspect of Anonymous’ rhetorical strategy that is the most problematic and inconsistent. This strategy can only be effective if the fiction is maintained and the group’s public persona remains unified. However, upon the appearance of contradictory statements or those seeking to establish some unity and discretion among members, the rhetorical suggestion of univocal support of an idea falters.

Some from the organization have sought to clarify that, despite the suggestion of the group’s collective signature, Anonymous is indeed democratic because anyone can become part of the collective:

if the majority of the public agrees with a proposed appropriation, then the public will act - If the majority of the public disagrees with a proposed appropriation, then the public will protest and label the message in question as illegitimate and thus not representative of the values of ANONYMOUS. This makes ANONYMOUS the first truly democratic endeavor in the world.<sup>237</sup>

However, because nearly all missives pose themselves as representative, any individual can create material or communications on behalf of the group. Moreover, as no governing body exists that could legitimately de-authenticate any communication, the group exposes itself to internal cooptation by individual members (cooptation will be discussed in detail later in the chapter). Abuse of this leads to comments like the following post from an Anonymous user directed at the community as a whole: “I am an individual. I am writing this statement. I do not represent Anonymous. In fact, no one does; the operative word there being ‘one.’ No statement or action made by a single individual can be claimed as a statement or action of Anonymous.”<sup>238</sup> However, this statement succumbs to the supreme contradiction of the

---

<sup>237</sup> “Open Letter from ANONYMOUS - 17/12/2010,” accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=65>

<sup>238</sup> “On Posting in the Name of Anonymous,” accessed March 29, 2011. <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=680>

group as all missives are addressed *as if* coauthored by the group en masse. While this can afford the group the appearance of both collective membership and unconditional adherence to its ideas, it is a perilous tactic as any deviation can lead to the revelation that the tactic's use is a means to simulate such membership and adherence.

This inconsistency is exemplified in what appears to be an "internal" video posted to You Tube in January of 2008. In the video, a disguised voice reads the following text while the organization's insignia, the outline of a black suited figure with a question mark obscuring the face, appears on the screen:

Hello Anonymous,  
 We are Anonymous. We direct this message to ourself [sic] to clarify the importance that we do not allow ourselves to become tainted by personal distinction. Once an individual attempts to act for or act as the many, Anonymous is no longer the incoherent machine it is intended to be. There are no official messages from Anonymous. There are no official videos from Anonymous. There are no official representatives of Anonymous. There is no official gathering point of Anonymous. There is no official goal of Anonymous. Anyone attempting to modify these points does so to the detriment of the whole. Anonymous is not your personal army. One head lacks the power of many. One head is corruptible. One head is removable. Everyone's contribution is equal. Don't be a follower. Rely on the whole. Be part of the whole. Avoid the one.<sup>239</sup>

Mystifyingly, the video seems to clarify that Anonymous is indeed a very loose and unaffiliated group of computer users and hackers who use various rhetorical forms and media strategies to appear to be an "incoherent machine," or, in other words, a rhizome. As such, the writer insists that the group must act with as little internal variance as possible in order to appear to be unified in a singular purpose such that the deictic "we" carries the intended force. Fatally, however, the video exposes the inconsistency in all that it attempts to regulate is the solemn univocality of group commitment.

---

<sup>239</sup>"Message to Anonymous," [video]. 2008. Accessed March 29, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ4HSwb59IA>.

The charge that no individual member may act as or for the many effectively disallows the individual to draw upon a socially constructed *ethos*, as such defined by Nedra Reynolds (1993), to speak as an individual member of the group as to represent the group collectively. For the group, this becomes a complex and ultimately unsolvable issue as every communication and product associated with the organization is signed as Anonymous. Caught in the paradox in which all individuals must act as the group, while no individual may as the group renders the project of maintaining the illusion of total commitment impossible under the conditions established by Anonymous.

### *Infiltration*

A secondary advantage of anonymity allows the rhetor to draw upon and employ the trope of infiltration as a means of launching fear appeals. Generally, the threat of infiltration has been employed in various forms of political propaganda, self-policing, and surveillance rhetoric as a fear appeal intended modify the behavior of a populace.

In Anonymous' "Message to Scientology," the group uses the trope of infiltration as a means to launch a fear appeals emphasizing the group's dispersal within society. In the video, a disguised voice states, "Over the years, we have been watching you... You cannot hide; we are everywhere. We cannot die; we are forever."<sup>240</sup> In these threats against the Church of Scientology, Anonymous employs threats of surveillance, pervasiveness, and decentralization to present themselves as having fully infiltrated the general public. Unlike overt threats of violence from an external and identifiable force, these fear appeals function as internal threats, asserting a threat but emphasizing that it could come at any point, in

---

<sup>240</sup> "Message to Scientology," [video], 2008, accessed Feb. 21, 2011. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC6Kv9yiLiQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC6Kv9yiLiQ).

any form, and from an unexpected individual or body. As employed here, the threat of surveillance attempts to elicit the fear of exposure, that of being seen without seeing one's observer. The threat of proliferation and decentralization, "we are everywhere," is a threat that functions in tandem with the general trope of infiltration, inciting the fear that trusted confidants may be "the enemy." Such an appeal attempts to undermine the cohesion of a group and the trust between individuals inherent to its functioning. The threat of decentralization, "we cannot die," functions to present the clandestine organization as immune to traditional modes of attack, without leadership, dispersed throughout the public, and, as such, rhizomatic. This critique is used to simultaneously bolster the clandestine organization's appearance of invincibility while undercutting recipient's capacity to act in self-defense.

The group's utilization of infiltration as a fear appeal is additionally made through performative and visual means. In the few instances that members of Anonymous appear publicly as members of Anonymous, the practice has been to do so wearing the Guy Fawkes mask popularized in the film *V for Vendetta* (2006). The film concerns a masked vigilante terrorist in a dystopian future England committing various acts of sabotage against the government, culminating in the bombing of parliament. In the film's climactic scene, hundreds of figures wearing the Guy Fawkes mask approach the parliament building to watch its destruction in anonymous solidarity with the main character. First worn publicly in protests under Project Chanology, the mask has become the *de facto* symbol of the organization, functioning to associate Anonymous with the film's ethic of vigilantism and to manifest the group's assertion that it is comprised of citizens dispersed throughout society.

The group additionally uses an official logo that visually indexes the appeal of infiltration. The logo is an altered version of the United Nations logo with an equatorial projection wreathed in two olive branches. Over the projection, a headless figure with a question mark in place of a head has been superimposed. With its obvious similarities to the United Nations logo, Anonymous seems to be emphasizing, if not in somewhat of a tongue-in-cheek fashion, its global reach and its prodigious membership. The suited figure, possibly a reference to *The Matrix* (1999), seems to emphasize professionalism and bureaucracy, while the question mark functions to reinforce the anonymity as the group's central tenant. As an ensemble, the symbols and references attempt to construct anonymous as a negative United Nations, influential, ordered, established worldwide, while simultaneously unknown.

This symbol appears to be both an attestation of the group's ubiquity within the world, a representation of their far reaching and multinational constituency, and at the same time an attempt to assert (regarding their more general project) a *negative* publicity. In their choice of the equatorial projection and its clear associations to the UN, an organization that is both immanently public and representative, the group's deployment of the logo paired with the anonymous figure (the question mark) suggests an attempt to draw upon the associations of an influential and representative body, but inverted. In the cultivation of a worldly consequential and publicly influential, though publicly unknown quasi-organization, the group strengthens the affective appeal of being among and unknown in the world while also attempting asserting this form of negative publicity as means of communicating its consequentiality.

*Avoiding Ad Hominem Attacks and Cooptation*

Because Anonymous actively conceals all forms of identification concerning its membership, it is largely immune to ad hominem attacks and cooptation from its opponents. Concerning ad hominem attacks, because the group is demographically unavailable and unaccountable to critics, arguments to dismiss the group based on character that would otherwise be quite specific are instead limited to attacks based on assumptions about the group. More significantly, however, because the group does not divulge information regarding its citizenship status or constituency, and as such cannot be accused to rent seeking behavior, it is largely immune to outside cooptation. Consequently, the group largely protects its acts and communication from being diluted or contaminated from the outside.

In a recent open letter to Anonymous by the Westboro Baptist Church, the church, having been targeted by the organization, unsuccessfully attempted an ad hominem attack against the group based on general assumptions about Internet users and hackers. The open letter refers to members of the group, variously, as, “Anonymous coward crybaby ‘Hackers,’” “A puddle of pimple-faced nerds organized under the cowardly banner of ‘Anonymous,’” “girls,” “little boys,” “foppish,” and “lousy.”<sup>241</sup> From the language of the letter, it is immediately evident that the church has no direct knowledge of the group and must therefore rely on stereotypes — Anonymous members are assumed to be male, young, intellectual or “nerdy,” and susceptible to emasculating taunts i.e. “girls.” It is also appears that, rather than legitimate critiques, these are taunts designed to provoke Anonymous

---

<sup>241</sup> “Westboro Baptist Church Invites Anonymous to ‘Bring It,” Accessed March 17, 2011, <http://www.urlesque.com/2011/02/21/westboro-baptist-church-anonymous-bring-it/>.

rather than hinder or destabilize them. This assumption can be made based on the words “BRING IT ON,”<sup>242</sup> appearing as the largest on the page. Ultimately, the letter fails to effectively dismiss the group based on their membership. Notably, the critique is not a rare one as even the *New York Times* has defined the group in similar fashion, as “loosely affiliated... tech-savvy kids more interested in making mischief than political statements.”<sup>243</sup>

Concerning cooptation, the group’s anonymity has stanchd any accusations of rent seeking behavior or dismissals that the group is merely exercising their democratic rights. Though many have criticized the group for their methods, none have, nor reasonably could, made such a charge. However, two other forms of cooptation plague the group, both as a consequence of its anonymity. The first is internal cooptation, discussed earlier with reference for the group’s inability to present a unified front. As previously noted, the group’s open nature and lack of oversight, while democratic, opens the potential of any user to speak on behalf of the group, co-opting its voice for a litany of projects. This is further complicated by the group having no center; consequently, it could be argued that *any* individual speaking on behalf of Anonymous engages in cooptation.

The second form of cooptation, following from the group’s anonymity, is in fact the external consequence of cooptation being unachievable. Unlike cooptation that seeks to claim authority over an agent or group, certain critics of Anonymous have employed Othering as a means to counter the group and render it anathema. In the wake of

---

<sup>242</sup> “Westboro Baptist Church Invites Anonymous to ‘Bring It,’” Accessed March 17, 2011, <http://www.urlesque.com/2011/02/21/westboro-baptist-church-anonymous-bring-it/>.

<sup>243</sup> “Anonymous (Internet Group)” *New York Times*, last modified December 14, 2010, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/anonymous\\_Internet\\_group/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=anonymous&st=cse](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/anonymous_Internet_group/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=anonymous&st=cse).

Anonymous' "Project Chanology," the group's campaign against the Church of Scientology, scientology's defenders retaliated strongly. In a statement released by the Church, Anonymous was characterized as "a group of cyber-terrorists ... perpetrating religious hate crimes against Churches of Scientology and individual Scientologists for no reason other than religious bigotry."<sup>244</sup> A spokesman for the Church reiterated these claims in an interview on CNN alleging the group's responsibility for "hate crimes" and "hate mongering."<sup>245</sup> A video in response to Anonymous, made anonymously and in similar aesthetic fashion to Anonymous' original threat to the Church, characterizes the group as "a loose band of smalltime hackers, child pornographers, schoolyard terrorists, and Internet bullies... a band of teenagers."<sup>246</sup> These accusations, strategically made to confront Anonymous' anonymity, show the group being spared cooptation while being drawn into another potentially problematic characterization: that of the Other. Both the characterization of "terrorist" and "hate criminal" or "hate monger" function specifically to render the recipient of such claims both not a part of a community and without the right to speak. The term "hate speech," as Judith Butler has reasoned,<sup>247</sup> works similarly to end any debate, forwarding the accusation that the user is disparaging a protected minority population. Both terms taken together attempt to reframe Anonymous as a "rogue" or "outlaw" group, disallowing their potential to speak in democratic or public contexts for

---

<sup>244</sup> Brain Braiker, "The Passion of 'Anonymous'" *Newsweek*, Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> 2008.

<sup>245</sup> "Scientologist Tommy Davis responds to Anonymous" accessed March 17, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSS178Q-4eo&feature=related> 5-7-08

<sup>246</sup> "Message to Anonymous from a Scientology Believer" [video], 2008, accessed March 29, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOXx2p12x4o>.

<sup>247</sup> Judith Butler, "The Value of Being Disturbed," *Theory & Event* 4(1), 2000.

having broken the fundamental rules of discourse, and thus criminalizing the content of their critiques.

### *Iconic Anonymity*

In both political and cultural contexts, anonymity has been employed as a *supplement*, a positive contextualization that renders namelessness iconic. In its cultivation, the state of being unnamed or unrepresented is emphasized and as such the concealment of identity becomes an *accentuated* absence, not a pure absence but an accessory that draws unique attention to itself. The question of identity becomes an acute question in the mind of the public and it is ultimately this question that can function as a means to propel the anonymous figure into a position of iconicity. Notably, this form of rhetorically cultivated anonymity may be said to be used mostly in the interest of cultivating celebrity. It is rather what can be done rhetorically with such anonymity where the potential for effective dissent becomes truly apparent. However, in the context of Anonymous, it is here that the desire for the radical ambiguity of anonymity, the withholding of the name suggested by Lyotard and Derrida, becomes mired in a fixity of identity. Specifically, in cultivating iconicity and a *mythos* regarding their identity, Anonymous becomes immanently *named* despite their anonymity.

The most prominent example of the cultivation of anonymous iconicity in the political realm is the Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, a figure seen only in a black balaclava. Of his celebrity, Juana Ponce de León, the editor of his selected writings, notes, "He is transparent, and he is iconographic. He hides his face so

that he can be seen.”<sup>248</sup> This statement alludes to the dual purpose of Marcos’ anonymity, at once the cultivation of powerful iconicity and at the same time an absence or mirror onto which the marginalized may read their struggles. Marcos has himself stated that his anonymity has allowed him to become, “gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro... and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains.”<sup>249</sup> Ponce de León, likewise, states, “beneath the mask of our own personal struggles, we are all Marcos.”<sup>250</sup>

However, Marcos’ capacity to be a mirror is rivaled by his distinctive iconicity. Marcos in photographs is at once poet and outlaw, most often seen riding a horse or speaking to a crowd, bedecked with bullets, and nearly always smoking a pipe. As Naomi Klein writes, “Marcos seems keenly aware of himself as an irresistible romantic hero. He’s... a Marxist intellectual who becomes a poor peasant.” In short, Marcos embodies the aspiration of left leaning intellectuals worldwide in existing both as an incisive critic and as a soldier, intellectually gifted while also capable of enacting the revolutionary practices for which he advocates. It is this persona of the warrior poet, embossed on ELZN fliers, flags, t-shirts, a brand to rival Che Guavera, which seems to overpower its potential iterability. It is indeed hard to doubt that Marcos seeks singular identifiable iconicity given Klein’s observation, “He plays with this character, flirts with it, saying that he can’t reveal his real

---

<sup>248</sup> Juana Ponce de León, “Editor’s Note: “Traveling Back for Tomorrow”” in *Our World is Our Weapon: Selected Writings* by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), xxvi.

<sup>249</sup> Naomi Klein, “The Unknown Icon,” *The Guardian*, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2001.

<sup>250</sup> Ponce de León, “Traveling Back For Tomorrow,” xxxi.

identity for fear of disappointing his female fans.”<sup>251</sup> Regardless of whether Marcos’ persona weakens his potential to be invested with the aspirations of the variety of marginalized global subjects, his *ethos* should be recognized as entirely self-constructed, the manufactured result of rhetorical decisions of dress and voice. Identity markers such as name, class, race, and personal history have been selectively omitted in favor of the factors Marcos deems desirable.

Such selective identity formation has an analog in the contemporary electronic music scene. In his text *Rhythm Science*, Paul D. Miller (a.k.a. DJ Spooky, a.k.a. That Subliminal Kid) remarks on such strategic means of identity formation in the DJ community, writing: “[*the*] sonic collage becomes my identity.”<sup>252</sup> Miller suggests that in terms of musical production, the content increasingly comes to supplant the identity of the producer such that an identity, a pseudonym or a persona, effectively becomes an index of their production. An alias, Miller asserts, operates according to “a database logic,”<sup>253</sup> as index of content, establishing an *ethos* based entirely upon pseudonym and product. Miller understands the construction of such of an identity as an act of invention and creation, “extension rather than a negation,”<sup>254</sup> leading to a more complex and textured identity formation through establishing an identity as the totality of communicative acts. In the contexts of the insurgent and the DJ, through strategic namelessness and the careful cultivation of iconicity, the rhetor’s *ethos* is carefully controlled and maintained. Likewise,

---

<sup>251</sup> Klein, “The Unknown Icon.”

<sup>252</sup> Paul D. Miller, *Rhythm Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 22.

<sup>253</sup> Miller, *Rhythm Science*, 4.

<sup>254</sup> Miller, *Rhythm Science*, 4.

Anonymous, which is known only through the content of its online writing, posted videos, banners and visual images, and the rare instances of their public appearance, shares this ability (in the period of their incipency) to construct and manage their *ethos*.

Given this capacity, the *ethos* that Anonymous has ultimately chosen to construct is, by turns, powerful and indefensibly bigoted, an index of their problematic and often ridiculed actions. Regardless, it must be noted that these aspects, though they may represent ill-advised decisions, have been entirely determined by “members” of the group. In its most effective cases, Anonymous posts resemble leftist manifestos not dissimilar from the writings of Subcomandante Marcos. Lacking stanch compassion for the subaltern that permeates Marcos’ writing, Anonymous’ posts nonetheless defend what they perceive as authoritarian behavior by corporations or governments, mostly against hackers and consumers, affirming the values of transparency, freedom of information, and the abolition of intellectual property laws. In a recent post criticizing Sony for legal action against hackers, an Anon writes, “You have victimized your own customers merely for possessing and sharing information... you have violated the privacy of thousands of innocent people who only sought the free distribution of information.”<sup>255</sup> Another repeats the deictic “we” and uses language heavily influenced by leftist manifestoes to support regime change in the Middle East: “To the people of Bahrain: We stand with you against your oppressors... Your brave actions will maintain the momentum of revolution for citizens all around the world wishing to regain their own freedoms,”<sup>256</sup> Though the

---

<sup>255</sup> “Operation Payback Brings You #OpSony,” accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=787>.

<sup>256</sup> “Operation Bahrain – Anonymous Press Release – 17/02/11” accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=450>.

language used here appears derivative with regard to the history of leftist activism, it succeeds in associating the groups with its intellectual forbearers and demonstrates the group's desire to be perceived as politically active dissent group.

Oppositely, other activities and posts by the group present the organization as pranksters and bullies, ultimately weakening attempts to enact serious or committed activism and be perceived as a meaningful organization. In one notable incident, in response to the introduction legislation by the Australian government to severely restrict access to certain websites, specifically some with pornographic content, Anonymous initiated DDoS attacks against government websites and bombarded the Prime Minister's homepage with pornographic content.<sup>257</sup> However, the group has often engaged in acts with no clear motivation or political agenda. In a recent incident, a boy in Pasadena, California, who had created an online "no cussing" club was targeted by Anonymous and served with various forms of online harassment.<sup>258</sup> Such acts are commonplace in the organization.

Lastly, the group's visual persona draws heavily upon dystopian themes and cultural referents, specifically the film *V for Vendetta* (2006). In drawing upon these sites, particularly the mask used in the film to disguise the vigilante hero and what has become the *de facto* uniform for public appearances of Anonymous members, Anonymous presents itself analogously as both a dissident anti-authoritarian organization, and, paradoxically, an adolescent group fascinated with popular culture. Likewise, the disjunction between

---

<sup>257</sup> Kathy Marks "Operation Titstorm – Hackers Declare War on Aussie," *New Zealand Herald* April 6, 2011.

<sup>258</sup> Rob Hayes, "'No Cussing Club' teen receives threats," KABC-TV LOS ANGELES, CA, Jan. 15, 2009, [abclocal.com](http://abclocal.com).

enthusiastic attempts to take up the discourse style and political sympathies of the dissident left and the staunchly apolitical pranks hackers has rendered the group intensely difficult to unify under a single *ethos*. As such, the *ethos* of the group is precisely one of indeterminacy and incoherence, defying attempts to categorize political sentiment, methods, or goals.

As these examples demonstrate, despite the group's attempts to operate anonymously and, at the same time, to cultivate a persona that indexes a menacing, trans-global, anti-authoritarian stance, the group arrives at the inherent disjunction between the concept of nameless and the practice of acting in the world without a name. The group cannot but index, like a database, the various associations and aspects of its invented *ethos* once it becomes known. For the group, in their vast number of projects, some successful and others less so, they have become immanently known. The goal of a space of wonder and dismay, the space of the *khora*, is one that the group demonstrates to a temporary place. In the aftermath of the group's initial salvos and acute attacks they become, despite anonymity, another public figure.

### *Conclusion*

As a linguistic and ontological concept, the name functions as a vital element in relationality – in relating to others, in the relating of concepts, in relating to the world. To deny the name, or to attempt its removal, is an act of rupture against the presumption of the name and against the social and linguistic forces that demand its inclusion. The rupture of namelessness is, as I have argued, a temporary one. Anything within the public consciousness that is accountable in language will be accounted for eventually – however, as I have also attempted to argue, rhetorical usage of namelessness may exist within this

indeterminacy for a period and, while there, function as a means to negotiate barriers to access. Anonymous figures exist in such a space of indeterminacy between being accounted for and being unknowable and as such have the capacity to act beyond the limitations of the named subject. As I have discussed, Anonymous attempts to exist in such a space of indeterminacy, to mount critiques of a penetrating nature and to avoid prosecution, but is unable to exist as an undifferentiated presence. Unable to co-opt them, unable to define them, they are designated as a dangerous unknown, relegated to the outside.

However, despite their failings, the group demonstrates the power of the rupture. The group demonstrates a capacity to exist in an intermediary space as a unique and uniquely powerful entity. It is the first politically and socially consequential anonymous organization to emerge in the Internet age (terrorist groups notwithstanding). It commands, through technological advancement, rhetorical suggestion, and legitimate followers, a significant presence and has undeniably achieved a degree of success in outing HBGary and in helping to attack Tunisian and Egyptian government websites during each nation's respective revolution. With its capacity to become media fodder, it occupies a privileged position in the Internet community and can claim the attention and support of individuals worldwide while remaining largely unaccountable. Given its potential to act and connect with sites of global power it may be said to be, overall, an example of the success of eventual rhetoric.

Nevertheless, despite clear successes and intelligent applications of its position, it is a group with severe failings and disadvantages. As many critics have noted, specifically

virtual reality pioneer and Internet philosophy Jaron Lanier,<sup>259</sup> the group has squandered much of its potential and cannot claim to be an organization with political or intellectual legitimacy. Nevertheless, as a symbol and an example of the capacity of marginal figures to locate ways of becoming significant, Anonymous is in the vanguard. Having been relegated to an intermediary position that it has used as a means to become a critical voice and maintain that voice, the group is unquestionably a significant global actor. It is neither a political party nor an insignificant outsider yet it has touched a valuable means of existing and thriving in a space somewhere between the two.

---

<sup>259</sup> Jaron Lanier, "The Hazards of Nerd Supremacy: The Case of WikiLeaks" *The Atlantic* December 20, 2010.

### Chapter 3: Bad Citizens: Ethical Parrhesia and Art Terror

As the former chapter investigated the paradigm of anonymity as a strategy calibrated to rupture the status quo of the public sphere by existing publicly while retaining anonymity, this chapter will investigate the figure of the rogue. Voina [war], a Russian dissident group of artists and activists, operates as such a figure by offering criticism through methods unavailable to power. I will argue that in occupying an antagonistic and mercurial relation to the site of global power, a tension between member and exile in which the critic is both active but unavailable, offers unique potential for the subject to mount arguments with the capacity to cut across logics of power. This strategy allows critiques to bypass the habituated modes of dismissal and cooptation offered by authorities and to provide a valuable instance of a viable form of criticism calibrated for contemporary global use. Because sites of sovereign power deny access to others while permitting the participation of citizens (as discussed in the previous chapter), but exist in an unclear relation to *quasi-citizens*, rogues, and dissidents, the rogue exists in a space of privilege. This space, I suggest, is one that the rogue constructs for herself by identifying and subsequently evading the measures designed to expose and expel oppositional actors. The rogue presents to a site of power as a singularity, operating according to Baudrillard's "unexchangeable" logic.

As I will also suggest, this form of rhetorical action is simultaneously a form of dissent and an instance of "evental rhetoric" in that the precise method utilized by the subject to infiltrate and deterritorialize a site of power aspires toward a novel and generative form of rhetorical action. Specifically, I will argue that this form of action takes as its point of departure the concept of *parrhesia*, understood by Michel Foucault as ethical

veridiction. Unlike Foucault's treatment of the concept, this method operates according to a logic in which the critic is not sacrificed but rather allowed to continue her critical project. In this continuation, Voina reinvents the form of the critique seemingly as a means to change the modes of criticism and offer a potential of activists globally for offering critique while both remaining free and undergirding the project of criticism itself. As such, I regard the group as moving toward a mode of criticism that attempts to instantiate a logical shift against predominant thought that the one who dissents must also be the one who is punished.

This chapter will proceed first with a discussion of Foucault's concept of *parrhesia* as it is developed in the seminars of the *Collège de France*. This section will interrogate the differences between Foucault's treatment of the concept and its reinvention under Voina. Importantly, this reading of Foucault's concept is a particularly resistant one. Foucault's understanding of resistance, as will be shown in the following section, is troubled by its own complicity and ultimate failure to successfully combat ideological forces. My interest, towards the practical and material realities of resistance, is ultimately against this Foucaultian reading and rather toward a belief in the possibility of a substantive resistance. The following section will offer a theoretical lens for understanding Voina's operation as a rogue critic. Specifically, the section will provide an account of how the rogue has been theorized in the work of contemporary scholars of rhetoric and critical theory (Derrida, Nancy, Serres, Deleuze, Guattari, Ono, and Sloop) and suggest how the concept may be operationalized as a method of constructing *ethos* and offering argumentation. As an example of the rhetorical deployment of rogue positionality, I will discuss the cultural production, discourse, and public response concerning the controversial Russian

performance art group Voina. I will analyze Voina's work and the response it has garnered through a lens offered by contemporary critical and rhetorical theory on the rogue, the outlaw, the parasite, and the minor to argue that this position offers the potential for the voicing of critique on behalf of voiceless minority subjects in contemporary contexts of power. This critique argues that Voina's public perception and expulsion from the position of the rogue demonstrates the problematic relationship between the two chief strategies of being rogue: securing one's position as an outlaw and making politically significant arguments from such a position. Importantly, these strategies may conflict with one another, rendering the figure of the rogue by turns consequential and ineffective.

### *Parrhesia*

In the nearly two decades since the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., hopes for the Russian Federation's emergence as liberal democratic state have largely vanished. Contemporary Russia, now tremendously wealthy through exploitation of abundant oil reserves, is instead a nation with a beleaguered media and an anemic public sphere where the potential for meaningful democratic participation in governmental affairs has been largely occluded through authoritarianism and corruption. Independent media and NGOs are constantly aggressed and their equipment seized through periodic "*zachistka* (cleansing),"<sup>260</sup> a means to monitor and intimidate potential critics. In 2010, leaked cables from the U.S. State Department revealed what many critics have long alleged: a culture of corruption and a

---

<sup>260</sup> Nadezhda Azhgikhina, "The Struggle for Press Freedom in Russia: Reflections of a Russian Journalist," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59 (2007), 1245.

dictatorial government entirely subservient to former president Vladimir Putin.<sup>261</sup> As was stated in one cable, “The specter of Joseph Stalin continues to haunt post-Soviet Russia.”<sup>262</sup>

Regarding such a system of repression, it is unsurprising that dissenting voices are increasingly aggressed when they manage to break the surface of public discourse. Anna Politkovskaya, perhaps the most celebrated critic of the contemporary regime, was such a critic whose investigations of the Chechen War and governmental abuses reached national and international audiences.<sup>263</sup> Her murder in 2006, what many have called an “apparent contract killing,”<sup>264</sup> and the various less-reported aggressions against critics inside contemporary Russia force the grave consideration of a question Politkovskaya initially posed in an article in 2003, subsequently taken as the title of her posthumous book: “Is journalism worth dying for?”<sup>265</sup> In its formulation, Politkovskaya’s question suggests that journalists, “the servants of information,”<sup>266</sup> must accept that telling the truth against oppressive regimes *necessarily* puts them at risk. In this suggestion, I regard Politkovskaya’s question as positing journalism as a form of ethical *parrhesia*, understood by Foucault as “courageous veridiction... [addressed] to an Assembly or tyrant who does

---

<sup>261</sup> C.J. Chivers, “Below the Surface, U.S. Has a Dim View of Putin and Russia,” *New York Times*, December 1, 2010.

<sup>262</sup> “US Embassy Cables: Stalin’s Ghastly haunts Russia,” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/232245>.

<sup>263</sup> See Anna Politkovskaya, *Putin’s Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy*, trans. Arch Tait (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2007).

<sup>264</sup> Ellen Barry, “Suspect Killed in ’06 Killing of Journalist in Moscow,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2011.

<sup>265</sup> Anna Politkovskaya, *Is Journalism Worth Dying For?: Final Dispatches*, trans. (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2007), 100.

<sup>266</sup> Politkovskaya, *Is Journalism Worth Dying For?*, 100.

not want to hear it.”<sup>267</sup> In suggesting that the condition of speaking truth is necessarily a sacrificial act wherein the truth-teller confronts an unwilling authority, Politkovskaya situates the critique of power as an ethical exchange of life for that which “throws truth in the face of [one’s] interlocutor”<sup>268</sup> and “encourages citizens to take care of themselves.”<sup>269</sup> Regarding the contemporary geopolitical scene, this ethical mode of truth-telling may be seen to inform the discourse of dissent in numerous international contexts where critics, artists, and writers such as Liu Xiaobo, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Chen Guangchen, among others, have accepted the risk of punishment in order to offer a public critique of power. However, despite the tremendous courage necessary to answer “yes” to Politkovskaya’s question, I suggest that critics and rhetoricians must begin to interrogate her premise in asking whether another ethical model of criticism is possible. Can we as rhetoricians envision a form of ethical truth-telling in which the critic survives?

With respect to investigations of civic discourse in critical and rhetorical theory, the notion of the rhetor or critic as naked, exposed, and public, exhibiting an *ethos* before an audience has been a longstanding stipulation both in the contexts of argumentation and truth-telling. Aristotelian *ethos* presumes both a transparency and publicity of character such that one’s goodness lends strength to argumentation.<sup>270</sup> Likewise, the Ciceronian

---

<sup>267</sup> Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 87.

<sup>268</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Government of the Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 54.

<sup>269</sup> Foucault, *The Government of the Self and Others*, 90.

<sup>270</sup> Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and the Poetics*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: The Modern Library, 1954), 25.

conception of *ethos* is reliant upon “the character, the customs, the deeds, and the life”<sup>271</sup> of a rhetor, again presuming that such qualities are to be made available to an audience. Contemporary conceptualizations of speaking and public access are no less indebted to this necessity. As Jodi Dean argues, publicity remains a primary feature of contemporary democratic theory and “capitalist technoculture.”<sup>272</sup> As she argues, “many continue to think that rule by ‘the public’ is enhanced by practices that enable the production and dissemination of public opinion, practices generally implicated in technologies of surveillance and expectations of entertainment.”<sup>273</sup> As Dean, suggests, presumptions of the availability of information and identity continue to undergird contemporary understandings of democracy such that, for many, contemporary democratic governance necessitates an increasingly immanent public self.

Foucault’s conceptualization of ethical *parrhesia* accords with this general model, posing the task of the *parrhesiastic* critic as one who must be public and publicly sacrificed in their courageous veridiction. The relational goods of this act, the promotion of the care of the self, “watching over oneself... that each individual attends to himself [as] a rational being having a relation to truth founded on the very being of his soul,”<sup>274</sup> are not to be enjoyed by the *parrhesiastic* critic herself who must appear before authority, but rather those on whose behalf the critic acts. It is against this formulation, however, that I question whether the act of veridiction cannot be enacted without such unmasking of the critic,

---

<sup>271</sup> Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 171.

<sup>272</sup> Jodi Dean, “Publicity’s Secret,” *Political Theory*, 29 (2001), 624.

<sup>273</sup> Dean, “Publicity’s Secret,” 624.

<sup>274</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 86.

disseminating truth while preserving both the critic's potential and her own bare life. In the contemporary post-political scene, given the enormous risks to life, the dominance of the commons that define oppressive states, and the incalculable loss represented by the death and sacrifice of such figures as Politkovskaya, I question whether there could not be such a form of truth-telling in which the critic and her *parrhesiastic* project would be prolonged, allowing the critic herself to enjoy the care promoted to others. Though many might suggest such an aspiration to be ignorant of the extent to which regimes silence critical voices and the necessity of publicity as prerequisite to argumentation and veridiction, I argue that certain contemporary groups and theories of dissent offer a paradigm of such dissent within oppressive power structures, allowing the critic to remain free from intimidation, imprisonment, and death.

Specifically, I suggest that such model may be located in Voina [war], a contemporary Russian art collective that successfully avoided prosecution from 2007 to 2010 while engaging in numerous incendiary public acts in Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>275</sup> Occupying an interstitial space between artists, critics, and outlaws, the group is, by turns, judicious and absurd, incisive and incomprehensible. Constantly evading public and governmental efforts to understand its project and work, the group negotiates a position of indeterminacy and liminality, thereby able to operate within a safe space of rhetorical

---

<sup>275</sup> Voina's relationship to the Russian state and the legal system is a complex one. Though the group continues to exist and offer artistic output and critical dissent, their ability to act has been significantly restricted by government censure. Ostensibly, Voina's operation as a critical entity may be broken into three distinct periods of activity. The first period, from 2007 to 2010 (the period of principal interest to this chapter) was Voina's most prolific. During this period the group successfully evaded prosecution by avoiding classification as a serious threat to Russian governance. However, as the result of escalating activities, several of the group's leaders were briefly imprisoned in late 2010. During this period the group members vocally protested the treatment of its imprisoned founders. Since the release of the founders following a brief period of arrest, the group has been living underground in Russia, actively evading detection and arrest. Despite their now explicit identity as criminals, the group continues to undertake actions.

agency. Their adoptive stance, what I term “rogue positionality,” manages a strategic indeterminacy, engaging in forms of criticism that simultaneously attacked Russian governance while cultivating an *ethos* evading its grasp. Such a tactic, I suggest, is foremost one of survival, holding the ongoing project of dissent as an ethical end above operational or identifiable consequences of critique. Though Voina may be said to be an ultimately unsuccessful venture, failing to produce major social or political changes while also failing to prevent its own eventual prosecution, I argue that the group nonetheless offers an important means of reconceptualizing veridiction where the act of truth-telling is not instrumental but rather a hopeful and ethical mode of dissention.

With this analysis, I aim first to offer a reading of a contemporary group whose model of dissent offers a corrective to the disheartening status of truth-telling in oppressive states, and second, to present an orientation in contemporary dissent whose mode is ethical rather than political. Unlike larger social movements or instances of popular protest, both of which attempt to garner substantial public support for specific political ends, the work of Voina aims at establishing a place and a means of dissent in contexts of authority where it is endangered. Whereas mass movements generally view their engagement as a part of a political process, a means of asserting public will with regard to an issue, the work of Voina aims to achieve a state of *potential*. As such, their project is anterior to the political, attempting to defend the practice of participation on behalf of citizens in contexts where this potential is increasingly imperiled.

The first section of this paper will locate Voina’s stance within competing theories of critical positionality in the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Serres, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Etienne Balibar, and rhetoricians Kent Ono, John Sloop, and Ronald Greene.

This section will use such models of criticism to provide a framework for conceptualizing how rhetorical agents create “safe” spaces of critique beyond sites of authority by negotiating their relationship to sites of power. The second section will investigate Voina’s cultural production and discourse with regard to how the group cultivates “rogue positionality” as a means to evade power. In so doing, the section will elaborate Voina’s stance as a third way between obscurity and exposure. Such a stance allows for the production and dissemination of criticism in contexts of authoritarianism and control. The third section will analyze Voina’s reception and the controversies it precipitated in public and political circles. This final section of the article will offer a critical reading of the shortcomings of rogue positionality in investigating how Voina, through cultivating positional ambiguity, frequently suffered through the deployment of murky and imprecise criticism. By negotiating a critical stance less explicit than that of an open critic of the regime, the group often obfuscated its own critiques to the point of inconsequentiality. However, despite the position’s various failings, I will maintain that the group’s critical stance nevertheless presents an important and practicable model for contemporary resistance.

#### *Five Figures of the Rogue*

A significant line of inquiry in post-structuralist and Post-Marxist theory, notably following from Gramsci and Althusser, has sought to interrogate how subjects may resist or counter hegemonic power structures from marginal or “minor” positions (de Certeau 1980; Critchley 2008; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2005, 2009; Hebdige 1979; Holloway 2010; Marcuse 1971; Scott 1987, 1992, 2010; Vaneigem 2003). Within this literature, a further subset is concerned with the maintenance of critical positions either within or in relation to power,

not merely as sites of resistance or revolutionary potential but as subject positions that preserve equilibrium between the subject's critical potential and her longevity as a dissenting subject. In seeking these two ends, such approaches prioritize dissent over modes of resistance that aim to displace authority entirely, instead venerating the subject as a life intrinsically worthy of preservation.

This section will elaborate five “praxical” stances offered by critical and rhetorical theory, each representing a tactical methodology taken on by a subject as a means of negotiating her subject position. As I will discuss, each position save one offers a unique rhetorical stance poised to offer arguments against an authority while negotiating a position that evades power. Importantly, each stance emerges from an initial subject-relation to the state, either inclusion or exclusion, meaning that each subject, before she takes on the task of the critic, is either positioned *within* or Othered from a site of power. As these theories suggest, the nature of this initial relationship determines the horizon of a subject's critical potential such only certain methods of self-negotiation are available. For the insider, the positions of the rogue<sup>276</sup> and the exposed critic are practicable, while for the outsider, the positions of the minor,<sup>277</sup> the parasite,<sup>278</sup> the outlaw are possible.

The most crucial concept pertinent to these critical stances is the dichotomy of the insider and the outsider, the non-critical subject positions of individuals respectively belonging to and excluded from a community or site of power. Concerning the latter

---

<sup>276</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>277</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

<sup>278</sup> Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

position, rhetorical and critical theorists generally view the outsider as one whose position and identity is constructed, and indeed marginalized, by the communities they are excluded from. As Greene (2004) argues, the immigrant is an unstable form of citizenship, representative of “a threat to national culture, even when a culture claims to value immigrants.”<sup>279</sup> This position of the outsider, however, need not only be understood according to literal non-citizens but also marginal figures within a community who are excluded from its center along lines of race, class, gender, and so on. As Ono and Sloop elaborate, such “undesirable” members within society are habitually excluded from public life along with “true” outsiders.<sup>280</sup> The insider, oppositely, is the paragon of inclusivity, not by definition a militant figure but a member capable of exercising legal and political rights. As the member of a community or site of power, the insider is positioned within such a site as a being of good standing, as a community member, a worker, a family member, and so on. Unlike the outsider, she already holds a position of relative power and critical potential, occupying a position that she is capable of either *using* or *renouncing* for critical ends.

Regarding the figure of the outsider, three critical stances offered by contemporary theory provide models of how this figure may transform the raw state of exclusion into one that organizes such otherness as a position capable of critique. Outlaw discourse as understood by Kent Ono and John Sloop is employed by marginalized and excluded subjects either for internal communication or as a means of “disrupting sedimented ways

---

<sup>279</sup> Ronald Walter Greene, “The Concept of Global Citizenship in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire: A Challenge to Three Ideas of Rhetorical Mediation*,” *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement*, ed. Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 165.

<sup>279</sup> Greene, “The Concept of Global Citizenship,” 169.

<sup>280</sup> Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California’s Proposition 187*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 39.

of thinking”<sup>281</sup> belonging to the majority. Crucially, outsider discourse is not a discourse that allows an excluded subject to pass into the community as an insider. Rather, the excluded subject remains excluded and instead becomes a site of opposition, a militant threat against the community or site of power through her “disruptive” discourse practices.<sup>282</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari’s minor is the figure of the outsider who has adopted the discourse strategies of the insider as a means to exist among insiders as an equal. Unlike Ono and Sloop’s outlaw discourse, the figure of the minor passes into the community through using, reappropriating, and “deterritorializing”<sup>283</sup> the majority language, never becoming indecipherable from true insiders but taking on their language practices as to exist among them. Such a position is an antagonistic and insurgent one with regard to the dominant language, a popular re-appropriation by a subversive minority using language as it is not intended, as such affording the “minor” the capacity of invention by reordering the dominant language from a marginal position.<sup>284</sup>

A similar tactic is offered in Michel Serres’ concept of the parasite. As Serres argues, to become a parasite the subject must identify a way to subsist within a site of power, offering a new logic as a means to present to the “host” as unthematizable and unrecognizable. In this formulation, being a parasite allows the interloper to persist within

---

<sup>281</sup> John M. Sloop and Kent A. Ono, “Out-Law Discourses: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 30 (1997), 60.

<sup>282</sup> Sloop and Ono, “Out-Law Discourses,” 61.

<sup>283</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 18.

<sup>284</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 20.

the community by disguising her own antagonistic potential. The figure, according to Serres, “Invents something new... he builds a new logic. He crosses the exchange, makes it into a diagonal.”<sup>285</sup> Unlike the minor, who only employs the dominant discourse to participate in a community, the parasite crosses the line of differentiation as to become indistinguishable from insiders through obfuscating her differences and introducing a “novel”<sup>286</sup> logic that troubles attempts at her identification.

For the insider, the strategies available as a means of critical engagement are the use of belonging for its potential of access or its renunciation. The former, the employment or deployment of one’s given citizenship as a means of publicizing one’s critique from a position of inclusion, is precisely the critical stance Politkovskaya may be said to have adopted in her journalistic career. Unlike the other positions discussed here, this position is the only stance that does not attempt to obfuscate its position or erect a means of defense but rather exposes the critic to a public and a state. As a member of a polity, the citizen speaks using the *ethos* of membership as a means of disseminating a critique and as such enters into a civic space in which she presents herself before power. In disseminating a public critique from such a position, as did Politkovsyaka by publishing journalism in *Novaya Gazeta*, she emerged as an identifiable public critic of Russian corruption and authoritarianism. It is through such being public, identifying herself as a critic of the regime, which enabled her to be identified and, as others have alleged, deliberately silenced.

The second method available to the citizen is the act of renunciation, the disavowal of positions of prominence within a community in favor of marginality and ambiguity that,

---

<sup>285</sup> Serres, *The Parasite*, 35.

<sup>286</sup> Serres, *The Parasite*, 35.

according to Jacques Derrida, allows the insider or the citizen to pass into the position of the rogue. Such rogues are, as Derrida suggests, “brothers, citizens, compeers,”<sup>287</sup> who repudiate such communal belonging and are repudiated by the state or site of power. According to Derrida, this position is never a neutral one, but rather always a designation, “an appellation,”<sup>288</sup> that marks them as a site of danger and disruption. This is an important distinction as the rogue, according to Derrida, is not merely a praxis but an appellation, a threat as identified by the site of power.

Formally, Voina’s general stance most approaches Derrida’s rogue – the group is comprised of insiders, namely university students, who renounced public standing within the Russian state to take on a position of indeterminacy and critical potential. Employing the mantel of artistic production and critical forms that both obfuscated the acuteness of its political critiques while lending the group an affectation of the carnivalesque, Voina negotiates a space of critique largely unavailable to the structures of governance. However, Voina also employs numerous tactics borrowed from other stances such as the deterritorialization and subversion of space and the introduction of the unthematizable as a means to obscure its position. Additionally, unlike Derrida’s rogue, Voina survives through thwarting efforts at their appellation as rogues, attempting instead to present novelty in place of traditional modes and positions of dissent. As I will detail in the following section, the stance of Voina is a hybrid one combining numerous elements of other stances in offering a negotiated critique of power.

---

<sup>287</sup> Derrida, *Rogues*, 63.

<sup>288</sup> Derrida, *Rogues*, 64.

### *Voina's Actions*

On May Day, 2007, a group of artists filed into a McDonald's franchise near Moscow's Serpukhovskaya Square and threw live cats at the employees. The event, entitled "Mordovian Hour," was the first "action" of Voina, a newly formed subversive art collective established by Moscow State Philosophy students Pytor Verzilov, since expelled from the group for cooperating with the police,<sup>289</sup> and Oleg Vorotnikov.<sup>290</sup> In the three and a half years between this initial event and the group's arrest 2010, Voina claims responsibility for ten subsequent actions, notably a public orgy held in February at the Moscow's Timiryazev State Biological Museum entitled "Fuck for the heir – Medved's little Bear"<sup>291</sup> and "Dick captured by KGB,"<sup>292</sup> the paint bombing of a 210 foot phallus on a drawbridge facing the FSB headquarters, the current equivalent of the KGB. For this work, the group was given the Innovation Award by Russia's Ministry of Culture.<sup>293</sup> The group's penultimate act, a project entitled "Crazy Lenya is our President!",<sup>294</sup> in which members overturned several police cars in May of 2010, departed from the non-violent nature of previous actions by incorporating direct acts of aggression against Russian police. On November 15th, 2010, the group's secret flat was by members by Center "E" forces, an anti-

---

<sup>289</sup> "Police Stooze Pytor Verzilov is trying to put Voina in Prison for Life," Free Voina, accessed April 18th, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/post/2667450884>.

<sup>290</sup> Konstantin Akinsha, "Art in Russia Under Attack," ARTnews, October, 2009. [http://artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art\\_id=2757](http://artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2757).

<sup>291</sup> "Actions of Voina," Free Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/actions>.

<sup>292</sup> "Actions of Voina." Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/actions>.

<sup>293</sup> "Police stooze Pytor Verzilov is trying to put Voina in prison for life," Free Voina, Dec. 31 2010, <http://en.free-voina.org/post/2667450884>

<sup>294</sup> "Actions of Voina." "Actions of Voina," Free Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/actions>.

extremist division of the Russian police force.<sup>295</sup> Two of the group's leaders, Oleg Vorotnikov and Leonid Nikolaev, were apprehended in the raid and taken to St. Petersburg on charges of hooliganism.<sup>296</sup> Since their arrest, subsequent charges of "violence against a government representative, and insulting a government representative"<sup>297</sup> have been also filed. In June 2011, Vorotnikov and Nikolaev were released on bail and as of September 2011 Vorotnikov has gone into hiding.<sup>298</sup> Group member Taisa Osipova remains in prison.<sup>299</sup>

Given the clear association of these subversive actions with other historical forms of public agitation, it must be clarified that Voina is not an anomalous figure with regard to its forbearers, artistically or ideologically, but must, in part, be seen as existing within a lineage of numerous artistic and social movements from the Decembrists, whom the group cites as providing their revolutionary framework,<sup>300</sup> to Dadaism, Viennese and Moscow Actionism, radical protest movements of the 1960s, and their "idol,"<sup>301</sup> Russian poet and performance artist Dmitri Prigov (1940 – 2007). However, with regard to its contemporary actions, Voina must also be understood according to the contemporary

---

<sup>295</sup> "The Arrest," Free Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/arrest>.

<sup>296</sup> "Actions of Voina." Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/actions>.

<sup>297</sup> Tom Washington, "More Charges for Voina," *The Moscow News*, April 15, 2011, <http://themoscownews.com/society/20110415/188588201.html>.

<sup>298</sup> Maria Galpernia, "Voina Artists Are Wanted by Police, Again," ANIMALNewYork, June 30, 2011, <http://animalnewyork.com/2011/06/voina-artists-are-wanted-by-the-police-again/>.

<sup>299</sup> "OMCT releases urgent call to action on the case of Taisia Osipova," Free Voina, accessed September 5, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/post/8708068961>.

<sup>300</sup> "Goals and objectives," Free Voina, accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/goals>.

<sup>301</sup> "What is Voina?" Free Voina, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/about>.

geopolitical context in which it exists, specifically as a group that employs inventive methods and strategies to surprise current configurations of power. In this sense, Voina is representative of a regional form of activism popular throughout the former Soviet republics. In this form of criticism, the position of the critic is being negotiated as to prolong its potential. As *New York Times* writer Ellen Barry observes, Russia and other post-Soviet nations have become fertile ground for such innovative forms of protest that, unlike previous modes of social protest, fail to approximate fully fledged social movements' large popular followings but rather have the capacity to attract younger generations and evade punishment.<sup>302</sup> Clapping and cell phone alarm protests in Belarus, folk dancing flash mobs in Azerbaijan, and Voina itself, as Barry suggests, represent acts of civil disobedience in post-Soviet states that significantly do not attempt to offer solutions to contemporary political oppression but rather enact dissent that aims to perturb states and evade punishment.<sup>303</sup> It is in this respect of introducing a form and a potential of survival and negotiated ambiguity to others that Voina represents a vital model for contemporary dissent – a non-discursive, embodied form of argumentation played out in the political realm. In specific terms, Voina engaged in acts or used language that violated norms of public behavior, generally involving the use of offensive language, sexual imagery or activity, and aggression or violence. In the following analysis I will discuss three specific methods employed by the group: 1) avant-garde transformation of public spaces, 2) profanation of public spaces, and 3) profanation of the body.

---

<sup>302</sup> Ellen Barry, "Sounds of Post-Soviet Protest: Claps and Beeps," *New York Times*, July 14, 2011.

<sup>303</sup> Barry, "Sounds of Post-Soviet Protest," *New York Times*.

The first aspect of the group's strategy, demonstrating direct influence from Dadaist and avant-garde art movements, involved the repurposing or transformation of public space to question the normative logics that govern behavior in such sites. These acts were notable with regard to the group's greater oeuvre in that they did not attempt to profane public spaces but rather sought to reposition how these spaces were seen and interacted with by those passing through them and to politicize them, forcing the recognition of governing power structures. In a project entitled "Feast," the group amassed in a Moscow subway car, erected tables, and held a dinner, toasting late Russian avant-garde poet D.A. Prigov. The work's primary effect, in keeping with an avant-garde sensibility, rendered the space absurd, challenging observers to conceptualize its bizarre refashioning. A second and much more critically potent effect was the act's rendering of the public space, a mechanism of transit, into a private one. By transforming the scene of a subway car into one that resembled a private dining space, the group attempted to peel away the normative logics of the space that dictate norms of behavior and replace them with their own. Understood according to Serres' conceptualization of the relationship of parasite to host, the group refashioned the space according to its own uses, subverting the host from an internal position within. In occupying the subway, Voina transformed the space for its own idiosyncratic purposes, deterritorializing the space while disguising its own role as a site of criticism and activism. Moreover, because the logic offered by transforming the site of a train car into a feast was strictly speaking *illogical*, an absolute departure from the normative logics of the space, Voina demonstrated what Serres refers to as crossing the exchange on the diagonal; Voina did not attempt to destroy or stop the train, and as such interrupt its primary purpose of transporting bodies, but rather offered a repositioning of

the space that confounded the norms and power structures suggested by its function and design.

This action demonstrates an aspect critical to Voina's countering of the logics of spaces and situations – the diverting of the logics of spaces to force a new divergent situation to emerge from the former. In "Feast," the situation was interrupted by an eruptive element that forcibly co-opted the spaces' normal operation and power structure. The most prominent example of such disruption, however, occurred during the trial of Andrei V. Yerofeyev, a juror on the committee who awarded Voina the 2011 Culture Prize and who was on trial for a separate incident. During the proceedings, Voina interrupted the court to perform a punk song entitled "All Cops Are Bastards."<sup>304</sup> Despite that the event was almost immediately stopped and the members were arrested, it may be read as a parasitic event in so far as the eruptive interruption succeeded in temporarily denaturing the situation, momentarily refiguring the persons present as unwilling spectators of a punk show.

Though it may be unproductive or ultimately impossible to accurately evaluate the rhetorical "success" of these counter-logical, interruptive actions, least of all because the works are part of a larger the cumulative project of situating Voina and its acts as rogue, they may nonetheless be partially evaluated through the various reactions of "victims" or onlookers who, presented with an interruption that counters the logic of a situation in an entirely unanticipated way, do not know how to act. In a project entitled "Kiss Debris,"<sup>305</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup> Ellen Barry, "Radical Art Group Wins Russian Ministry Prize," *The New York Times*, April 8, 2011.

<sup>305</sup> Tom Washington, "Voina come back for kisses," *The Moscow News*, January 3, 2011, <http://themoscownews.com/local/20110301/188458300.html>.

in which female group members approached female police officers and attempted to kiss them, the intended victims presented a spectrum of responses. Though some officers interpreted the act as aggressive and responded in kind, some smiled embarrassedly, others defensively ducked out of the way, and still others simply tried to ignore the attention altogether.<sup>306</sup> Similarly, in “Feast,” some train commuters who suddenly found themselves seated at a dinner table attempted to extricate themselves as if they were suddenly intruding upon a private event, some observed from a safe distance, and others pretended to ignore the event entirely.<sup>307</sup> The varied reactions to these spectacles present individuals, faced with a logical reorganization of a situation, at a loss with regard to how to respond. In forcing the individual to confront and negotiate an obscene or surreal situation, the group is able to impose an original logic upon a space or situation.

The second aspect of Voina’s project concerns the profanation of the body, baring the bodies of group members or engaging them in degrading acts in public spaces as a means to achieve three ends: 1) the resistance to public norms that demand the body be clothed, clean, and observant of codes of cultural conduct, 2) the assertion of rogue positionality by flaunting these codes, and 3) dramatization the group’s relationship to hegemonic power structures. Georges Bataille defines profanation as the “use of the sacred for profane purposes.”<sup>308</sup> Regarding this definition, Voina’s “profane” actions concerned the profanation of spaces and objects that were not sacred in the literal sense, but rather ones

---

<sup>306</sup> *The Art of Kissing a Cop* [video], accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpNhl8BLVP0>.

<sup>307</sup> *Pir* [video]. (2008). accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDzjD6wBz8M>.

<sup>308</sup> Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 122.

that were protected or governed by the normative logics of authoritarian powers. Specifically, these physical sites of governance and the subjects of such governance are the sacred sites that the group rendered profane either through marking them or, as in the case of their own bodies, engaging them in actions that contradicted the laws of behavior governing them. Arguably the group's most provocative statement utilizing this trope involved a staged orgy at Moscow's Timiryazev State Biological Museum. In "Fuck for the Heir Puppy Bear,"<sup>309</sup> the group assembled outside the museum, entered, and held a brief orgy as museum goers looked on. As several observers have noted, perhaps the most provocative aspect of the piece was the presence of a pregnant woman engaging in sexual acts with the group, flaunting norms of motherhood and standard sexual mores with her participation. An additional action, "How to Snatch a Chicken: A Tale of How One Cunt fed the Whole of the Group Voina," involved the theft of a chicken from a supermarket concealed in a member's vagina. The primary method of these acts operated analogously to that of Voina's avant-garde actions; in presenting bodies engaged in sexual activity in a biological museum, or presenting an "offensive" method of theft, the group countered the logic of the situation by positioning bodies in ways that were shockingly intimate, presenting bodies in such ways as to offend. Secondly, by exposing the body and engaging it in a sexual act, and as such transgressing perhaps the gravest taboo with regard to public spaces, the group attempted to secure a transgressive and profane public position. In provoking disbelief as to why one would choose to engage in such an act, Voina denied the observer's capacity to understand or contextualize the group according to any available

---

<sup>309</sup> "Actions of Voina," I FUCK THE PUPPY BEAR / Я ЕБУ МЕДВЕЖОЖКА [video]. 2008. Accessed April 20, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUbRqswNRSA>.

political or artistic rubric. With more force than the use of profanity in the names of projects, the group's sexual practices functioned to divorce it from the realm of normalcy and the space of the thematizable — a rigorous rejection of the civic and the status quo of political dissent.

Thirdly, and most significantly, by rendering their bodies naked and placing them in sexual or humiliating positions offers a complex assertion regarding the vulnerability of the group before power. This use of nudity as a politics, as an instrument, and as the vocalization of agency, may be profitably analyzed through the work of Giorgio Agamben. As Agamben argues in a study on the relation of nudity to grace,<sup>310</sup> nudity is always the event of nudity as opposed to a permanent state.<sup>311</sup> With this suggestion, Agamben argues that in its presentation, nudity, because of the social presumption of nudity's hiding, is always a pronounced negativity (the event of the absence of clothes). Nudity, as Agamben argues, is only experienced as "a denudation and a baring."<sup>312</sup> In the application to rhetorical inquiry, nudity as such should be regarded in the positive sense, as a statement and a species of rhetoric. In the case of Voina and its two most provocative actions, the nudity of the group carries with it the force of argument. Agamben's observation helps guide a rhetorical understanding that the nakedness as presented by Voina is meant to be read. However, the content of such an argument contains complex assertions. In one respect, the members of the group seem to dramatize their own powerlessness and vulnerability with regard to contexts of power. In that they are bared before the audience,

---

<sup>310</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. Davik Kishik and Stefan Petadella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>311</sup> Agamben, *Nudities*, 65.

<sup>312</sup> Agamben, *Nudities*, 65.

engaging in various humiliating sexual acts, and filmed and photographed in doing so, the group dramatizes its own vulnerability. In their exposure, to the gaze of the museum goers, the various onlookers, and to the eye of the camera, the members of Voina are entirely seen, faces and bodies exposed. In their nakedness, the members of the group are entirely *available*, opened up to viewership and ridicule. In this respect, the group could be said to dramatize their nakedness and vulnerability before the law, their capacity to be punished and killed, what Giorgio Agamben has called bare life, “a naked life that is sacred, impure, and thus killable.”<sup>313</sup> At the same moment as the nudity signifies vulnerability, both before the immediate audience and as a symbolic nakedness before the law, the imminently erotic aspect of nudity that marks both aforementioned actions is also in attendance. The group members, as is made clear by their prevocational sexual acts, also attempt to scandalize their action through sexualizing their nudity. Here, Agamben’s critique is also helpful. As Agamben argues, nudity functions as an invitation to its own viewing, and critically, lacks a definite teleology: “nudity is, literally, infinite: it never stops occurring... The gaze avidly continues to search for nudity, even when the smallest piece of clothing has been removed...”<sup>314</sup> In this sense, the nudity of Voina functions as an invitation. The nudity is not merely a part of the spectacle, though it certainly forms a critical aspect of its argumentative force, but it is also a means of acquiring a view. As the nudity functions as an invitation to the viewer to look and to continue looking towards an infinite process, a process whose spectatorship, as Agamben suggests, has no end, the nudity of the groups project attempts to arrest its views the spectacle. Regarding both rather paradoxical

---

<sup>313</sup> Agamben, *Nudities*, 64.

<sup>314</sup> Agamben, *Nudities*, 64 – 65.

aspects of the group's nudity, the bearing of bodies as a demonstration of powerlessness and the demonstration of nudity and sexuality to be arresting to viewers, Voina is able to construct an and deliver their argument in the same gesture

In its third and most well-known method of dissent, the group utilized various forms of profanation or transformation of urban spaces, decontextualizing, public spaces as sites of power and rendering the province of democratic ownership and potential. In his introduction to *Geographies of Resistance* (1997), Steve Pyle argues "resistance seems to occupy, deploy, and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation."<sup>315</sup> It is in such a manner through strategies of occupation and profanation that Voina succeeds in cultivating unique spatialities, heterotopias where resistant action may briefly flourish. Voina's most controversial work in this regard, "Dick Captured by the KGB," functioned accordingly, using a crudely drawn phallus on Liteiny Bridge facing the headquarters of the FSB. Naturally, this choice of subjects is by no means unique, however, precisely because the trope of the phallus is the province of bathroom and schoolyard pranks, its deployment on a highly visible urban structure, not only visible to the FSB but also to the thousands of city dwellers to whom the site is exposed, functioned to lay a complex claim to the space through profanation. If, as de Certeau argues, the city space may be read as textual, comprised of optical artifacts but is nevertheless *unseen* as such by city dwellers,<sup>316</sup> this inscription is an act of rendering-visible the city-as-text, forcing the viewer to regard the space as a textual and indeed rhetorical one asserting various powers and prohibitions. Moreover, apart from merely rendering visible, the act

---

<sup>315</sup> Steve Pyle, "Introduction: opposition, political identities and spaces of resistance" in *Geographies of Resistance*, eds. Steve Pyle and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

<sup>316</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 92-3.

functions as a (re)writing of the textual city, asserting that this writing of the city is not merely the province of civic authority but rather one belonging to and inscribable by agents.

This strategy, notably, has proliferated beyond the confines of urban Russia and the state itself as the group's detention and general project have resonated globally. As of 2012, Voina scribe Aleksii-Pluter Sarno has been conducting international actions in support of the group, hanging and photographing a banner printed with the words "Voina Wanted" and depicting Vorotnikov's grizzled face behind iron bars in various international urban locations: Fukushima, Zurich, and Spain, among others.<sup>317</sup> Like the action on Litiény bridge, the efforts to inscribe Voina in such international spaces is similar to efforts to re-write city space as a mode of agentive action and transformation, but with the efforts to promote the cause and the action of a transnational scale, the group is identifiably working towards the generalizability of their project to general international situations of dissent and control. Moreover, the proliferation of these images into international spaces asserts, much like the deterritorialization of the Moscow train car, a unique spatiality. In presenting this image on a garbage heap near the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant or a bridge in central Zurich, the tactic of claiming or appropriating an urban structure for argumentation is the same, but as the city space is a global one, not the Russian civic territory under the authority of the regime, the argument becomes iterable. The "Voina Wanted" poster in its ubiquity across several nations can seek to affirm a general, if not somewhat vague, aspiration for emancipation. In losing its particular contextual significance, the work instead functions as a call for the rights of dissidents in a number of diverse contexts.

---

<sup>317</sup> "Voina points to the art of dissent? Free Voina, accessed June 4, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org> and "Voina Wanted in Zurich" Free Voina, accessed June 4, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org>.

Moreover, as the image serves as an ironic call for Voina's arrest, it simultaneously communicates that the group is free. In doing so, the poster is an example of the group's eventual rhetoric, demonstrating Voina's capacity to occupy a space of criticism while remaining at large. In reaffirming the group's continued evasion of the law by presenting the poster in its variety of locations, the group continually reminds urban viewers that the project of criticism in which the critic evades punishment is indeed practicable.

With regard to Voina's three strategies, the strongest aspect of their project is their ability to construct a unique and complex position of antagonism. In structuring themselves as set in relation to authority while simultaneously dramatizing the power of the state over their rights and bodies, the group's members are successful in cultivating a complex position for themselves as rogue agents. In designing and implementing iconic performances that have the capacity to attract a general global audience, the group has succeeded in affirming a rebellious ethic that functions both in a particular nationalist context and in a general global context. The group's unique combination of the sexual or crass with absurdist elements seems uniquely calibrated to resonate with a global viewership, functioning both as entertainment and critique. Moreover, through its use of physical affronts and/or sexual provocation, the group paints with a broad brush that can be understood by essentially any viewer. As Vorotnikov stated in an interview regarding the group's strategy, "One has to fuck them in a way people can grasp."<sup>318</sup>

However, what remains vague with regard to this position, and what numerous critics have remarked upon, is the ambiguous nature of the political critique that this

---

<sup>318</sup> "Vor: 'to fuck them in a way people can grasp, that is our wont [sic]'" *Free Voina* accessed May 4, 2012 <http://en.free-voina.org/>.

position enables. Though various sectors and figures of the Russian government have been targeted by the group, other actions, notably “Feast,” critique abstract structures of power that govern public spaces. Accordingly, it is often unclear whether Voina aims to be a voice mounting directed critiques or an ethical critic aiming to show the potential of free agency in spaces governed by power. This ambiguity has been both useful and injurious to the group, having helped cultivate Voina’s status as an ungraspable and evasive critic of the political regime while simultaneously limiting the group’s capacity to offer a cogent or consistent critique. This paradox may be said to be the rogue’s greatest limitation regarding its ability to be politically consequential — though the rogue may be successful in constructing its own position, its capacity to be understood as a site of critical potential is often lost. Too easily seen as purely provocative and isolated from context, Voina’s greater ethical project is habitually obscured and narrowly circumscribed within the spectacular scenes and images it has chosen to create.

In the following section, I will analyze the rogue’s public reception and discuss how it has functioned as an integral part of its operation. As I will argue, the ways in which Voina is taken up by the public manifest the problematic contradictions between the rogue’s ability to construct an oppositional identity and to use that position to disseminate her critiques.

### *Voina’s Publics*

The rogue subject’s reception by audiences and authorities is the critical determinant of the success or failure of her ability to negotiate a position beyond the reach of authority while remaining a substantive critic. As I have argued, Voina attempted to remain ambiguous and unidentifiable with respect to its level of threat, its purpose, and its

own designation through a strategy of self-obfuscation. Its employment of oddity and careful negotiation of identity enabled the group to persist in a political environment highly antagonistic to criticism. However, for Voina, the tension between substantial criticism and incomprehensible action is one that proved overwhelmingly difficult to manage. In obfuscating its critical project, Voina fell far short of the incisiveness achieved by such outspoken critics of the regime as Politkovskaya. In failing to offer direct and unambiguous criticism, the group alienated many, marginalized itself far more often than it was able to make coherent and successful critical statements, and, perhaps most damningly, opened itself to erroneous interpretations. As Moscow based art critic David Riff notes in a blog post on *chtodelat news* on January 6, 2011, Voina's ambiguity allowed its work to be supported by right-wing anti-police factions within Russia whose political stance could have been further from Voina's own. From these and other misunderstandings or co-optations of the group's vague anti-authoritarian stance, it is evident that Voina's evasion came at the cost of blunting the potential power of its critiques. However, despite these political failings, Voina may nonetheless be recuperated for its ethical capacities, namely in its presentation a mode of critical engagement in which the life of the critic is preserved.

In this section I will examine two public controversies concerning the work of Voina and argue that an ethical dimension resonates within both demonstrating Voina's promotion of care-of-the-self. The first controversy stems from the 2011 Innovation award by Russia's Ministry of Culture given to the group for "Dick Captured by the KGB" as Voina's leaders were on trial for hooliganism. This controversy brings to the fore significant questions concerning the role of art in politics and the extent to which art is an acceptable venue for "dangerous" criticism. The second controversy concerns the rhetorical capacity

from the position of the political prisoner rather than the rogue critic. As many defenders of Voina have alleged, prosecuting members of a dissident group as criminals is a violation of human rights and cannot be justified. However, as I will argue, placing Voina on trial and thereby removing it from the position of the rogue significantly transformed the group's rhetorical project from one of evasive unthematizability to an entirely familiar realm of rights based criticism.

Concerning the first debate, the granting of the Innovation award has illuminated a tension between Russia's cultural and governmental spheres. In describing the piece, members of the award committee referred to "Dick Captured by the KGB" as "very professional with respect to the strategy and tactic [sic] of radical interventions,"<sup>319</sup> and stated, "This intervention will become part of the history of modern art in Russia."<sup>320</sup> Notably, The Culture Ministry, the overseeing body granting the award, voiced certain reservations concerning the "hooliganish, provocative"<sup>321</sup> nature of the piece, but stated that it ultimately chose to acquiesce to the popular support of Voina in allowing the award to be granted.<sup>322</sup> From the statements of the award committee, it is evident that the committee regarded the work as foremost a political statement and only secondly as valuable for its artistic contribution.

---

<sup>319</sup> "VOINA WINS RUSSIAN ART PRIZE" *Art Forum*, April 11th, 2011, <http://artforum.com/news/mode=international&week=201115>.

<sup>320</sup> "VOINA WINS RUSSIAN ART PRIZE," *Art Forum*.

<sup>321</sup> Sergey Chernov, "Voina: Controversial Art," *The St. Petersburg Times*, April 13, 2011, <http://news.windowstorussia.com/controversial-art.html>.

<sup>322</sup> Chernov, "Voina: Controversial Art," *The St. Petersburg Times*.

Against the group's judgment, various governmental bodies quietly denounced the award in an apparent attempt to undercut the group's political potential. The Public Chamber called the award, a "slap in the face of common sense and those citizens who consider the image on the Liteiny Bridge in St. Petersburg to be banal hooliganism"<sup>323</sup> and calling the decision to give the award "inappropriate and unprofessional."<sup>324</sup> As seen from these comments, the reactionary argument from the Russian government attempts to denigrate the work of Voina as a stunt rather than a legitimate form of political or aesthetic work. Notably, the response is a measured one, merely refusing to take the group seriously and characterizing those who value their work as "unprofessional," rather than regarding the act as in any way legitimate. In short, the denunciation failed to regard the group as an ungraspable critic and instead characterized Voina as a group of low-level hooligans. In this failure, the group was denied the force it attempted to achieve through its negotiated position, demonstrating that while the bridge action succeeded in falling just short of labeling the group as dangerous critics, the group instead suffered the opposite consequence of being largely ignored. As such, the government reaction demonstrates both the inherent difficulty of negotiating a position that evades such processes as dismissal and co-optation and the ease with which the position of the rogue critic may be territorialized by others despite deliberate attempts on to remain ambiguous. Nonetheless, the novelty of the act, the granting of the award, and the proliferation of images on the Internet nonetheless suggests that the action itself enjoyed a degree of success in demonstrating a mode of acting against the government that could be widely consumed,

---

<sup>323</sup> Chernov, "Voina: Controversial Art," *The St. Petersburg Times*.

<sup>324</sup> Chernov, "Voina: Controversial Art," *The St. Petersburg Times*.

understood, and indeed allowed to exist unpunished. Though the government refused to inaugurate the act critically, thereby staving off a familiar standoff between government censorship and artistic expression, the act was able to achieve modest critical recognition in that it was seen and publicized by the Innovation Committee as a successful form of artistic dissent.

The second controversy surrounding Voina concerns the legality of its prosecution and its rhetorical capacity after imprisonment. In its defense, Voina and its supporters have questioned the government's reaction and alleged human rights violations towards the group, reactions that critics have seen as an attempt to silence both Voina and general dissidence Russia. Oppositely, the Russian government and various critics of Voina consider the group to be guilty of illegal action. *Washington Post* writer Kriston Capps takes the latter position, suggesting that Voina's imprisonment is legal and legitimate based on the illegality and provocational nature of their actions. Arguing that the group "weaponizes" art as a means to "terrorize the state," Capps argues that regardless of their political or artistic intent, the group should be punished for its numerous "patently illegal" acts.<sup>325</sup> Additionally, she suggests that the only reason the debate concerning the extra legality of Voina's imprisonment is being waged can be attributed to Voina's vogue with certain members of the art scene, notably graffiti artist Banksy.<sup>326</sup> As such, Capps regards the controversy over Voina to only exist to thanks to the group's counter-cultural celebrity and to be ultimately insubstantial.

---

<sup>325</sup> Kriston Capps, "Russian art group Voina uses often-illegal means to spread anti-state message," *The Washington Post*, April 2, 2011.

<sup>326</sup> Capps, "Russian art group Voina uses often-illegal means to spread anti-state message," *The Washington Post*.

Arguments by defenders of Voina accuse the authoritative and violent measures taken by Russian authorities to be violations of human rights. In an editorial in defense of the group, Yana Sarna, Voina's photographer and editor, frames Voina's treatment as a draconian crackdown on legitimate political activism and an unambiguous attempt on behalf of the Russian government to silence dissidents. Her criticisms cite the government's inhumane treatment of arrested members, specifically physical abuse and the taking of transit documents.<sup>327</sup> Sarna argues that these actions on the part of the government must be protested on the grounds of human rights violations: "[Voina] are the only ones in the Russian art community who are making socio-political art that aims to struggle for the rights and freedoms of the people in their country."<sup>328</sup> Similarly, the website FreeVoina.com, a website maintained by members and supporters of the group as a means of keeping the public informed about the group's status, critiques the excessive and inhumane violence of the group's arrest. The account mentions the "plastic bags placed over their heads," a threat from an officer that the group was being taken to "the woods," and the seizing of ID cards from members thereby denying them the right to transit and health care.<sup>329</sup>

I argue that the detention of Voina and the arguments surrounding Vorotnikov and Nikolaev's treatment mark a substantial shift in the rhetorical and artistic potential of the group. Under arrest, the group ceased to be mercurial artistic rebels and suddenly returned to a recognizable subject position: the silenced dissident artist analogous to

---

<sup>327</sup> Yana Sarna, "Russia's Political Artists Deserve Support," ARTINFO, December 13, 2010, <http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/36576/russias-political-artists-deserve-support/>.

<sup>328</sup> Yana Sarna, "Russia's Political Artists Deserve Support," ARTINFO.

<sup>329</sup> "The arrest," Free Voina, accessed May 14, 2011, <http://en.free-voina.org/arrest>.

Politkovskaya. As Moscow based art critic David Riff argues in his *chtodelat news* blog post on January 6, 2011, this change ended meaningful arguments about the group's work and returned them to the well trod territory of victimization and human rights: "Art can only be 'political' when it is criticized, attacked and/or endorsed by an art community and a broader audience, but it can only be art when the audience can appreciate, discuss, and criticize it without being held to a question like 'do you want them to go to jail or not?'" As Riff notes, the only meaningful response to Voina's imprisonment, as the arguments already cited in this debate demonstrate, concerns the ethical responses to group's treatment and nothing further. In prison, Voina become synonymous with figures such as Liu Xiaobo and Ossip Mandelstam, symbols of repressive state systems who were no longer agents capable of countering its logics themselves. In so far as its status and former ability to evade detention while staging numerous actions, what Riff refers to as the exploiting of "vacuums" within the state regime, its fall from this position accords to Serres' concept of the parasite's inevitable expulsion from a "host," the inevitable closing of the space in logic that the parasite initially opened. Paradoxically, in ceasing to inhabit their complex rogue position, the political critique suggested by Voina's imprisonment and actively made by its supporters finally becomes clear, if only to be made in a familiar way, as art and dissent on trial. The exchange of a singular position of critique for a clear method and object of critique demonstrates the fall of the rogue position whereby the critic becomes exposed to the authority, precisely the eventuality that the rogue position attempts to protect. As Riff suggests, the "political" potential of the art group is abrogated when it ceased to be a free open critic of the regime and rather became mere symbol of Russian authoritarianism.

These two controversies, exhibiting and in part compelling Voina's failure to fully occupy a rogue position, demonstrate the stance of the rogue critic to be one intensely difficult and often impossible to occupy, or to occupy indefinitely. In moving from an unthematizable figure to one that represented various definite stances for a variety of communities (bad artists, pranksters, criminals), Voina slowly became public by virtue of its inability to indefinitely hold a space of safety, novelty, and indeterminacy open. Its movement from non-violent or passive action to actions violently aggressing sites of state power represented an unfortunate choice on behalf of the group, easily allowing it to move into a territory of direct and bare aggression against the state. Nevertheless, despite Voina's unambiguous failure on these fronts, what remains following their arrest is a model, largely unrealized, of a group attempting to promote dissent as a worthy and necessary practice. In adopting the odd methods it chose, Voina approached Politkovskaya's question, "Is journalism worth dying for?" by way of invention. The group, rather than answering the question, promoted a mode of criticism that dared to question Politkovskaya's generally accepted premise and as such presented to others a method of criticism that promoted survival over sacrifice. As such, the group attempted the ethical task of sharing the potential of criticism with others, attempting to inaugurate the project of dissent as a good.

### *Conclusion*

As I have attempted to demonstrate, Voina's critical project operated through a reinvention of ethical *parrhesia*, reserving the life of the critic and the project of criticism as a means to secure a place for dissent in repressive regimes. As practiced by Voina, the project is a hopeful one, looking towards the potential of criticism to be a meaningful practice in the context of the fragmented post-liberal geo-political scene. However, as

other individuals and groups have recently shown, the tactics of rogue positionality are capable of being utilized for vastly dissimilar political projects.

As the rogue filmmaker and provocateur James O’Keefe has demonstrated through his campaign against liberal institutions, most notably his undercover exposé of the community-based association ACORN, rogue positionality is as easily employed to promote a conservative ideology as it is for a liberal one. Both Voina and O’Keefe have utilized the tactic of rogue positionality to respond to a system of governance they view as corrupt and authoritarian, actively inhibiting the dissemination of opinion and action. Both have attempted to disseminate what they regard to be the raw truth of such restrictive regimes, Voina through their prevocational street theater and O’Keefe through the undercover “stings” of his Project Veritas. O’Keefe, like Voina, attempts to safeguard and obfuscate his position, having obtained tax-exempt status for Project Veritas via its registration as a site of “nonpartisan” journalism.<sup>330</sup> As such, the only formal difference between the two lies in their ideological divide; Voina seeks to achieve a space where critics may act within the context of Russia’s neo-Stalinist and hyper-capitalist culture of control while O’Keefe targets liberal sentiment in the social institutions and entitlement programs of the United States.

Accordingly, the tactic of rogue positionality, though it is fundamentally a means of championing the agentic capacities of individuals in oppressive power structures, may also function on behalf of structures of control, policing institutions involved in promoting the agency of marginal individuals. Used in this way, the method, though involved in an act of truth-telling, repudiates Foucault’s ethical *parrhesia* by foreclosing the project of

---

<sup>330</sup> Zev Chafets, “Stinger: James O’Keefe’s Greatest Hits” *New York Times*, July 27, 2011.

individual agency and dissent on behalf of individual subjects and instead working to achieve a moral and social status quo managed by governmental and economic authorities. The success of the tactic in both capacities, through Voina's gaining of recognition as a critic and O'Keefe's success in bringing down ACORN and motivating other like-minded activists,<sup>331</sup> I argue, should be recognized as a symptom of the disappearance of the civic in the global world. I argue that this extra-political positioning of Voina and O'Keefe figures the substantial breakdown of the concepts of citizenship and citizen politics cited by contemporary critics of globalization.<sup>332</sup> Their activism suggests a complex and as yet under-theorized dimension of activism enacted by agents for whom the civic space is unavailable and no longer meaningful. While Voina's project approaches the dilemma hopefully, regarding its own dissent as a means to reinvigorate dissent on behalf of marginalized subjects, O'Keefe and others employ the tactics of the rogue to work against this potential. Consequently, Voina and O'Keefe represent emerging global modes of dissent enacted in a post-national framework that, though they offer the potential of relational goods on behalf of dissenting subjects, at the same time point to a profound loss both to rhetoric and to the ideal of civic negotiation.

In this chapter, I have presented the reinvention of the concept of *parrhesia*, a means of adopting a critical position against a site of power and prolonging that position both as a means to extend the critical project and as an undergirding of the project of dissent. Such a practice, I have argued, is enacted through the adoption of the figure of the rogue, a critical

---

<sup>331</sup> Zev Chafets, "Stinger: James O'Keefe's Greatest Hits" July 27, 2011.

<sup>332</sup> See Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

stance of infiltration and deterritorialization, and a refiguring of citizenship as a means to attain rhetorical agency in the context of authoritative sites of power and a fragmented public sphere. The rogue, as I have argued, is a figure who manages a complex contradictory relation to the state and, given this position, is poised to offer rhetorical arguments that cannot be deflected as “rent seeking” or the enacting of democratic rights but that must be taken as direct and eruptive opposition to an authority. Through actively establishing herself as a “bad citizen,” the rogue renounces her right to rights and willingly takes on a position akin to Agamben’s construction of bare life. As I have also suggested, this is a position that inherently exposes the rogue to danger, and according to Serres, eventual expulsion. By way of exchange, the position offers the temporary capacity to offer critiques that both evade and refigure the notion of political action and civic participation. It is in this sense that Voina’s adoptive form of *parrhesia* and its actions as a rogue agent demonstrate the group to be employing a form of evental rhetoric in demonstrating that the project of criticism and the survival of the outspoken critic are not irreconcilable projects. On the contrary, Voina’s prolonged life as an outspoken and invulnerable critic of Russian policy through using the *ethos* of the avant-garde artist demonstrates a unique mode of action, a synthesis of tactics calibrated for contemporary conditions.

At the same time, I have argued that the necessity of such a tool demonstrates a loss to democratic virtue, namely that evental rhetoric is more available than the tools of democratic participation. By renouncing the civic process as unviable and instead entering into and refiguring spaces of authority specifically as a means of critiquing the floating signifiers of “democracy” and “*civitas*,” the rogue, as I have attempted to define it, understands itself as an figure of post-liberal agency, asserting the impossibility of

meaningful civic action and attempting to locate in the contemporary intransigencies of power methods for so called “global citizens” to enact agency in contexts where no methods for such enactment are immediately available. As with anonymity, being rogue is effectively a renunciation of the potential of acting according to civic codes, however, as I will argue in the next chapter, it does not assert that such codes are inherently undesirable or ultimately irrecoverable.

The next and final chapter of this dissertation will more deeply examine evental rhetoric’s relationship to the rupture or break with normative logics through an investigation of WikiLeaks. Through an analysis of the public action, rhetorical self-construction, and public reception of the organization WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, I will demonstrate how evental rhetoric is both a hermeneutic and a generative practice, plumbing the “voids” of a discourse or normative logic, identifying the means with which to profoundly transform that logic, and implementing them. As I will argue, WikiLeaks’ project of making public previously classified documents may be understood through Badiou’s concept of the event. In presenting information that not only changes the conditions of a discourse situation but offers the process of revelation a profoundly useful mode of dissent, the project of WikiLeaks may be understood in broad terms as aspiring towards evental changes in governance.

In revealing information that has been actively concealed from the public, I will regard WikiLeaks’ dissemination of classified information as an ethical act, actively seeking a democratic and inclusive speech situation for the maximization of citizenship and decision-making procedures, and modeling a way of speaking that it deems as ethical and constitutive of functioning democracy. Unlike the first two aspects of the Voina’s tactics,

anonymity and the rogue, that figure democratic inclusion as unachievable and instead attempt to locate methods in its absence, *parrhesia* and the seeking of discourse ethics are *hopeful* tactics, treating civic and democratic structures as not beyond recuperation. Taken together, the three elements of the anarchist rhetorical stance are indeed not anarchic in the sense that they attempt to negate the structures of governance, but as I suggest, operate as an X-mark, a means of negotiation and change in the context of a system in which the means of action are increasingly limited.

#### Chapter 4: Theorizing the Rupture: WikiLeaks as Rhetorical Event

In previous chapters, this dissertation detailed the projects of individual agents reaching toward radically inventive means to navigate impasses in the global rhetorical scene – strategies that I grouped under the term “evental rhetoric.” Specifically, I detailed a strategy termed “rhetorical anonymity,” used as a means to renegotiate the necessity of presence and identity in rhetorical interaction and the strategy of “rogue positionality,” employed as a means of obfuscating the position of a critic as a means to evade cooptation, identification, and punishment. Both strategies, I argued, present to the global scene as radically “novel” in that they employ impracticable, unthematizable, and fundamentally transgressive logics with regard to formally accepted conditions of rhetorical interaction and dissent. I defined the novelty introduced by my case subjects on the specific grounds that each strategy embodied a paradox with regard to the status quo of rhetorical interaction, employed forms of *absent presence* and *non-critical critique*, and took up modes of voice and interaction thought to be impracticable by the standards and definitions of rhetoric as a discipline. The dissertation’s elaboration of these modes suggested that these strategies, though they rebuked norms of rhetorical access and implicitly called for reconsideration of the norms of rhetorical interaction that they themselves enacted, nonetheless functioned as a species of rhetoric. As I suggested, they functioned rhetorically through tactical disruption of patterns of exclusion, surprising dominant forms of discourse, advocating for an interactional ethics based on the primacy of the individual voice to the project of democracy, and through their intentional acquisition of spaces within colonized sites of global power where rhetoric, at least temporarily, could function as liberated.

What this dissertation has not yet theorized with regard to the rhetoricality of these modes is the apparent paradox of how novelties such as these may be identified and employed rhetorically given that their identification, adoption, and function (as disruptive and eruptive) seem to operate in rejection of the accepted norms of rhetorical interaction. Specifically, this dissertation has identified how eruptive logics may be successful when employed in the context of dissent and consequently why such logics may be desirable when a rhetor seeks to disrupt and upend public spaces managed by authority but it has yet to be established precisely why these logics are disruptive, how they initially emerge, and whether their application may indeed be considered rhetorical. Regarding this problem, numerous complex questions begin to emerge when a rhetorical lens is applied to moments of rupture. Given that their operation is not a rhetorical engagement with an audience, as understood by contemporary rhetorical theory that regards rhetoric as an engagement between a rhetor and an audience within a particular rhetorical situation, but rather a reorganization of a situation itself, a “surprise,”<sup>333</sup> it remains a question whether novelty or rupture may be thought of as a tool to be identified and employed by rhetors? Can rhetorical language allow us to conceive of how one goes about identifying and deploying a rupture? Given that a rupture defies the norms of rhetorical production and reception, can a rhetor be said to be rhetorically responsible for a rupture she precipitates?

This chapter will attempt to identify answers to these problems using the most recent and observable instance of a political rupture, namely the organization WikiLeaks. Using the organization’s identification of novel methods of acquiring and distributing

---

<sup>333</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 165.

sensitive and classified materials to negotiate political intransigence, thus forcing a rupture in the global public by introducing a heretofore unrealized model of political critique, I will argue that the organization's actions may indeed be understood as rhetorical after a recasting of the event in rhetorical terms. As I will argue, the two central facts of the event, its status as a novel rupture that transforms the logic of a situation or world and its capacity to inaugurate subjects, are processes that may be understood to be *within* the purview of rhetoric. Regarding the novelty of the rupture itself, or the naming of the void in Badiou's terms, though rhetoric does not operate on the level of the transcendental, scholars of the exploit have demonstrated that strategic naming of exceptions may function rhetorically. In this respect, I will argue that through hermeneutic analysis of a situation and an audience, a rhetor is capable of naming and exception and offering a rupture akin to Badiou's event. Regarding the creation of subjects, as I will clarify in this chapter, both Badiou and Nancy argue that the event is the ontological moment in which the subject comes into being. Following the work of Barbara Biesecker, I will argue, analogously, that evental rhetoric creates subjects around its own disjunction.

The first section of this chapter will begin with an investigation of novelty-as-rupture and detail how critical theorists Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy have understood the operation of rupture ("event") as a transformation of worldly logic and as a moment of subjectivity. Notably, I will clarify how both theorists understand this to be an explicitly arhetorical operation. The section will then discuss how rhetorical theory may negotiate the paradoxes and incommensurabilities of its arhetorality through attention to the concept of the void as an exception or exploit capable of being taken advantage of for rhetorical gain. Additionally, through Biesecker's refiguring of the rhetorical situation, I

will discuss how the moment of the rhetorical rupture may also be a moment of subjective creation. Through both of these aspects, I will argue that though the concept of the event as it has been theorized in critical theory, particularly by Badiou and Nancy, does not translate effortlessly into rhetorical theorization, the concept nevertheless greatly informs the rhetorical process. The second section of the chapter will turn to the organization WikiLeaks and offer a reading of the organization's work and the global rhetorical situation in which it exists according to the rhetoricized concept of the event detailed in the first section. This section will attempt to reconcile WikiLeaks' presentation as an unthematizable rupture according to a rhetorical situation whereby it may be understood as rhetorical, specifically a species of evental rhetoric. The chapter will then close with a discussion of the implications of such a rhetoricized form of the event to contemporary rhetorical theory and offer a discussion of the implications of such revision for the greater project of global dissent.

### *Manufacturing Rupture in the Rhetorical Situation*

This dissertation began with the concept of the event arguing that such a moment of transversal change aids both in the understanding of the transformations of radically inventive discourses and disruptive rhetorical forms and the understanding of the aspirations of contemporary dissent groups. I return now to the concept to engage more deeply with the notion of dissent as a moment of rupture to argue precisely how the concept may be adopted into rhetorical framework.

Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the event as elaborated in *Being Singular Plural* (2000) is intimately associated with the work's reconceptualization of Heideggerian ontology. As the text asserts, Being is always and necessarily a state of co-subjectivity, a state of

“multiplicity,”<sup>334</sup> rather than of autonomy. The plural notion of being is the result of the “event” of plural being-*with* such that the *co*-subject, and indeed subjectivity itself, issue from the singular event of Being. In this sense, Nancy understands the self as capable of existing in the world precisely as the result of the event, framing the event of Being as necessarily inconceivable and unavailable to the subject. According to Nancy, the event is always a sudden and “inexpressible”<sup>335</sup> happening that exists as “event” precisely because it is incapable of being foreseen, a happening that “can only take thinking by surprise.”<sup>336</sup> With regard to the event’s constitutive nature, Nancy additionally frames the event as necessarily transformative, naming War the “event par excellence... that suspends and reopens the course of history.”<sup>337</sup> Taken concurrently, these notions of the event, as transformational, constitutive, unavailable, and surprising, pose its existence as pre-ontological and entirely unavailable for agentive creation.

Badiou’s event, like Nancy’s, is an ephemeral and ungraspable instance, an unthematizable rupture that appears and vanishes leaving behind an appeal to others to affirm it through what Badiou terms “fidelity.”<sup>338</sup> Such fidelity is enacted in “truth procedures,”<sup>339</sup> practices in the realm of love, science, art, and politics that instantiate the truth of the past event by marking acknowledgement of its having occurred. Badiou’s

---

<sup>334</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 5.

<sup>335</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 165.

<sup>336</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 165.

<sup>337</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 107.

<sup>338</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), 41.

<sup>339</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 133.

ontological system is founded upon this notion of relation to the event — subjectivity, agency, ethics, and truth are structured in its service and the horizon of potential for world subjects is limited to retroactive identification and fidelity to events, or indeed their rejection or apocryphal retroactive construction. As Badiou argues, “Truths are reality itself, as a process of production of political novelties, political sequences, political revolutions...”<sup>340</sup> For Badiou, the structure of the event followed by a truth is not merely an instance that pierces reality, but rather the things that weave its fabric, the processes that account for reality’s progression and the subjectivities within it. Like Nancy, Badiou frames the event as similarly constitutive of the subject such that subjects are subjects *of the event*.<sup>341</sup>

Given the definitions and examples of the event by these scholars, it is clear neither deny that novelty enters into the world by way of individual invention or discovery. War and May ’68, identified as events by Nancy and Badiou respectively, are generated or resultant from the acts or bodies of individuals. The question as such is not whether the event enters the world as a result of human intervention but rather whether events may be deliberately created. Separate theories of language, culture, interaction, and persuasion indebted to post-structuralism, theories to which Badiou and Nancy do not abide, likewise suggest that such intentional invention of the event is effectively unachievable as it would necessitate that the individual inventor be capable of reading her own world from the outside in order to see the potential of that novelty within a current world (what Badiou has called “the void” in his own schema). As a varied array of otherwise dissimilar

---

<sup>340</sup> Badiou. *The Rebirth of History*, 87.

<sup>341</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 43.

philosophers and linguistics following the linguistic turn (Sapir 1921, Derrida 1976) have argued, human perspective is focalized through a specific language and/or worldview that is largely limited to what the subject has been conditioned to understand as possible.<sup>342</sup>

This belief is continually challenged, however, by the seemingly purposeful deployment of real novelty in the world. Though many of the notions of the event cited by Badiou do not issue directly from the deliberate hand of the subject (the meeting of lovers, for instance, is a random and initially unthematizable meeting of two strangers that subsequently transforms the relation of both to the world, to one another, and to themselves, and that can hardly be understood as intentional or rhetorical) others seem to spring from the ideation of the individual. The “Haydn-event,”<sup>343</sup> Badiou’s term for Franz Joseph Haydn’s introduction of classical music onto the Baroque situation, issues from the creative work of a single individual. Badiou’s suggestion here is that events only exist as such through the fidelity of others to them and that consequently Haydn, though his music responded to the void in the Baroque situation or world, cannot be considered as intentionally precipitating the event because the event exists as such by virtue of its transformation of the world and the fidelity of others to it, processes unrelated to Haydn’s creation of the music. Though there is neither any doubt about the responsibility of Haydn

---

<sup>342</sup> From an ontological perspective differing significantly from that of their contemporaries, Badiou and Nancy are also skeptical of the individual’s capacity to introduce the outside to situations as the event is constitutive of subjectivity – the notion of a post-ontological subject purposefully creating a pre-ontological event would be a contradiction in terms. This is not to say, however, that the subject, according to Badiou, is unable to think *beyond* a world, or to understand within a given world that there could exist something outside of it. As Badiou argues in *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, “there exists, for every world, a transcendental measure of the not-apparent-in-this-world” (122), suggesting that worlds or situations contain the means of understanding what is not already within them. It is in this contestation where Badiou’s rejection of post-structuralist assumptions of linguistic and ideological determinism is evident. However, despite this affirmation, Badiou nonetheless denies that this capacity for thinking the not-apparent-in-this-world provides the subject with the capacity to force or instantiate an event.

<sup>343</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 68.

with regard to the creation of his own music nor about whether Haydn knew himself to be creating something radically new in the world, there remains the difficult question of Haydn's responsibility for the *effect* of his music upon the Baroque world. More precisely, if Haydn knew himself to be creating a radical novelty, can responsibility or intention be attributed to him for transforming the Baroque situation? Badiou argues resolutely against this in *Being and Event* when he writes:

When Galileo announced the principle of inertia, he was still separated from the truth of the new physics by all the chance encounters that are named in subjects such as Descartes or Newton. How could he, with the names he fabricated and displaced... have supposed the veracity of his principle that is, the supplementation of his situation...<sup>344</sup>

According to Badiou's understanding, neither the event nor its truth as affirmed by subsequent individuals are capable of being foreseen precisely because these elements are unforeseeable – they are collectively and retroactively instantiated by others in ways that are not available to an individual in a moment of invention. However, despite Badiou's rejection of the agentive forcing of the event, the questions persist regarding the nature of rhetorical novelty. Specifically, can the individual rhetor who has identified a novel form, trope, or truth and attempted to instantiate it in a rhetorical situation be *rhetorically* credited when the use of such a trope ruptures and transforms a situation?

The answer to such a problem lies in the rhetoricization of the void, namely its removal from the evental situation as strictly an ontological moment of becoming and its reintegration within a theory of rhetorical agency specifically as an exigence. For Badiou and his delineation of truth procedures, the void is a transcendental object, a moment of potential that permeates an entire world whose logical system relies on the potential of that void remaining hidden. For lovers who have yet to meet, pre-evental subjects living

---

<sup>344</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 401.

their lives independently and unaware of the possibility that a precipitous meeting could transform their lives and individual worlds by throwing them together, the hidden void is such a meeting. In this scenario, the event of the meeting would effectively transform the world of the lovers and instantiate a new truth, that of love. However, if the void is understood not to be the unknowable potential of change but an exception, the deployment of rupture may be considered yet another tool in the rhetorician's arsenal.

To elaborate this point I will again turn to the theory of the exploit, specifically through the work of Galloway and Thacker. In reviewing the asymmetrical resistant practices enacted by activists, Galloway and Thacker elaborate the technological practices by which hackers exploit systems by locating a means to gain access: "informatic spaces do have bugs and holes, a by-product of high levels of technical complexity."<sup>345</sup> The hermeneutic search for these holes or bugs, the authors suggest, allows for the visualization of political practice to become clear.<sup>346</sup> Hackers or activists may seek out these holes within networks or systems and act upon them to their own political advantage, not in the means of a transcendental shift, as in the case of Badiou, but rather in the sense of an exception that exists but has been overlooked by the dominant power. These exceptions, the authors argue, are the ideal mechanisms for such asymmetrical resistance as they allow power to be gained from the powerless actor. Two key aspects are notable in this process. First, the interface of human and non-human elements in Galloway and Thacker's system means that the activation of an exploit allows for a chain of events to take place only partially accounted for or attributable to human agency – the authors discuss the

---

<sup>345</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 82.

<sup>346</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 82.

examples of the computer virus and the post-9/11 anthrax scandal as instances where the exploit proliferates unpredictably beyond the initial human intervention.<sup>347</sup> Secondly, because of this proliferation, questions of agency, intentionality, responsibility, and target become difficult. As the authors argue, such proliferation beyond the initial human act, as in the case of bioterrorism, may move and target indiscriminately, be spread and proliferated by non-human actors, and continue to operate under its own mechanism rather than via ideology or intention.<sup>348</sup> Much like Badiou's pre-evental subject responsible for the emergence of the event, the individual who locates and makes use of the exploit, regardless of intentionality, is no longer able to control it once the initial act is completed.

This description of the agent's use of the exploit, though unable to fully account for a method and a praxis of intentional rupture, approaches the *agentive* event. Galloway and Thacker theorize a means of identifying and creating a rupture, allowing that rupture to disrupt and proliferate within a system. This theorization is that of a hybrid action somewhere between the realm of responsibility and the non-agentive. Though the agent is not entirely divorced from the creation of the rupture, she is neither entirely responsible nor entirely in control. What such a theory suggests, perhaps disappointingly, is that the rupture, even when produced on the level of the mundane rather than the transcendental, is always somewhat shrouded in mystery and chance. Regardless of eventual outcomes, there exists a human agent who acts with motive in exploiting an exception within the system.

---

<sup>347</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 85-95.

<sup>348</sup> Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 85-95.

For the purposes of the theorizing of this dissertation, and specifically in reference to dissident groups whose essential terrain is the social and media landscape and only partially the online network, the use of the exploit works analogously in that such groups, in locating and operationalizing exceptions or unrealized weaknesses (rather than holes or bugs in code), may let loose proliferating changes that upend a social system or discourse. As I have demonstrated with Anonymous and Voina, and as I will in the next section of this chapter regarding WikiLeaks, this action may be done as a means to assert power, gain ground, and formulate a space around a gesture that may allow for arguments to be made. These groups, in an action of exploitation, have created spaces around rhetorical gestures that have allowed for specific instrumental changes to occur and discussions to happen as these exploits have effectively drawn blood from sites of power.

Yet, this notion of finding and exploiting the exception in the fabric of discourse does not yet yield definitive answers regarding what in fact is novel with regard to what is introduced in response to a void. Specifically, it is unclear to what extent the instrumentalizing of the void is an act of discovery (hermeneutics) or creativity (invention) and the precise relation of this engagement to rhetoric. John Muckelbauer, via Derrida and Deleuze, addresses this issue of novelty as an interplay, and indeed a false dichotomy, between the sameness of tradition and the alterity of invention. As he argues, complete novelty and complete unthematizability with regard to tradition would be rhetorically useless as it would bring about confusion rather than change.<sup>349</sup> Novelty, he argues, must engage within tradition as to be thematizable and to enact change.<sup>350</sup> Tradition, in fact, is

---

<sup>349</sup> Muckelbauer, *The Future of Invention*, 146.

<sup>350</sup> Muckelbauer, *The Future of Invention*, 146.

that which invites innovation that will, paradoxically, not alter it, as would be thought, but become an instrumental part of it. As Muckelbauer writes, “we might even go so far as to say that tradition only functions through change, that it requires change in order to repeat itself.”<sup>351</sup> There is both correlation and fruitful dissonance with Badiou in Muckelbauer’s reading. Unlike Badiou, Muckelbauer is concerned with agentive and instrumental innovations issuing from subjects and, as such, the immediate incomprehensibility of an innovation is necessarily undesirable from a rhetorical perspective. Badiou, alternately, argues that the event cannot but be incomprehensible upon its arrival for its status as singularity. This difference could be said to lie in the phenomenology of the event. For Badiou, the event is supernumerary – it is a moment of beginning and of retroactive refiguration. Badiou’s event cannot be understood *in situ* precisely because it arrives from the outside. For Muckelbauer, innovation or change, in order to function as such, must identify a paradoxical position – difference *must* be repetition in that it must arrive out of and, in a way quite different from Badiou’s use of the term, be faithful to tradition.

Though it is beyond the purview of this project to reconcile Badiou’s event with Deleuze’s concept of difference, I believe that a rhetorical compromise may be taken from Muckelbauer’s work to inform my own reading of evental rhetoric. Both the way I have figured evental rhetoric, as a reading of a void and the making use of that void to create a rupture, and Muckelbauer’s reading of Deleuze regarding change, involve a hermeneutic procedure (though it is largely implied in the work of Muckelbauer). This procedure at its core involves a reading of what is latent within the situation and the bringing to light of that absence. For Muckelbauer, this is a fluid process in that innovation arrives without

---

<sup>351</sup> Muckelbauer, *The Future of Invention*, 146.

rupture. Rather, in his reading of change, the innovation is an indivisible always present aspect of tradition such that tradition is never pure but always repeating through change. I, like Badiou, view change as a process of fits and starts – interruptions that continually refigure the past and change the course of reality (or tradition). Unlike Muckelbauer, I regard these moments of change as bringing about moments of acute ambiguity. However, I do not believe that this ambiguity is without rhetorical function. As I have attempted to argue, with the ambiguities brought about by taboo, anonymity, and changes to the conditions of communication, subjects are left in places of doubt. Confronted with altered conditions, subjects are not only *affected* (faced with the doubt or ambiguity such a situation presents), but also find themselves faced with the opportunity to practice new forms of rhetoric. It is in this capacity that I view ruptures to be simultaneously supernumerary and wholly rhetorical.

The second aspect of the event, the creative destruction of transposing one logical model for another and creating subjects of the event, has a clear resonance to rhetorical theories of the subject informed by critical theory. Most significantly, Barbara A. Biesecker's treatment of the rhetorical situation theorizes the rhetorical event as capable of inaugurating subjectivity. As Biesecker argues in her seminal essay "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*," prior understandings of the rhetorical situation have failed to substantively address the issue of subjectivity in relation to rhetorical events, suggesting that previous views of the rhetorical event have only ever involved the interaction of previously constructed subjects rather than as the moment of their manufacture. As Biesecker argues, the rhetorical event "marks the articulation of provisional identities and the construction of contingent relations that obtain between

them.”<sup>352</sup> As a dynamic process of subjective manufacture, Biesecker views the rhetorical event as a far more transformational and constitutive moment than theories of rhetoric that have regarded rhetorical interaction as the mere meeting of established subjectivities and not as a dynamic process of writing and rewriting of identity. In the same manner as Badiou, Biesecker’s use of *différance* suggests that subjectivity follows from the event and that the event should be recognized as an instance of constitution rather than the mere occasion of argumentation. However, Biesecker’s reliance on Deriddean deconstruction makes for significant differences between the theories. Most significantly, Biesecker regards the process of identity construction as an unstable and dynamic one as identity is figured and refigured with each rhetorical event. For Badiou, as the event is the instance of ontological beginning limited to the realms of aesthetics, love, science, and politics, and, strictly speaking, an *uncommon* happening, it is not dynamic and is not rewritten but a vital moment of creation that leaves in its trace truths that constitute reality. Though Biesecker’s rhetorical version lacks this permanence and, by association, consequentiality, it introduces an aspect fundamentally associated to the rupture, specifically the capacity of the rupture to create an audience calibrated to it, albeit one far more transient than that theorized in Badiou’s event.

The same questions of rhetoric’s subjectivizing effect are interrogated through critical and psychoanalytic theory in Rickert (2007). In the text, Rickert explores the relation between writing and subjectivity, theorizing the event of writing as a traumatic rupture that haunts the writer from the initial moment of composition. Drawing from the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, an unconscious process of subjective creation,

---

<sup>352</sup> Barbara A. Biesecker, Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989).

Rickert argues that the process of composing is subjectivity itself.<sup>353</sup> As Rickert argues, “Rhetoric is bound up with the intransigent psychic glue that dis/joins us to each other in an infinity of possible relations, offering everything but the transcendence that would rescind the offer.”<sup>354</sup> Like Biesecker, Rickert seeks to theorize the subject making capacities of rhetoric, writing, and communication beyond a mere act of argumentation between predefined subjectivities, but as a dynamic iterable process: “The subject is thus in motion. It is not a static subjective position...”<sup>355</sup> Rhetoric, according to Rickert, is a moving, unstable process of replacement and creation intimately tied to the subject’s relation to discourse and language. Both Rickert and Biesecker, through the employment of differing critical theories, understand the act of linguistic production as a moment of making and beginning for those drawn into the event of its production. In this respect, the rhetorical event is the event of subjective creation.

This conception of the rhetoricized event seems to offer a means of answering the Hayden-event problem if Badiou’s schema is abandoned in favor of this rhetorical and instrumental framework. If the problem is reoriented merely to pose whether Hayden could be held responsible for his introduction of a rupture that would *rhetorically* reframe the situation, that of the meaning of music, the discourses surrounding it, and the relation of subjects to it, a rupture that recognized the absences and instances of potential innovation, it would plausible to answer affirmatively. Under these conditions, Hayden may be held responsible as, having abandoned the question of event and its subsequent truth

---

<sup>353</sup> Thomas Rickert, *Acts of Enjoyment: Rhetoric, Žižek, and the Return of the Subject* (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>354</sup> Rickert, *Acts of Enjoyment*, 29.

<sup>355</sup> Rickert, *Acts of Enjoyment*, 30.

and instead turning to the concept of music as a situation and a discourse, it is reasonable to think that one innovative individual could solve a problem and offer its solution to a general public via the creative exploitation of the absence (or possibility) of classical music. Moreover, it may also be understood that through exploiting the absence of the classical music, the event of its creation creates subjects through its existence – those in its circle, experiencing the novelty of the new form, become subjects through their relation to it. To be accurate in this analysis, however, a proper example must be limited to an instance of rhetoric, of which the Haydn-event problem is not.

The Russian dissident art group Voina from the previous chapter offers a far better example of this process at work. The discourse of power perceived by the group concerned the problems of censorship and the restrictions on free expression dominant in contemporary Russia. In understanding the capacity of a group to offer outlandish and highly visible works of vandalism that functioned as criticism but were protected under the banner of art, the group identified a novel solution: the launching of criticism that could not be seen or punished as such. These forms of intervention, the bridge, the subway car, the museum, were the first moves in what would become an expanding chain of processes. The images themselves were playful and provocative, critiquing structures of control through a form that was impossible to take entirely seriously. The novelty, the large scale scatology of the work *as political critique* functioned as a rupture. This rupture, because of the strongly provocative nature of the work, the bravery of its defiance, and its humor became a viral (and vital) success. When the images of the work came into contact with Internet media, the images were traded at high speed, expanding outward across cyberspace. The glitch, for the group, was the conjunction of art, vandalism, politics, and humor that proved

beyond thematizable (for a time) for Russian governance. The audience the group created, as I previously discussed, was comprised of the immediate audiences of Voina's street acts and, on a secondary level, those who viewed the images second hand. These audiences were formed rhetorically around these scenes, pulled in as spectators of spectacles, often unwillingly. As both victims (in the case of the unwanted embraces of police) and observers, the audiences were structured within the acts of protest and (similarly to the concept of the event) forced into positions of viewership in which they were confronted and forced to interact with the group's forceful images.

The emergence of WikiLeaks, which I will detail in the following section, offers an example of this paradigm that offers a *rhetorized* rupture based upon the reading of a situation and structures subjects around this rupture. Against a reading of WikiLeaks that would allege the group does no more than to offer a purely anarchic and non-rhetorical form of resistance against governments and corporations, I allege that the rupture created by WikiLeaks may be credited with a calculated rhetorical action and pragmatic exploitation of a latent exploit perceived by Assange, applying a hacker's sensibility to the problem of political transparency. In judging this problem as answerable through an archive of the present, WikiLeaks offered a vast archive of controlled documents as a means of creating a rupture around the topic of transparency. This topic, which was forced upon public consciousness with an immense quantity of evidence exposing governments and corporations alike spread across the Internet garnering media interest and forcing both governmental and institutional response. In reference to the goal of transparency, this forcing of transparency through means that were previously latent and unrealized forced a rhetorical situation. Secondly, because these documents named a variety of government

and non-governmental players and forced even more individuals into the fray as observers and commentators, the WikiLeaks episode, like Badiou's event, created subjects in its wake. Entities named by the leaks, the United States for instance, were forced into the position of being exposed in various capacities and forced, in turn, to respond to allegations or condemn Assange and his institution. Others more sympathetic praised the institution. These effects, setting individuals in relation to an event, should be understood as creating subjects out of a rhetorical situation, specifically that of the rupture. In creating subjects out of the exploit of the archive, the event structured a vast number of responding subjects, subjects who would otherwise have been uninterested parties but who were compelled via the event to respond. On these two counts, I suggest that WikiLeaks presents a striking example of evental rhetoric in which a power discourse is ruptured and transformed via an exploitative charge effectuated from the margins.

This model of evental rhetoric, as I have suggested with my analyses in previous chapters, is far different from what one might call a dialectical or assertion based model of rhetoric. Critically, the model breaks from both Lloyd Bitzer's model of the rhetorical situation in which a rhetor responds to an exigence as it places a demand upon the audience, or the revised notion offered by Richard Vatz in which a rhetor invents an exigence in response to her perception of an audience.<sup>356</sup> In sharp contrast, the exploit model, like Bitzer's conceptualization, understands the bug, glitch, hole, absence, or void, to be an ontological matter. This void, though it is a negative object, pre-exists the rhetor and the situation. However, unlike Bitzer's model, it does not call forth to the rhetor in what, for Bitzer, has always seemed to be an assertion of determinism: "rhetorical discourse

---

<sup>356</sup> Richard Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6 (1968): 154.

*comes into existence* in response to a situation.”<sup>357</sup> Rather, the model requires the rhetor’s self selection as an actor and problem solver (or creator, as is more the case). Unlike both models, the evental model is not available to all rhetors but only those who are able to determine the existence of the hole.

A secondary difference lies in the questionable nature of this act’s relation to communication. In dialectical or assertion based models as well as both Bitzer’s and Vatz’s, the rhetorical act is undeniably one of communication – the rhetor presents her arguments to audiences. In the exploit model, rhetors lift latent exceptions to the surface as a means of disrupting the status quo. As I have clarified previously, the rupture is non-signifying. This model of a type of rhetorical situation in which the rhetor takes on the role of problem solver, teacher, and lexographer offers to shed light on real world instances of rupture, particularly in the context of political dissent. First, it refines the concept of the rupture explored in this study in defining the rupture not merely as that which upsets a given situation but that which offers novelty. In this respect, it provides a way of reading the successful instances of global dissent not merely as oppositional or eruptive but creative — the vocal outcries of such groups not only resound in opposition to global stalemates but in active negotiation of them. Second, it functions to prioritize both the actions of a rhetor and her hermeneutic analysis of a given situation before novelty is deployed — it is this hermeneutic aspect, the identification of the exploit, where the potential for novelty and change arises. Given these aspects of evental rhetoric, this dissertation will finally ground the argument that eruptive innovation, or what may be termed “rhetorical novelty,” is not merely an effective means to deal with the intransigencies of global governance and

---

<sup>357</sup> Lloyd Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 3. The italics are mine.

financial control but rather the most successful means given that the mode embraces a process of developing and deploying indefensible attacks against otherwise unassailable structures of power. It is fundamentally a method to deal with the vast global silences that preempt the contemporary voicing of agency.

The next section of this chapter will analyze WikiLeaks as the preeminent contemporary example of this form of “rhetorical novelty” through its identification of the foreclosure of agency in the contemporary world scene and its deployment of secret documents as a way to enact a solution to this intransigence. I will argue that WikiLeaks’ method represents the innovative solution to the problem of speaking and that its release of documents may be analyzed rhetorically as a means of offering a rhetorical rupture.

#### *WikiLeaks as Rhetorical Rupture*

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the organization WikiLeaks, then largely unknown to the general public, released a video to its website. The footage, shot in 2007 and presented under the title “Collateral Murder,” contained leaked video taken from an American helicopter in Baghdad during an attack on twelve men, two of whom were later discovered to be Reuters journalists.<sup>358</sup> This initial release was followed by the release of the Iraq War Logs, a collection of over four hundred thousand documents detailing the daily operations of the American presence in the country.<sup>359</sup> These releases ignited the slow building furor that came to dominate international media in December of 2010 with the so called “Cablegate”

---

<sup>358</sup> Eric Schmitt, “In Disclosing Secret Documents, WikiLeaks seeks “Transparency,”” *New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

<sup>359</sup> “Iraq War Logs, 2004-2009,” last modified October 22, 2010, [http://mirror.wikileaks.info/wiki/Iraq\\_War\\_Logs,\\_2004-2009/](http://mirror.wikileaks.info/wiki/Iraq_War_Logs,_2004-2009/).

scandal in which 251,286 documents were slowly published to WikiLeaks website.<sup>360</sup> The radical singularity of the group's project coupled with overwhelming media and political attention prompted many to conclude that Julian Assange's project had instantiated a new era of communication insecurity. As many attested, particularly at the 2011 World Economic Forum, the organization had effectuated such a substantial shift to the status quo of governmental privacy that the world has effectively entered into a "Post-WikiLeaks" era in which the risk of widely disseminated leaks of sensitive information could not be ignored or forgotten. Given the nature of this project, WikiLeaks is inconsistent with the forms of dissent investigated by the majority of scholars of marginal discourse – it does not seek to establish itself as a site of authority, it does not seek agency, rights, or recognition and it is the product of a small, decentralized, and largely anonymous number of individuals. The organization, rather, attempts the task of opening a rupture upon global logic, leaving its trace through the mass disclosure of leaked documents pertaining to corporations and the US government.

Given WikiLeaks' meteoric rise and evident disruption of the logics of national and global governance, two questions posed in the previous section become pertinent. First, can the consequences and changes in the world scene resultant from WikiLeaks' novel method of publicizing documents be attributed to its reading of the situation and its motive of creating a rupture forcing the issue of transparency? Second, given the novelty of both the method and the truth about access it communicates, can the organization's actions be

---

<sup>360</sup> Though the cables were initially released incrementally in late 2010 and early 2011, a scandal in the fall of 2011 in which Guardian editor David Leigh published a password allowing the full archive to be accessed prompted WikiLeaks to release the entire archive. "Global – Guardian journalist negligently disclosed Cablegate password," last modified September 1, 2011, <http://wikileaks.org/cablegate.html>.

regarded as rhetorical? According to the revised concept of the rupture as derived from the work of Biesecker, Muckelbauer, and Rickert, I argue that the rupture WikiLeaks precipitated may be attributable to the Assange's hermeneutic assessment of the possibility of such a rupture to exist. This section will begin by analyzing WikiLeaks' initial hermeneutic analysis of the problem of contemporary agency and its goals with regard to the problem's solution. This analysis will suggest that the group's strategy attempts to offer a rhetorical response to a world scene that has not yet conceptualized the void of the leak and that the group's strategy may be correlated with the effect its introduction of leaks subsequently effectuated. I will then follow this discussion with an analysis of the group's reception in the public world to demonstrate that the rupture created subjects primed by its eruption.

In regarding WikiLeaks initial constitutive statements, its hermeneutic analysis of the breakdown of individual agency, and its self-appraisal of as an instrumental rhetorical strategy may be read in Julian Assange's speeches, his early political writings, WikiLeaks' constitutive documents, and the interviews given by Julian Assange concerning the group's project. Considering this first of these, Julian Assange provided a clear assessment of the nature of the exploit in a speech at the Oslo Freedom Forum in 2010 when he outlined the globalization, privatization, and digitalization of censorship and secrecy. In the speech, Assange described the paradigmatic shift in the nature and capacity of state censorship by offering an anecdote concerning the execution and subsequent writing out of history of former NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria.<sup>361</sup> As Assange related, when Beria was executed,

---

<sup>361</sup> *Julian Assange - Oslo Freedom Forum 2010*[video], 2010, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDvfQ5gZ-Jw>.

libraries carrying the Soviet encyclopedia were instructed to redact his biography. However, as Assange noted, not without the trace of such redaction — the glue or the ripped page bore the evidence of censorship.<sup>362</sup> However, as Assange argued, the technological shift to the digital age has improved the efficacy of this process: “when something disappears from the [digital] archives... it is gone forever. It has not only ceased to have existed; it has ceased to have ever existed... you won’t see the tear-lines, you will just see ‘page not found.’”<sup>363</sup> Assange’s point is that the centralization of digital information and the management of such information by global sites of power has allowed for a far more totalizing system of censorship and propaganda than ever could have existed in an age when information was both material and decentralized. The discourse of power, he asserts, now functions through a system of totalizing censorship and the redaction of history. This contemporary system of censorship, he argues, is managed by both state and corporate actors such that private interests with financial power have substantial ability to conceal information and silence investigation. In a video address to a WikiLeaks rally in Australia in February of 2011, Assange referred to the problem of secrecy as “the challenge of our time,”<sup>364</sup> for the Internet generation and equated the struggle to that of the struggles for civil and women’s rights in the 1960s.<sup>365</sup> In this characterization, in addition to that

---

<sup>362</sup> Julian Assange - Oslo Freedom Forum 2010[video], 2010, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDvfQ5gZ-Jw>.

<sup>363</sup> Julian Assange - Oslo Freedom Forum 2010[video], 2010, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDvfQ5gZ-Jw>.

<sup>364</sup> Julian Assange Challenges The Internet Generation [WikiLeaks At War]-(HorseofPaulRevere) [video]. 2011, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHgNFBbuBfl>.

<sup>365</sup> Julian Assange Challenges The Internet Generation [Wikileaks At War]-(HorseofPaulRevere) [video], 2011, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHgNFBbuBfl>.

provided in 2010, Assange demonstrates his understanding of the contemporary situation of secrecy.

The exploit that Assange identifies regarding this situation lies in the fact that this model is reliant upon the complicity of actors within systems of bureaucracies to keep this information secret. Consequently, for Assange, the exploit lay in locating a method to challenge the redaction by allowing general access to the minutiae of what was secreted through the disobedience of actors within this vast system of secrecy. The exploit would function precisely because it was not a critique of such secrecy, one that could be questioned or dismissed, but catalogued proof of redaction made available for viewership. As Assange argued in his Oslo speech, WikiLeaks attempts to “build a historical record... of how civilization actually works in practice... Because all our decisions, individual decisions, our political decisions, are based upon what we know.”<sup>366</sup> As Assange suggests, because the concepts of political participation and liberal democracy depend upon access to knowledge or at least knowledge of the existence and nature of financial and governmental secrecy, WikiLeaks’ record of leaked documents attempts to address this impasse by creating a globally accessible archive, a common space where secret information dampening the potential of access is made public. On other occasions, Assange has more specifically detailed the scope and content of the archive; on the minutiae of war revealed by the Iraq War Logs, Assange called the release, “the largest... most detailed significant history of a war, to have ever been published probably at all but definitely in the course of a war.”<sup>367</sup> In

---

<sup>366</sup> *Julian Assange - Oslo Freedom Forum 2010* [video], 2010, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDvfQ5gZ-Jw>.

<sup>367</sup> *Julian Assange & Žižek First Day 1/2 (DemocracyNow)* [video]. 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7hTD0WuogI>.

both characterizations, the task of WikiLeaks is structured as a superlative novelty, what could be understood rhetorically as the pragmatic naming of the absence within a system and offering, with the archive, logic that deals directly with the culture of redaction.

These comments to the superlative nature of the content and scope of the WikiLeaks project directly associate with the logic of WikiLeaks as rhetorical rupture — not only is the site an exploit of a gap in the prevailing discourse but its solution is one that offers a novel logic of dissent. These characterizations present the act of release as a singular one, surmounting all previous attempts at providing a means of large scale access to a public. As mentioned in Chapter 3, *parrhesia* is a strategy of revealing truth to an authority as a means of dissent. While WikiLeaks does exhibit this method by presenting facts to sites of power, it does so to a larger degree and, significantly, through the use of a widely accessible technological platform. Not only this, but it is done at such a scale as to have no previous analogue. While *parrhesiastic* in nature, the logics of Assange's gesture go beyond extant models to utterly reinvent the concept.

In an essay titled "State and Terrorist Conspiracies," released by Julian Assange on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, he argues for the need of an interruptive solution to the intransigencies of contemporary geopolitics. This statement outlines the motives and theorization behind the act of widespread leaking. As the documents states:

We must think beyond those who have gone before us... we must develop a way of thinking about this behavior that is strong enough carry us through the mire of politically distorted language, and into a position of clarity... [we must] use these insights to inspire within us and others a course of ennobling, and effective action.<sup>368</sup>

---

<sup>368</sup> Julian Assange, "State and Terrorist Conspiracies," (originally published on iq.org, dated November 10, 2006), accessed October 4, 2011, <http://cryptome.org/0002/ja-conspiracies.pdf>.

Though vague about the specific nature of instrumentality, Assange's aspiration is clear regarding role of global intervention — Assange intends to offer a logic beyond that of forbearers and to disrupt contemporary political language with the clarity of his actions. The manifesto additionally cites the goal of “think[ing] in a new way about political relationships,”<sup>369</sup> and marginalizing political conspiracies by “decreasing [their] total conspiratorial power.”<sup>370</sup> These statements further identify the work of the group's project as necessarily and foundationally an attempt to operationalize a novel form of dissent that would disrupt rather than enter into congress with sites of power.

Interestingly, Assange's rhetorical strategy pairs these claims to invention and rupture with attempts to link the organization's actions with previous legal and political precedent. However, I suggest that these strategies, rather than weaken the group's claims to having developed an exploit, attempt the complex rhetorical task of couching the values of the group under the mantel of democracy. This strategy, much like that of Voina, situates the group in a complex relation to the public and to sites of power – in one respect, WikiLeaks operates as a subversive entity, while in the other they structure themselves as honoring and operating under the name of democracy. In its online “About” statement, WikiLeaks identifies itself with established legal and humanitarian precedents and widely held values concerning democratic freedoms and human rights. Two repeated phrases, “we agree” and “we believe,” serve the rhetorical task of affirming that WikiLeaks methods, though novel, nevertheless affirm the values of democratic participation and accountability the organization believes various sites of global authority to have lost. Specifically,

---

<sup>369</sup> Assange, “State and Terrorist Conspiracies.”

<sup>370</sup> Assange, “State and Terrorist Conspiracies.”

declarations of agreement are used to align the organization with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) concerning the freedom of opinion and expression and the US Supreme Court ruling on the Pentagon Papers affirming the role of the press in exposing government corruption. By aligning itself with the UDHR, WikiLeaks seeks to avow its role as a human rights organization, both affirming of and protected under the UDHR.<sup>371</sup> In citing the Supreme Court ruling on the Pentagon Papers, WikiLeaks aligns itself with previous document discloser Daniel Ellsberg. Through this identification, WikiLeaks seeks to position itself both in the role of government watchdog and in association with a ruling in which an individual initially considered eligible for prosecution under the Espionage Act of 1917 was ultimately exonerated for his role in exposing government secrets.

Similarly, the statement “we believe” occurs throughout the document fulfilling the complex dual function of constructing a system of global ethics and responsibility while positioning WikiLeaks as uniquely poised to fulfill it:

We believe that it is not only the people of one country that keep their own government honest, but also the people of other countries who are watching that government through the media.

In the years leading up to the founding of WikiLeaks, we observed the world’s publishing media becoming less independent and far less willing to ask the hard questions of government, corporations and other institutions. We believed this needed to change.

We believe the world’s media should work together as much as possible to bring stories to a broad international readership.

The great American president Thomas Jefferson once observed that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. We believe the journalistic media plays a key role in this vigilance.<sup>372</sup>

---

<sup>371</sup> “About,” accessed October 4, 2011, <http://wikileaks.org/About.html>.

<sup>372</sup> “About.” Accessed October 4, 2011. <http://wikileaks.org/About.html>.

Chiefly, these contestations present a form of global responsibility unique to contemporary political and ethical discourse. Its contestation that the honesty of governments (read transparency) is the prerogative not only of the citizens of a nation but of a world population of viewers and consumers is striking in its resemblance Sandoval's citizen-subject<sup>373</sup> and Nancy Fraser's concept of the all subjected principle,<sup>374</sup> emphasizing the shared nature of world subjectivity irrespective of national affiliation. This assertion is followed with a critique of traditional forms of media, which have become, according to WikiLeaks, more subservient to government and financial interests and less willing to take on the role of watchdog necessary for the democratic project. It is into this space where WikiLeaks presents itself, constructing its identity as a dynamic and non-national form of media not beholden to such interests and as such at liberty to expose governments, poised to reaffirm generally accepted democratic values. Gesturing to the figure of Thomas Jefferson serves as a strategy to align WikiLeaks to the foundational rhetoric of American democracy and to reinforce this claim.

Given these elements of Julian Assange's hermeneutic analysis of the problem of contemporary agency and his structuring of WikiLeaks as an exploit both utilizing and confronting the digitalization of information and censorship, he identifies and precipitates a problem around the issue of transparency. These elements communicate a problem that, although not new in the respect that advocates for participatory and civic

---

<sup>373</sup>Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 26.

<sup>374</sup> Fraser, *Scales of Justice*, 65.

rights have long voiced similar arguments, as Assange himself suggests,<sup>375</sup> is novel in the way it presents the mass disclosure of an archive or history of the present as the remedy for the traceless redaction of these elements from the commons. The second element necessary for these investigational elements to prove to be a rhetorical rupture lies in the creation of subjects around WikiLeaks' eruption. The following discussion will argue that WikiLeaks, in so far as it prompted governments and financial targets to take an interest in its project, succeeded in gaining significant notoriety and for many prompted discussions of a structural shift in the modes of conducting business and governance, created subjects in its wake.

Academics, journalists, and figures of governance and finance have, following a period of confusion in 2010 with regard to the organization and its project, largely realized and indeed instantiated the actions of WikiLeaks as marking a new era, or at least representing a novel threat worthy of serious attention with regard to conducting business and governance. The interest, debate, and scholarly attention that have followed WikiLeaks' initial rupture affirm the conditions Biesecker cites for the rhetorical situation, namely that the rhetorical event conditions subjects by imposing a logic germane to the rhetorical situation and thereby constitutes the identities of those involved.<sup>376</sup>

Though numerous governments, including that of the United States, express antipathy towards the organization and even continue to seek the extradition of Julian Assange, WikiLeaks has been recognized by others as an organization that raises the

---

<sup>375</sup> *Julian Assange Challenges The Internet Generation [Wikileaks At War]-(HorseofPaulRevere)* [video], 2011, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHgNFBbuBfl>.

<sup>376</sup> Biesecker, *Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation From Within the Thematic of Différance*, 110.

questions of whether government transparency is a human right, whether the dissemination of secret documents is a service or espionage, and what the roles, limits and definitions of the press in the information age are. Because of its rupture and emergence as an initially indefinable figure, WikiLeaks has been able to enter the decolonized space of this rupture both as a rhetorical actor, setting the agenda of public debate, and conditioning the behavior of those communicating under the threat of exposure. In the respect that WikiLeaks, for many, has imposed conditions upon action, that they are compelled to act in reference to the event, suggests the close parallel between Badiou's fidelity and Biesecker's concept of the conditioning of subjectivity. The relations between subjects and their own communication has changed and through this transformation, reconstructed the subject relations and subjectivities of individuals beholden to its call.

Through the combination of public shock to its leaked documents and its subsequent rhetorical self construction, WikiLeaks has forced debate, praise, criticism, and action across the public and governmental scene. It has been condemned by the State Department and the Obama administration as a threat to diplomacy and American lives<sup>377</sup> and praised by other nations and organizations as a new model of legitimate resistance. The organization has been praised by several world leaders such as Brazil's former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva who stated the organization "exposed a diplomacy that appeared untouchable."<sup>378</sup> News organizations have credited WikiLeaks, in part, for leaks concerning governmental corruption that helped to spur the recent Jasmine Revolution in

---

<sup>377</sup> "Text of State Department Letter to Wikileaks," *Reuters*, November 28, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/28/us-wikileaks-usa-letter-idUSTRE6AR1E420101128>.

<sup>378</sup> "WikiLeaks: President Lula backs Julian Assange," *BBC News*, December 9, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-11966193>.

Tunisia.<sup>379</sup> The organization was nominated for a Nobel Peace prize by a legislator from Norway's Socialist Left Party, a representative of which stated to the press: "I think it is important to raise a debate about freedom of expression and that truth is always the first casualty in war... WikiLeaks wants to make governments accountable for their actions and that contributes to peace."<sup>380</sup>

Perhaps the most remarkable example of an acknowledgement of the organization's consequentiality occurred at the 2011 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in which the WikiLeaks values of anti-secrecy were lauded by delegates and cited as setting the bar for diplomacy. Russian president Dmitri Medvedev cautiously praised the organization during the opening ceremony, stating that the WikiLeaks example should "make international relations healthier."<sup>381</sup> Here, Medvedev offers a paradigmatic example of a political figure forced into a discursive corner. Though one might imagine that such a figure would likely feel antipathy toward Assange and WikiLeaks, to condemn the organization could be perceived as an acknowledgement of state secrets. Consequently, Medvedev hedges with shallow praise, speaking from a position of compulsion. Finding himself in a position narrowed by the advent of the site, Medved offers an answer as a means of negotiating his position as world leader. This forced acknowledgement is a prominent example of the subjectivizing nature of WikiLeaks's eruption. In a more acute example, a panel discussion entitled "Confidentiality or Transparency: The WikiLeaks

---

<sup>379</sup> Dickinson, Elizabeth, "The First Wikileaks Revolution," *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2011, [http://wikileaks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/13/wikileaks\\_and\\_the\\_tunisia\\_protests](http://wikileaks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/13/wikileaks_and_the_tunisia_protests).

<sup>380</sup> Amland, Bjoern H. "WikiLeaks Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize," *The Huffington Post*, February 13, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/02/wikileaks-nobel-peace-prize\\_n\\_817558.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/02/wikileaks-nobel-peace-prize_n_817558.html).

<sup>381</sup> Klaus Schwab and Dmitri Medvedev, "Opening Address," January 26, 2011, <http://www.weforum.org/>.

Dilemma” featuring, among others, David Kennedy, the Director of the Institute for Global Law and Policy at Harvard Law School, Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, and Arthur Sulzberger Jr., the Chairman and Publisher of the *New York Times*, concluded that the WikiLeaks example demonstrated “a need for more transparency in the sharing of global information by governments and organizations alike” and that the organization acted justifiably in exposing that which is being done in the name of citizens.<sup>382</sup> Possibly the most remarkable reference to the organization took place in a panel discussion entitled “IdeasLab with the Young Global Leaders: Shared Values for Empowering Change,” in which participants debated the line between transparency and accountability in a “Post-WikiLeaks world.”<sup>383</sup> Such a construction accords WikiLeaks with the considerable role of having precipitated an eventual shift in communications and intergovernmental relations. In this respect, the way in which the organization is understood as precipitating a thoroughgoing shift in communication and international relations demonstrates individuals living under the shadow of its eruption and struggling to make sense with the consequences. That these individuals are compelled to reassess themselves, governments, and acts of communication relative to the shift suggests the potency of the organization to refigure subjectivities.

In addition to governmental and financial recognition, the organization has received considerable attention via the emergence of similar sites and organizations utilizing the WikiLeaks model. The first rival leak site, OpenLeaks.com, launched on January 26th, 2011.

---

<sup>382</sup> “Confidentiality or Transparency: The WikiLeaks Dilemma,” January 26, 2011, <http://www.weforum.org/>.

<sup>383</sup> “IdeasLab with the Young Global Leaders: Shared Values for Empowering Change,” January 28, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <http://www.weforum.org/>.

The organization, formed of former WikiLeaks employees, cites as its mission to “increase direct leaking for socially localized, and not just global, issues... We want to explore all that is possible, and share the lessons we learn along the way with the rest of the world.”

Though the site claims not to be a direct clone of WikiLeaks, serving as a conduit for the release of information rather than an encyclopedia for it, its emergence nonetheless suggests that the model of WikiLeaks is proliferating and becoming normalized rather than expunged. Moreover, it demonstrates that individuals with parallel values to WikiLeaks, having observed and adjusted according to the legal controversy surrounding the organization, are maneuvering within the context of international law as to retain the function of a leaking site while positioning themselves as beyond legal recourse. In 2011, other regional versions of the site have been launched in Europe, Asia, and North Africa, demonstrating recognition of the utility of such a strategy on national and civic levels.<sup>384</sup> Like subjects compelled to respond to WikiLeaks’ eruption, the subjects who mimic WikiLeaks do so through its example of action. Having offered up a logic of resistance, the site shows a new means of negotiating power –a grammar of possible resistance is opened and those acting through may be said to be subject to that which potentiated their use of the method.

Many in academic circles, particularly in those indebted to the investigation of communication, governance, and democratic theory, have also embraced WikiLeaks as a legitimately new form of political dissent. In “WikiLeaks, the New Information Society, and Digital Parrhesia,” Pramod K. Nayar interprets WikiLeaks’ dissemination of previously secret or classified documents as an act of community building, creating the potential for

---

<sup>384</sup> Finn Brunton, “WikiLeaks and the Assange Papers,” *Radical Philosophy* 166, March/April 2011, 8.

greater access and rhetorical engagement in the contemporary world scene.<sup>385</sup> As he argues, WikiLeaks functions as an “electronic agora,”<sup>386</sup> a space of producing collaborative/distributed knowledge<sup>387</sup> in the service of global civil society.<sup>388</sup> Nayar additionally interprets the act of releasing such information as an act of *parrhesia*, what Michel Foucault has described as ethical veridiction,<sup>389</sup> the presentation of truth to a site of power that encourages others to engage in the care of the self, arguing, “[WikiLeaks] calls upon the speaker to examine what s/he believes and therefore for a closer scrutiny of her/himself.”<sup>390</sup> However, Nayar stresses that while these ends of WikiLeaks should be understood as constructive with respect to the project of establishing global community, the organization must be understood to simultaneously function as an unthematizable break upon the logics of contemporary governance and communication. As he shrewdly identifies, “[WikiLeaks] constitutes a rupture in dominant and dominating patterns of knowledge making and interpretive schemes.”<sup>391</sup> If, as Nayar suggests, WikiLeaks has ruptured the functioning of power as an epistemology and as a heuristic, such a rupture goes to the core of a subject’s relation to the world. Such a rupture offers a means to break the univocal and hegemonic discourses of power, change our relation and valuation of

---

<sup>385</sup> Pramod K. Nayar “WikiLeaks, the New Information Cultures and Digital Parrhesia,” *The Economic and Political Weekly* xlv no 52 (25 December 2010), 28.

<sup>386</sup> Nayar, “WikiLeaks,” 29.

<sup>387</sup> Nayar, “WikiLeaks,” 29.

<sup>388</sup> Nayar, “WikiLeaks,” 29.

<sup>389</sup> Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of the Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 87.

<sup>390</sup> Nayar, “WikiLeaks,” 28.

<sup>391</sup> Nayar, “WikiLeaks,” 28.

history, and intervene in our ability to know facts about the world that would otherwise inform our decisions. In short, refiguring the way the subject understands and relates to the world and, by association, her understanding of what is possible, I suggest, is tantamount to refiguring that subject in relation to this potentiating moment i.e. the rupture that transformed her worldview.

Other academics who have focused upon the emergence of WikiLeaks as an agent of change construct the organization as a force structuring behavior and subjectivity following its eruption. As Brian, McDermott, and Weins (2011) argue, WikiLeaks offers “a pivotal point at which the system could be fundamentally restructured,”<sup>392</sup> and provides “a wake-up call to policymakers that the Internet age has taken the long-simmering problem of overclassification and turned it into a crisis.”<sup>393</sup> In an article for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, David Maass argues that the organization’s emergence holds “historic, if not seismic, significance,”<sup>394</sup> instantiating an era where “deeds will henceforward have to match words. If they don't, you can assume you will suffer a WikiLeaks crisis of your own.”<sup>395</sup> In an article titled “WikiLeaks and the Assange Papers,” Finn Brunton argues:

current technology has created as set of profound opportunities – and problems for the existing order – waiting for the arrival of human arrangements capable of making use of them. WikiLeaks is a preliminary solution, an initial sketch of a world in which the potential within these technologies has been unlocked.<sup>396</sup>

---

<sup>392</sup> D. Brian, P. McDermott J. Weins, “WikiLeaks is a Wake-Up Call for Openness,” *Government Information Quarterly* 28(2): April 2011, 135.

<sup>393</sup> Brian et al, “WikiLeaks is a Wake-Up Call for Openness,” 136.

<sup>394</sup> David Maass, “Local (Wiki)Leaks,” *Columbia Journalism Review* Sep/Oct2011, 50 (3), 10.

<sup>395</sup> Maass, “Local (Wiki)Leaks,” 11.

<sup>396</sup> Finn Brunton, “WikiLeaks and the Assange Papers,” *Radical Philosophy* 166, March/April 2011, 8.

Notable in Brunton's argument is the acknowledgement of WikiLeaks not as an actor but as a means of introducing or reconditioning a way for subjects to enact their own subjectivity. In that WikiLeaks presents a set of opportunities and problems, the site structures a new set of strictures and options by the nature of its threat and the minutiae of its leaks. As Brunton suggests, previous avenues are closed while others are opened, a call is made to understand and further the technological project of the site, and moving forward there is a new sense of a dissident *telos*. In these respects, what it means to be a subject is altered in that choices, opportunities, problems, and relations are rewritten through the site's dual function as potential and threat.

This sample of recent articles, political and financial responses, and emulative organizations suggests a certain fidelity to WikiLeaks as a communicative and political event. Despite that many of these responses are problematically predictive of WikiLeaks' continued relevance and success as a transformational rupture and as such cannot be understood according to Badiou's schema for its temporal proximity to the emergence of WikiLeaks, they nonetheless acknowledge the organization's impact upon the contemporary world scene. Though this dissertation has abandoned the concept of the event in favor of that of novel truth, these forms of global recognition have, in the brief period of its celebrity, done much of the work to instantiate what they claim WikiLeaks has offered. As WikiLeaks' values of anti-corruption and anti-secrecy have been debated, refuted, taken up, and emulated in various spheres across the globe, the organization's success creating a space of novel rhetorical interaction in the aftermath of its appearance seems conclusive. In succeeding in locating a method of antagonism to force the recognition of political authorities, media outlets, and financial institutions, the

organization provides, at least conceptually, a globally responsive a model for the acquisition of agency against the contemporary context of information control. In strict opposition to foundational theoretical models of the acquisition of agency and recognition, this model provides an entirely new paradigm for the creation of rhetorical situations in the context of the global scene, not simply functioning as an oppositional authority, but rather as a site of deterritorialization and transformation. Most significantly, these discourses affirm that a species of discourse that initially emerges as an unthematizable threat or anomaly may transition through public recognition and adoption to affirm a new truth pertaining to acting and speaking in the world.

### *Conclusion*

Given the nature of WikiLeaks as the activation of a gap within the discourse of power that erupted across various public spheres, instantiating subjects primed to its emergence, it is evident that what allowed for the possibility of such an instance was the original realization that such an upheaval was in fact possible. The reading that allowed the exploit to be offered is, I suggest, the single most determinative factor potentiating the rupture of WikiLeaks to be substantively introduced. This *attunement* to a situation and an audience, the capacity to identify the hole that will allow a rupture to take place, is the most critical and, indeed, most inscrutable aspect of eventual rhetoric. Careful and substantive analysis of these conditions, I argue, will provide contemporary critics with the means of decisive and effective solutions to political intransigencies as a means of political dissent. However, the precise method of *how* to identify such holes or voids is necessarily heterogeneous. As each rupture is singular in its presentation, each hole is likewise unique in its latency within a situation.

It is in this necessity of sensitivity to the closure of previous points of access where aspects of the theory of the event, specifically Badiou's assertion of the primacy of our ethical recognition of and fidelity to the event, may be recuperated for specifically rhetorical purposes. Describing the ethic of a truth, Badiou writes:

We might put it like this: 'Never forget what you have encountered.' But we can say this only if we understand that not-forgetting is not a memory... Not-forgetting consists of thinking and practicing the arrangement of my multiple-being according to the Immoral which it holds, and which piercing through [*transpercement*] of an encounter has composed as subject.<sup>397</sup>

As Badiou argues, living an ethical existence that affirms the concept of humanity, namely human dignity and rights, necessitates the living practice of the acknowledgment of those events that have instantiated situations and engendered subjects. This acknowledgement, what Badiou terms the "thinking of the event," necessitates recognizing and acting in affirmation of the event, similar to the ways a subject understands an ethical shift and operates in a way as to affirm it. Though Badiou's model locates this necessity in the affirmation of a truth as appurtenant to a past event and mine looks ahead to the offering of novelty, both models of thought pose the recognition of the conditions of the world, specifically the conditions that order our being and our capacity to act, as critical to responsible and conscientious action. Turning again to this chapter's theory of rupture, these modes of contentious action suggest that to offer a rupture depends upon one's ability to conceptualize how citizens are *disabled* with regard to agency and to employ a mode of thinking of potential [*dynamis*] concerning what could exist in a situation.

Ultimately, I argue that the example of WikiLeaks, when understood within this theoretical context, suggests that rupture, specifically the introduction of novel logics that

---

<sup>397</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 52.

challenge those of a current situation, is the most powerful and significant means by which dissent may transform political and social scenes in the contemporary world. As an event that captivated more media attention, more international public interest, and forced debate in numerous circles from politics to academia than the 2003 Anti-War protests or the contemporary anti-austerity protests in Europe, WikiLeaks functioned to force the recognition of a new way of acting rhetorically in the world. As a paradigmatic example, WikiLeaks suggests an understanding of ruptures as those events that bring about new ways of acting and perceiving, instantiating epochal shifts in interpretive communities when world conditions present impasses. They instruct other agents as to the potential of agency and broaden the potential of meaning making in social and political scenes.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will review the purpose, operation, and value of the deployment of what I have termed evental rhetoric as a means of transforming contemporary socio-political scenes and offering meaningful dissent that negotiates the obstacles of secrecy, silence, and power. I will briefly theorize this mode of rhetorical practice and the groups associated with it against the contemporaneous movements marked by more traditional forms of protest, specifically those seen in the Occupy movement and in the Arab Spring. I will argue that while social protest movements that have largely (re)adopted traditional forms of dissent (the riot, the protest, the sit-in, and so on) have flourished over the past year, an understanding of rhetorical discourses that utilize new modes of interaction to create the rupture is necessary. Lastly, I will additionally clarify what I believe this dissertation to offer both to rhetorical theory and theories of dissent in the context of globalization.

## Coda

“We are the 99%” is one dissident mantra of the contemporary era. The refrain was heard and painted on signs throughout urban centers in the Fall 2011 and into 2012 – in Lower Manhattan, on the green before Austin’s City Hall, on Pittsburgh’s Market Square, in an empty lot in Madison’s Near East Side, and internationally, in Oslo’s Eidsvolls plass, in front of the Mexico City Stock Exchange, at Cyprus’ UN controlled buffer zone, and in Bratislava between Palace Cinemas Aupark and the Incheba Expo Arena (“*my sme 99%*”), to name but a few locations. Unlike the preponderance of online dissent and activism in 2010, 2011 and 2012 saw the emergence of boots-on-the-ground activism throughout the urban West, a movement that echoed and took solidarity from the Arab Spring. Like it’s more directed and explicitly revolutionary Middle Eastern counterpart, the Occupy Movement functioned largely through polarization and the identification of targets that, at least for those in Zucotti Park, were the Wall Street bureaucrats, many of whom who passed the park daily. Internationally and at the movement’s unofficial center in Lower Manhattan, students, business people, and onlookers gathered. Zucotti Park enjoyed a stream of visits such prominent academics as Judith Butler, “If hope is an impossible demand, then we demand the impossible,”<sup>398</sup> and Žižek, “Don’t fall in love with yourselves. We have a nice time here. But remember: carnivals come cheap.”<sup>399</sup> A joint statement on the movement signed by many NYU faculty, notably including Avital Ronell and Andrew Ross, read:

---

<sup>398</sup> “Judith Butler at Occupy Wall Street,” Salon.com, October 24, 2011, [http://www.salon.com/2011/10/24/judith\\_butler\\_at\\_occupy\\_wall\\_street/](http://www.salon.com/2011/10/24/judith_butler_at_occupy_wall_street/).

<sup>399</sup> “Today Liberty Plaza had a visit From Slavoj Zizek [sic]” accessed July 28, 2011, <http://occupywallst.org/article/today-liberty-plaza-had-visit-slavoj-zizek/>.

Occupy Wall Street has stimulated a widespread and previously neglected discussion across the country about growing inequality and the effect of concentrated corporate power on our political and economic systems.<sup>400</sup>

In this bizarre synthesis of youths, civilians, and public intellectuals (reminiscent of the tenor of May '68), an occasion of general public unrest at the contemporary consolidation of financial power erupted for several months. The Occupy Movement is one single example of contemporary worldwide protest, a crowded field that is impassioned as it is vague.

Badiou calls this moment “a time of riots.”<sup>401</sup> In the uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East, the United States, Spain, Greece, and elsewhere, he locates a resistance refusing to regress into the empty signifiers of “‘democracy,’ ‘the West,’ ‘the international community,’ ‘human rights’ ...”<sup>402</sup> that he argues are bound up inextricably with the logics of global capitalism.<sup>403</sup> Like other critics, notably Dean and Žižek, who view contemporary neoliberal democracy as an excessively safeguarded fiction, Badiou looks towards the new potentials of other systems borne from the oppression and breakdown currently on display. Rather than a regression, a call for these compromised signifiers of the past, Badiou reads the call as a desire for new logics to emerge. In this impetus, Badiou views the uprising as a rejection of the incommensurability of agency and participation to exist in tandem with contemporary capitalism. Speaking of the motives of those protesting in Egypt against the vestiges of the old regime, Badiou writes: “we are standing up, we are all united, the idea

---

<sup>400</sup> “NYU Faculty Statement of Support for Occupy Wall Street” accessed July 27, 2012  
<http://studentweekofaction.wordpress.com/nyu-faculty-statement-of-support-for-occupy-wall-street/>.

<sup>401</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 5.

<sup>402</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 4.

<sup>403</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 4.

we have of our historical destiny transcends all our social or cultural differences, we have proved ourselves..."<sup>404</sup> Though he could be accused of problematically speaking for the masses, Badiou reads a historical dissatisfaction and a historically negating moment of collectivity in an opposition to the oppression of the government. Taking into account the doubt and disorganization found not only across the disparate contemporaneous movements worldwide and within specific movements themselves, Badiou does not doubt their consequentiality: "History reawakens, it is the reawakening that matters; it is what is to be saluted; its rational consequences are what must be invested by the Idea."<sup>405</sup> For Badiou, this Idea, the immanent truth of modern struggles, is the will against domination and the affirmation of a transcendental human dignity.

In light of the riots of 2011 and 2012, Badiou sees his philosophy of the event being enacted in the large movements springing up worldwide rather than in the *minor* instances of exploitation like those that I have analyzed in this dissertation. The minor instances of which I have spoken I have acknowledged to be *not* species of Badiou's events but rather instances of articulation, rhetorical moments that strive towards change and that can, through a rhetorical lens, be understood to be articulations that belong to rhetors themselves. However, the more present and, arguably, more politically consequential examples of boots-on-the-ground activism do not, I believe, negate this dissertation's argument regarding the importance and power of evental rhetoric. Rather, I see the efforts of WikiLeaks (and like groups) and the efforts of on the ground movements to be two prongs of the same vital political impetus currently intensifying. However, with Badiou, I

---

<sup>404</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 88-9.

<sup>405</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 99.

argue that these two prongs do not, as many critics and many in the media have contested, exemplify a so called “democratic”<sup>406</sup> will on behalf of dissidents and protesters. I argue, rather, that both evental modes of protest and more traditional modes, though often protesting against discrete authorities, are not working towards agonistic or democratic solutions but rather towards pragmatic means of acting where traditional modes of participation have not only been damaged but are a lost paradigm. In these times of riots, I believe both the evental rhetorical efforts enacted by small groups like those that I have named and the large scale movements taken up by hundreds of thousands of street protestors address a critical lack of agency in the cotemporary constellation of power. The difference, rather, is that of methodology. The methodology of evental rhetoric attempts a paradoxical task of creative destruction to allow for substantive rhetorical action against broad and often undefined sites of power that would otherwise be unassailable. Those on the ground follow trodden channels and, in their brutalization by police, suffer similar setbacks. Though I believe their methods fail to engage with the unique problems of the contemporary scene, their goals and aspirations are precisely those that I believe motivate those creating ruptures in the discourses of power.

To conclude this dissertation, I will review the essential aspects of this generative method, specifically the five major propositions of my argument regarding the function, operation, and place of what I have called evental rhetoric.

**1. The rupture, as a political gesture, allows powerless rhetors to gain access to closed spaces of power.**

As I have argued, evental rhetoric is not comprised of rhetorical gestures as such, nor does it function discursively. Rather evental rhetoric is a means of effectuating, or

---

<sup>406</sup> Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, 4.

aspiring to create, disruptions in normally functioning discourses of power. These ruptures are not the openings of dialogues and they don't contribute to chains of discourse. Instead they are disruptions that introduce logic, ideas, or arguments into these discourses of power and that, critically, demand to be listened to.

The method functions by identifying exceptions, holes, or moments of potential in these discourses of power. By exploiting these latent moments, evental rhetoric functions as an attack, an attempt to leave a mark on an otherwise protected site. Because these spaces are otherwise closed, the method of evental rhetoric allows for the negotiation of this rupture from a position of obscurity.

## **2. The method functions precisely because it is not an *engagement*.**

This method is non-dialectical – it does not position one speaker or rhetor in opposition to another. As I have argued regarding the rhetorical ruptures of the groups analyzed in each of my case studies, the gesture of evental rhetoric offers an interruption that stymies the discourse of power. This allows for the rhetor to avoid charges of rent seeking as the method of engaging with power appears not as an utterance but must be dealt with as a discrete object unto itself. With the example of WikiLeaks, though Julian Assange is known to be the figurehead of WikiLeaks and his ideology one of transparency, the archive itself could not be ignored because despite this engagement the imposition of the archive created a *problem* that forced recognition from sites of power. The rupture that such a problem opened, the commentary, discussion, support, and legislation enacted to address the rupture is a consequence of the rupture demanding attention as a non-dialectical gesture introducing a logic that could not be glossed by the sites of power it addressed.

### 3. The rupture is temporary.

As the examples of Anonymous, Voina, and WikiLeaks have shown, the rupture of evental rhetoric, because it brings about a moment of radical ambiguity outside of signification, is always necessarily *reterritorialized*. As Elmahdy's photograph became interpreted by various frames, Anonymous became named, Voina became branded as a political actor, and WikiLeaks was limited materially by various political and financial forces, each instance of rupture became territorialized and normalized in the public eye.

Various theories discussed in this dissertation have sought to clarify why ruptures, enacted within various scenes, are short lived. Serres' theory of the inevitable expulsion of the parasite, Foucault's discussion of *parrhesia*, Lyotard's treatment of the name, and Muckelbauer's discussion of invention's inevitable transition from otherness to *doxa* attempt to theorize the moment from the intrusion of the foreign to its normalization. Through these theories, and the central concept of this dissertation, Nancy and Badiou's theories of the event, scholars have detailed a seemingly essential aspect of culture and language: the need to mastery and understanding of foreign objects. Either, as in the event, these ruptures transform the logics of situations, replacing the current logic and relations of individuals with the logic of the event, or they themselves becomes normalized, inconsequential, and fail to transform situations. Regardless of which is the case, it is clear (particularly from the examples provided in this dissertation) that it is impossible to remain in the state of the rupture permanently.

The rupture publicizes the previously unseen absence in the discourse that, when revealed, becomes known and understood. It is the aspiration of such groups who name

voids, those that I have mentioned here, to change (like events) the structure of situations to make the logic of the rupture into a permanence of political and ethical relations.

**4. The method of the rupture is not transmissible – it is germane to the void or exploit it addresses.**

Like events, ruptures only address specific instances where a hole (or void) pre-exists. In other words, like traditional rhetorical practice, eventual rhetoric is situational – one method of interruption will only function in a specific site. To return once again to Elmahdy's photograph, the use of nudity was instrumental in her particular situation as it incited furor over the proliferating image of a nude Egyptian woman. This example was functional in the context in which it would be effective, namely in the context of a revolution against a repressive regime in which, among many other topics, the question of women's rights and female sexuality was divisive and sensitive. One might imagine that the same tactic might, in another context, be entirely inconsequential. A relevant analogue with virtually no potency is the nudity filled PETA campaign visible on PETA's official blog in February 2012 opposing fur in which models and ordinary civilians walk the streets in various stages of undress to protest the popularity of the garment. Though sensationalistic, the protest has never garnered the intense and immediate attention of Elmahdy because the tactic has not rupture the scene to which it was offered. On the contrary, the relative banality of nudity as a means to protest the wearing of fur has little plausible connection to the problem of fur other than a facile comparison between the doffing of fur and nudity. Moreover, because the nudity is offered to Western societies, particularly urban cosmopolitan ones, the act offers little in the way of surprise.

The nature of the rupture, its interruption of discourse and its appearance as a novelty, means precisely that the same rupture will not function again as rupture. As I have

indicated with the examples in this dissertation, when a rupture functions well enough to succeed in transforming a discursive landscape it then becomes part of a grammar. This is not to say that the example cannot be repeated or has no function when it is, but rather that the rupture created with the first instance can only have such effect in that instance. Every other instance indexes the first instance, precisely like the event, and exists in reference to it. In this respect, the ability to erupt as surprise, as an intrusion lacking in schemas and associations, is impossible in subsequent situations.

The consequence of this impossibility of iteration is that evental rhetoric has no generic formula precisely because the exceptions or holes sought are, by definition, unforeseen. It is only through the individual's attunement to the situation, to read it against the grain, that they are able to see what lies latent there. The void that such an act exploits must necessarily be an unexpected one lest it be banal. Rather, it must be something that *no one* expected. Precisely because this is the case – that these elements are occluded in discourses – there is no direct method to locating them.

##### **5. The method heralds a post-liberal political reality.**

As I argued in the first chapter, global capitalism has largely rendered the concepts of democratic engagement, global citizenship, and global democracy largely fictive. Instead, the global scene is increasingly one dominated by complex non-democratic apparatuses, coalitions of national and financial interests that wield power authoritatively and are beholden to little or no outside censure. The rhetoricians who attempt to function through these systems with evental rhetoric do so as a means of negotiating these impasses rather than as a means of reacquiring democratic processes. Anonymous, Voina, and WikiLeaks, with their campaigns of hacking, exposure, and critique are far less interested in

reinstating conditions for participations rather than aggressing targets of their choosing and demonstrating a means of aggressive dissent. That these tactics are as effective as they are relative to more traditional means of dissent, I argue, suggests that the situation faced demands pragmatic answers rather than attempts to regress conditions to more democratic states.

As the anti-globalization movement has changed its name, rebranding from a stance of “anti” to “alter,” as in alterglobalizationists or *altermondialistes*, so has the current of left-leaning popular dissent changed from a position of stopping global transition to curbing its worst transgressions. The preponderance of protestors no longer seek to stop the processes of trade and the increasingly complex network of connections, but to ensure that they develop in such a way as not to instantiate utterly authoritarian societies of control beholden only to the market. In general, these “third way” protestors are pragmatists. In large part, practitioners of eventual rhetoric are like minded – they attempt to find a way to function in the context of globalization, attempting to enact small scale changes on the level of practice while not setting their sights on greater “revolutionary” ideals. In the work of Anonymous, Voina, and WikiLeaks, the most prominent contemporary examples of this practice, there has yet to emerge a sense of whether these modes have a *telos*. As I have argued, their actions are motivated by an often vague set of ideals, a general will to protest, or a need to speak. These goals have not sought any of the heralded goods of a democratic culture but rather the more vague and universal goods of the voice. Yet, despite their shortcomings and the haziness of their goals, they have had tremendous success in challenging many of the powerful institutions across the contemporary political and financial scene, demonstrating that asymmetrical resistance is possible against massive

sites of authority. But to what end does rhetoric approach? In the incipience of the method's challenge to sites of power, it is as yet unclear whether its practitioners will approach cohesion and identify instrumental goals or whether they will remain fragmented and only able to offer piercing but momentary ruptures. Regardless of eventual outcome, I regard the task of understanding what they do and how they act as vital within in a global scene where the power of the subject is increasingly overshadowed.

## Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- . *Nudities*. Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: Norton, 2006.
- Aristotle. *The Rhetoric and the Poetics*. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. New York: The Modern Library, 1954.
- Anonymous. *Primary Colors*. New York: Random House, 1996.
- Anonymous. *O: A Presidential Novel*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. *Intention*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1963.
- Asen, Robert and Daniel C. Brouwer "Introduction: Reconfigurations of the Public Sphere" in *Counterpublics and the State*, edited by Robert Asen Daniel C. Brouwer. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Assange, Julian, "State and Terrorist Conspiracies," (originally published on iq.org, dated November 10, 2006) Accessed October 4, 2011. <http://cryptome.org/0002/ja-conspiracies.pdf>.
- Aune, James Arnt. *Selling the Free Market: The Rhetoric of Economic Correctness*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2001.
- Azhgikhina, Nadezhda. "The Struggle for Press Freedom in Russia: Reflections of a Russian Journalist." *Europe-Asia Studies* 59 (2007): 1245 – 1262.
- Bach, K.. 'Actions Are Not Events'. *Mind* 89 (1980): 114–20.
- Badiou, Alain. *Ethics*. Translated by Peter Hallward. London: Verso, 2001.
- . *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham. London: Continuum, 2001.
- . *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*. Translated by Alberto Toscano. London: Continuum, 2009.
- . *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2012,

- Balibar, Etienne. *We, The People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, Translated by James Swenson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Barnett, Scot. "Toward a Rhetoric of Everyday Things." Review of *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects and Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* by Graham Harman. *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture* 7 (2010).
- Bataille, Georges, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986.
- Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 3 -14.
- Brown, Wendy. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Baumann, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Beck, Ulrich and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*: Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
- Bennett, J. *Events and Their Names*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Benett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010.
- Benhabib, Seyla. *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Barbara A. Biesecker. Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989): 110 – 130.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Brown, James Jr. "Essay's Ethos: Rethinking Textual Origins and Intellectual Property." *College Composition and Communication* 61.1 (2009): 212-231.
- Brown, Wendy. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Brian, D., P. McDermott J. Weins. "WikiLeaks is a Wake-Up Call for Openness." *Government Information Quarterly* 28(2): April 2011, 135-136.

- Brunton, Finn. "WikiLeaks and the Assange Papers," *Radical Philosophy* 166, March/April 2011, 8 – 20.
- Bryant, Levy. *The Democracy of Objects*. Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2011.
- Butler, Judith and Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State?: Language, Politics, Belonging*. London: Seagull Books, 2007.
- Judith Butler, "The Value of Being Disturbed," *Theory & Event* 4(1), 2000.
- Caputo, John D. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997.
- Castells, Manuel. *Communication Power*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. *Figures of the Thinkable*. Translated by Helen Arnold. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Charland, Maurice, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133 – 150.
- Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*. Translated by James M. May and Jakob Wisse. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Cloud, Dana L. "Doing Away with Suharto – and the Twin Myths of Globalization and New Social Movements," in *Counterpublics and the State*, edited by Robert Asen Daniel C. Brouwer. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Critchley, Simon. *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*. London: Verso, 2008.
- Davidson, D., 1969, 'The Individuation of Events', in N. Rescher (ed.), *Essays in Honor of Carl G. Hempel*, Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 216–34; reprinted in *Events*, pp. 265–83.
- Davidson, D., 1980, *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dean, Jodi. *Democracy and Other Liberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- . "Publicity's Secret," *Political Theory* 29 (2001): 624 – 650.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Translated by Dana Polan. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

DeLuca, Kevin. *Image Politics*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1999.

Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

--. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

--. *On the Name*. Translated by Ian McLeod. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

--. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Donnelly, Michael. "Freedom of Speech and the Politics of Silence: The Case of Ward Churchill," in *Agency in the Margins: Stories of Outsider Rhetoric*, edited by Anne Meade Stockdell-Giesler. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010.

Earth Rights International, *Total Impact 2.0: A Response to the French Oil Company Regarding its Yananda Natural Gas Pipeline in Military Ruled Burma (Myanmar)*. 2009.  
<http://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/publications/total-impact-2-0.pdf>

Farrell, Thomas B. *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Hants: Zero Books, 2009.

Fraser, Nancy. *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Foucault, Michel, "Body/Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 - 1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York: Parthenon Books, 1980.

--. "Questions of Method" in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, Translated by Robert Hurley and et al. New York: The New Press, 2000.

--. *The Courage of Truth (The Government of the Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

- , *The Government of the Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Friedman, Thomas. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution - and How it Can Renew America*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2008.
- Galloway, Alexander R. and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Greene, Ronald Walter. "The Concept of Global Citizenship in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*: A Challenge to Three Ideas of Rhetorical Mediation," in *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement*, ed. Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011.
- . *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Harmon, Graham. *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*. Peru: Open Court Publishing, 2002.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hawk, Byron. "Toward a Rhetoric of Network (Media) Culture: Notes on Polarities and Potentiality." *JAC: Special Issue on Mark C. Taylor and Emerging Network Culture* 24.4 (2004): 831-50.
- Hawk, Byron and David Rieder. Introduction. "On Small Tech and Complex Ecologies." *Small Tech: The Culture of Digital Tools*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1979.
- Hawhee, Debrah. *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).
- . *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

- Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
- Holloway, John. *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.
- Ferguson, Niall. *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2011.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Jowett, Benjamin, trans. *Plato's Timaeus*. State College: The Pennsylvania State University, 1999.
- Jullien, François, *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, Translated by Sophie Hawkes. New York: Zone Books, 2004.
- Fraser, Nancy. *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.
- Kim, Jaegwon. "On the Psycho-Physical Identity Theory." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 3 (1966):277-85.
- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Laclau, Ernesto. *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Leigh, David. *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles. *Hypermodern Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. *x-marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010.

- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Differend: Phases in Dispute*. Translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- . *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Maass, David. "Local (Wiki)Leaks," *Columbia Journalism Review* Sep/Oct2011, 50 (3): 10 -11.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.
- McCloskey, Deirdre. *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- . "Bourgeois Virtue," *American Scholar* 63 (2) (Spring): 177 – 191.
- Melamed, Jodi. "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism," *Social Text* 24 (2006): 1 – 24.
- Miller, Paul D. *Rhythm Science*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.
- Moretti, Franco. "The Grey Area: Ibsen and the Spirit of Capitalism." *The New Left Review* 61 (Jan-Feb 2010).
- Muckelbauer, John. *The Future of Invention: Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and the Problem of Change*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Murray, Joddy. *Non-discursive Rhetoric: Image and Affect in Multimodal Composition*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*, Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- . *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, Translated by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
- Nayar , Pramod K. "WikiLeaks, the New Information Cultures and Digital Parrhesia," *The Economic and Political Weekly* xlv no 52 (25 December 2010), 27 – 30.
- Olson, Lester C., "On the Margins of Rhetoric: Audre Lorde Transforming Silence into Language and Action." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 49 – 70.
- Olson, Parmy. *We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous, and the Global Cyber Insurgency*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012. Kindle edition.

- Ponce de León, Juana. "Editor's Note: "Traveling Back For Tomorrow"" in *Our World is Our Weapon: Selected Writings* by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. ed. Juana Ponce de León. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001: xxiii – xxxii.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1944.
- Politkovskaya, Anna. *Is Journalism Worth Dying For?: Final Dispatches*. Translated by Arch Tait. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2007.
- Quine, W. V. O., 1950, 'Identity, Ostension and Hyposthesis', *Journal of Philosophy*, 47, 621–33.
- Reynolds, Nedra, "Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority," *Rhetoric Review* 11 (Spring 1993): 325 – 338.
- Rickert, Thomas. *Acts of Enjoyment: Rhetoric, Žižek, and the Return of the Subject*. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.
- Rodríguez, Sergio González. *The Femicide Machine*. Translated by Michael Parker-Stainback. Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2012.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Sloop, John M. and Kent A. Ono, "Out-Law Discourses: The Critical Politics of Material Judgement," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 30 (1997), 50-69.
- . *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California's Proposition 187*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.
- Sandoval, Chela, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Sapir, Edward. *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921.
- Sassen, Saskia. *Territory Authority Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006
- Schwab, Klaus. *Welcome Address*. 2009 World Economic Forum. Davos, January, 2009.
- Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

- Stockdell-Giesler, Anne Meade, "Introduction," in *Agency in the Margins: Stories of Outsider Rhetoric*, edited by Anne Meade Stockdell-Giesler. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E.. *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002.
- Thompson, E.P. "The Crime of Anonymity," in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* eds. Douglas Hay et al. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975.
- Vaneigem, Raoul. *The Revolutions of Everyday Life*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. London: Rebel Press, 2003.
- Vatz, Richard. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6 (1968): 154 – 161.
- Vickers, Brian. *In Defense of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1989.
- Virilio, Paul and Sylvère Lotringer. *Crepuscular Dawn*. Translated by Mike Taormina. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2002.
- Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2002.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1958.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Zaeske, Susan. *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *In Defense of Lost Causes*. New York: Verso, 2009.
- . *Fist As Tragedy, then as Farce*. London: Verso, 2009.
- . *Violence*. Picador: New York. 2008.