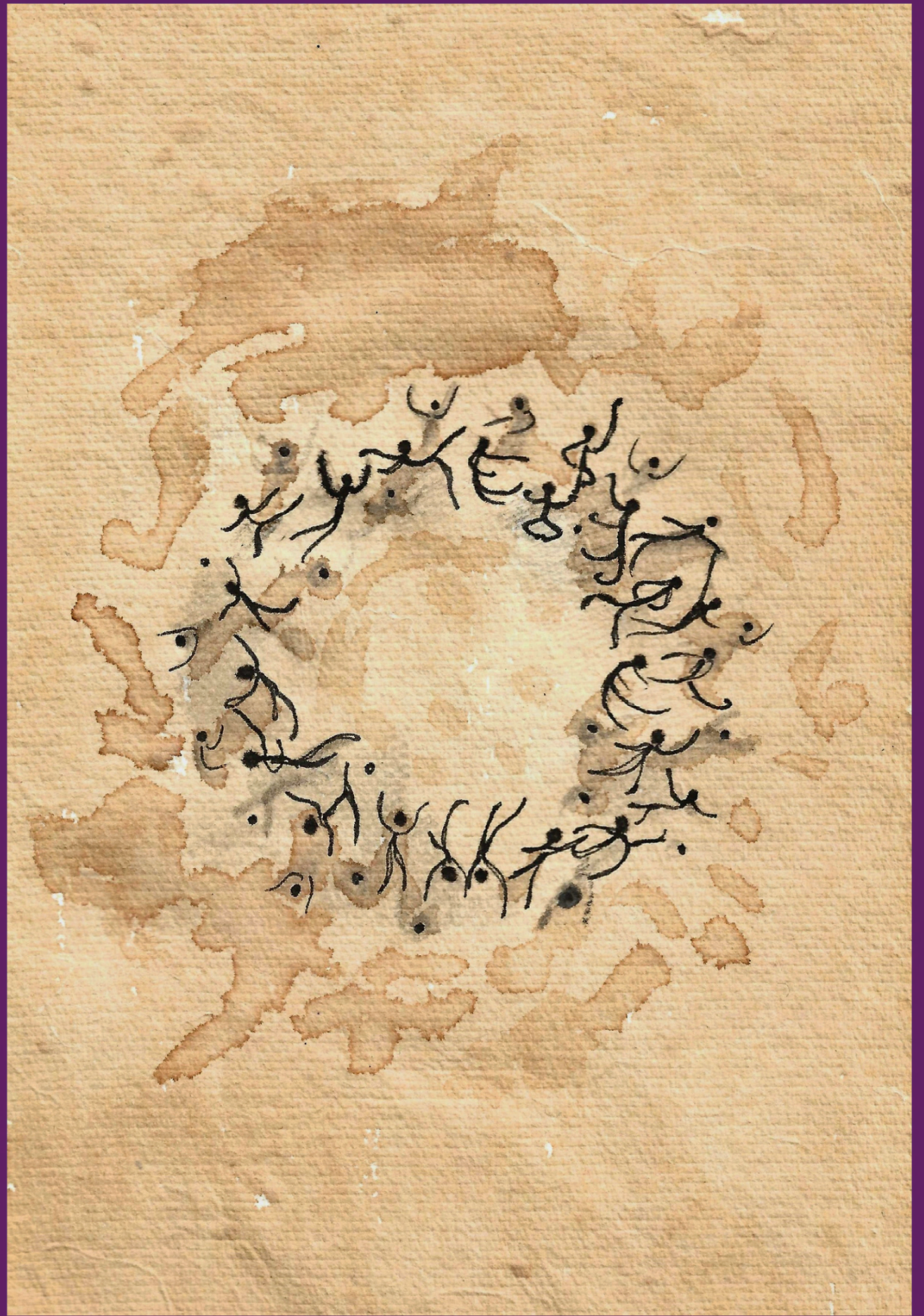


Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy

#27 | June 2026

The Politics of Feeling

Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy

www.eur.nl/esphil/esjp
www.esjp.nl
Contact: esjp@esphil.eur.nl

ISSN: 2212-9677

ESJP
#27 | 2026

Editorial

What moves us to act politically? Not just what persuades us, but what, in a deeper sense, sets us in motion? The four essays gathered in this edition share a conviction that is both simple and radical: that to ask what moves us politically is already to ask after the affective shape of our shared world. Love that refuses to be private, joy that refuses to be passive, beauty that refuses to be ornamental, and art that refuses to be silent.

That these questions now have a home in print is thanks, first and foremost, to the authors of this edition: Charlie van Dijl, Heloísa Nerone, Pepijn Op de Beek, and Alice Lucchiari. Working only from what is on the page, our editors must find each argument, press on it, and suggest changes that improve the text without ever making it their own. For the care with which this was conducted, I thank the editors who joined us this year, Felix, Johanna, Sophie, Nuria, Volodymyr, Isa, Vincent, and Joren, and those who committed to yet another year: Charlie, Héctor, Derman, and Alice.

Some people deserve particular acknowledgement. Joren supported this edition in his role as secretary, and his work made sure that everything actually ran. Charlie was both editor and author this year, managing it all while starting a new job. Alice was an author, editor, and artist: together with Camillia Iannucci, she made the cover art that opens this edition. Derman made the posters and contributed the reverse interview with Ahmet Öğüt. Georgina conducted the interview with Dr Irene van Oorschot and navigated the formatting, with her characteristic patience. I must also thank Heloísa, the previous editor-in-chief, for generously sharing her knowledge and for always being there to help me navigate the ins and outs of the job. Finally, I cannot go without thanking the members of our faculty who help to keep the journal alive by nominating texts and reviewing those we select for potential publication. This edition was built by many hands.

The idea for a themed edition was also built by many hands. During our selection meeting, the quality of submissions was high enough that several editors began to notice something: some of these papers felt connected. That observation became a conversation, and the conversation became *The Politics of Feeling*, the 27th edition of the ESJP.

The question of affect in politics is hardly new. But the essays collected here approach it with philosophical seriousness and range. What unites them is not a single answer, but a shared refusal: a refusal to accept that feeling and politics belong to separate worlds. Together, they suggest that the affective dimension of political life is where political transformation is prepared and carried out, not a detour from political philosophy, but the place where its questions are answered. How we feel in the presence of injustice, what kinds of emotion sustain or obstruct resistance, whether art can still produce genuine shocks to the senses: these are not the questions political philosophy can answer from a distance. We invite you to read these essays not only as separate inquiries, but as a conversation: one that asks, from multiple directions, what it means to feel, in both senses, one's way toward a different world.

Sterre Kanon

Editor-in-chief

ESJP
#27 | 2026

About

The Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy (ESJP) is a double-blind peer-reviewed student journal that publishes the best philosophical papers written by students from the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam and from the Humanities Programme of the Erasmus University College. Its aims are to further enrich the philosophical environment in which Rotterdam's philosophy students develop their thinking and bring their best work to the attention of a wider intellectual audience. Aside from serving as an important academic platform for students to present their work, the journal has two other goals. First, to provide members of the editorial board with the opportunity to develop their own editing and writing skills. Second, to enable students to realise their first official academic publication during their time as a student at ESPhil or the Humanities Department of the EUC. A new issue of the ESJP appears on our website every June.

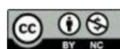
To ensure the highest possible quality, the ESJP only accepts papers that (a) have been written for a course that is part of the Erasmus University College or Erasmus School of Philosophy curriculum and (b) have been nominated for publication in the ESJP by the teacher of that course. Each paper published in the ESJP is subject to a double-blind peer-review process in which at least one other teacher and two student editors serve as referees.

The ESJP encourages students to keep in mind the possibility of publishing their course papers in our journal and to write papers that appeal to a wider intellectual audience.

Editorial Board
Sterre Kanon (Editor-in-chief)
Joren Smits (Secretary)
Héctor Emilio Martínez García
Umut Derman Tacyildiz
Charlie van Dijl
Alice Lucchiari
Volodymyr Pavlenko
Felix Hecher
Johanna Thea Kappe
Vincent Kuijper
Sophie Maris
Nuria Mainer Millan
Isa Slangen
Georgina Aránzazu Dijkstra (Interview-editor)

Advisory Board
Thijs Heijmeskamp
Jamie van der Klaauw

Supervisory Board
Prof. dr. (Liesbeth) L.H.J. Noordegraaf-Eeelens
Dr. (Constanze) C.B. Binder
Prof. dr. (Han) J.A. van Ruler



Disclaimer
Although the editors of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy have taken the utmost care in reviewing the papers in this issue, we cannot exclude the possibility that they contain inaccuracies or violate the proper use of academic referencing or copyright in general. The responsibility for these matters therefore remains with the authors of these papers and third parties that choose to make use of them entirely. In no event can the editorial board of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy or the Faculty of Philosophy of the Erasmus University Rotterdam be held accountable for the contents of these papers.

All work in this issue of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. For more information, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/

ESJP
#27 | 2026

In this Issue

In **Closures and Openings for Love in Politics through the Eyes of Hannah Arendt and bell hooks**, Charlie van Dijl explores love in politics. Although love is often appealed to in political movements, love and politics form an ambiguous pair. Two thinkers who have taken a clear stance on the relation between love and politics are Hannah Arendt and bell hooks. Arendt and hooks, each in their own way, revived the modern understanding of the public sphere and politics, by way of investigating a communal bond that is constitutive of freedom, rather than of oppression and violence. However, for Arendt love had to be excluded from such a bond, while for hooks it was an essential element. The essay takes a critical look at these two positions to understand how a communal bond based on love can and cannot succeed as a political project. The aim is to find an opening for love in politics. By radicalising Arendt's notion of action, we find that love can be both a site and a performance of political action, as long as love is understood as an activity of self-investigation, self-actualisation, and self-transformation. In this form, love holds a world-changing power.

In **Joyful Contingency: *Notes on Event and Political Affects***, Heloísa Nerone investigates the relationship between political transformation and affects through a dialogue between Alain Badiou's theory of the event and Spinoza's philosophy of affects. At the centre of the discussion is the question of how radical change becomes possible and how worlds become receptive or resistant to it based on the circulation of specific political affects. Informed by a post-foundationalist framework, the author argues that no political order is ever complete, meaning that the possibility of rupture is always present. Badiou gives us the vocabulary to define this rupture (in terms of an event) but leaves unexplored the conditions that make this transformation possible in the first place. Against this limitation, Heloísa emphasises the affective dimension of politics and the labour involved in resisting the closure of the world to change. Drawing on Spinoza, particularly through the interpretations of Gilles Deleuze and Marilena Chaui, the text analysis how affects such as fear, hope, and security shape political capacities in a 'pre-evental' moment by sustaining domination or expanding our collective power to act. Contemporary political struggles therefore acquire a central role, not as passive anticipation of a future rupture, but as practices that actively create worlds receptive to transformation.

Inspired by the barricades at Palestine solidarity protests, in **Toward an Aesthetics of the Barricade**, Pepijn Op de Beek considers barricades from an aesthetic perspective. They analyse the artistic merits of the barricade-form, emerging on the street as an anonymous and contingent montage that inspires affective revolt. In contrast, the essay critiques two barricade artworks, by Santiago Sierra and Ahmet Öğüt, as being unable to break out of the confines of their museal status as commodified fine art. Further, it critically discusses Anna Kornbluh's book *Immediacy, or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism*, relating the barricade-form to the aesthetic paradigm of immediacy that Kornbluh describes. The author, drawing on Adorno, argues that the barricade exists dialectically, functioning as critical interruption of the ruling order and as blockade against capital-flows, while also constantly at the risk of absorption into the spectacle of immediacy. Through

a critique of Kornbluh's dismissal of direct action and anti-politics as unmediated immanence, they arrive at an abolitionist viewpoint that locates barricades within relational infrastructures of insurgency.

In **Poetry as Revolution: A Philosophical Investigation Through Rancière's Theory and the Legacy of the 1946 Haitian Revolution,** Alice Lucchiari explores the role played by Surrealism in the Haitian Revolution of 1946, arguing in favour of a view of art as fundamentally political. She uses Rancière's theory to show how the forms of visibility provided by Surrealism affected a change in the distribution of the sensible in 1946 Haiti. She also engages with the work of the Martinican Surrealist poet, philosopher and politician Aimé Césaire, suggesting that the political power of the poetic word can be understood in terms of incantation.

A Correspondence Between Ahmet Öğüt and Derman. Today, protests and demonstrations, facilitated by social media and partially liberated from traditional gatekeepers, have become a far more accessible (if often episodic) experience. Yet, much like in Dresden in 1849, even the most compelling ideas must still contend with institutions and challenge prevailing social norms. This interview by Umut Derman Tacyildiz is certainly an unusual one. The idea emerged from the frequent references to Bakunin's Barricade (2015) throughout this issue of ESJP and in ESPhil lectures. Perhaps serving as a potential trigger point for Habermas scholars, this exchange departs from the conventions of the textbook interview. Rather than presenting a polished question-and-answer format, what follows is an electronic correspondence between two individuals that is perhaps better understood as a Deleuzian process of "becoming." There are even some interesting geography facts!

On Spells and Situations*: An Interview with Dr Irene van Oorschot.* For this edition, our interview editor Georgina Aránzazu Dijkstra spoke with Dr Irene van Oorschot (ESSB). Originally trained as an anthropologist, Irene has worked across sociology, legal studies, science and technology studies, feminist scholarship, and decolonial ecology. Her research follows the often-overlooked material practices through which worlds are held together: from judges grappling with case files and digital systems, to the production of forensic knowledge in courtrooms, and foresters grappling with uncertain climate futures in the Dutch forests of *Staatsbosbeheer*. Inspired by Isabelle Stengers' call to "give situations the power to make us think," Irene and Georgina reflect on philosophy beyond detached critique, as a situated, collective, and caring practice. Staying with forests, courtrooms, animals, and other companions in thought, they ask what becomes possible when concepts remain close to the worlds that gave rise to them, and what our concepts, and our wagers, might yet conjure.

ESJP
#27 | 2026

Table of contents

Closures and Openings for Love in Politics through the Eyes of Hannah Arendt and bell hooks
Charlie van Dijl **8 – 16**

Joyful Contingency: *Notes on Event and Political Affects*
Heloísa Nerone **17 – 27**

Toward an Aesthetics of the Barricade
Pepijn Op de Beek **28 – 41**

Poetry as Revolution: *A Philosophical Investigation Through Rancière's Theory and the Legacy of the 1946 Haitian Revolution*
Alice Lucchiari **42 – 48**

A Correspondence Between Ahmet Öğüt and Derman
Umut Derman Tacyildiz **49 – 54**

On Spells and Situations: *An Interview with Dr Irene van Oorschot*
Georgina Aránzazu Dijkstra **55 – 63**

ESJP #27 | 2026

Closures and Openings for Love in Politics through the Eyes of Hannah Arendt and bell hooks

Charlie van Dijl

> "Those of us who have already chosen to embrace a love ethic, allowing it to govern and inform how we think and act, know that when we let our light shine, we draw to us and are drawn to other bearers of light. We are not alone."
>
> — bell hooks, *All About Love*

Love is often appealed to in political movements. Protesters that march for solidarity and peace commonly chant lines like "Make love, not war", "Love trumps hate" and "Love is a form of resistance". The thought is that love, based on an understanding of shared humanity, can form a basis for solidarity that politically moves us to fight for actions that relieve the burdens causing harm and injustices to fellow humans. At the same time, love and politics might not seem an intuitive pair. Love is commonly known as that delicate bodily experience of intimacy, care and warmth, and politics can be thought of as a coarse, unpredictable public activity, in which a voice becomes (and at times disappears as) one of many voices. Then, in order to make the case for love as a bonding instrument that advocates for justice and political freedom, it is important to investigate what love means, what it demands from lovers and what it can achieve politically.

Two thinkers that have taken a clear stance on the relation between love and politics are Hannah Arendt and bell hooks. Whilst reflecting on modern twentieth-century society and the historical events that shaped it, Arendt and hooks, each in their own way, revived the modern understanding of the public sphere and politics, by way of investigating a communal bond that is constitutive of freedom, rather than of oppression and violence. However, for Arendt love had to be excluded from such a bond, while for hooks it was an essential element.

The reflections of Arendt and hooks remain insightful in today's context. Over the past decades, populist forces have been threatening liberal democracies across the world, with one of the most prominent effects being the increased polarisation amongst communities (Roberts 2022, 1). By magnifying similarities amongst group members and stressing differences with so-called outsiders, polarisation has given way to a political narrative of inclusion and exclusion, strengthening the belief that the ruling majority holds power to serve its own good, and its own good alone (Urbinati 2019, 6). This complicates political decision making and governance in numerous significant ways, but simply also makes it more difficult to live together in

society. Therefore, it is high time to search for a politics that bonds people together, but simultaneously embraces differences.

In this essay, we take a critical look at the positions of Arendt and hooks to understand how, in their views, a communal bond based on love can and cannot be successful as a political project. By radicalising Arendt's notion of action, we will find that love can be both a site and a performance of political action, as long as love is understood as an activity of self-investigation, self-actualisation, and self-transformation. I argue that such a critical love can change the world.

In search of a politics of freedom: Arendt and hooks

Hannah Arendt and bell hooks were both interested in the meaning of a politics of freedom and its tensions with the political events of their times, but their starting points, approaches, and writing styles were rather distinctive.

Arendt (1906-1975) was a German political theorist and was educated in the classical Western tradition of philosophy. She was largely influenced by her teachers, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, founders of phenomenology, the field in philosophy that studies the world as it appears through human experience. Having fled from Germany to the United States during the Second World War, Arendt criticised the classical philosophical tradition, arguing that its moral and political categories were ill-suited to comprehend the devastating events of the twentieth century, that is, Nazism and Stalinism (Tömmel and Passerin d'Entreves 2025). In order to come to terms with these events and bring new life to our understanding of the nature of politics, she dedicated her philosophical work to human political existence and the conditions that both grant and limit this special human capacity. She studied when in history these conditions have been undermined, and drew on concepts and examples from the Ancient Greeks, Christianity and Marxism. Although Arendt refrained from theoretical system-building, the red threads that run through her writings do form a systematic and detailed understanding of the world (Canovan 1992, 6). Moreover, Arendt's motivation to write came from her own desire to understand the nature of human existence on earth (Canovan 1992, 2). Therefore, Arendt did not make a large effort to communicate her ideas to a broad audience in a digestible manner, nor was she explicit about a political agenda aiming to ignite some kind of activism.

During the time Arendt was writing her most important works, bell hooks (1952-2021) grew up in segregated Hopkinsville in an Afro-American working-class family. hooks became a celebrated cultural critic, feminist theorist and writer and was greatly influenced by the experiences of her upbringing. She studied English literature and devoted her career to writing and teaching about the intersection of racism, feminism, and capitalism. In her work, hooks dissected ways that could liberate people from dominant and oppressive structures, specifically by explaining the struggles we go through as individuals and collectives (Biana 2021, 129). hooks was continuously connecting theoretical concepts, novels, and artworks to the level of personal experience. For one, because her own personal experiences reveal a friction with established theories and popular media. Secondly, because hooks was motivated to urge readers into the self-transformation she foresees for political change.

In this way, the works of Arendt and hooks read very differently. Arendt's writings are condensed, complex and often distant, whereas, hook's work is written in an accessible, vulnerable way, such that readers can relate to her thoughts and internalize them. Thus, to bring the two thinkers together is not self-evident.

However, I argue that their works share a search for a politics that allows all inhabitants of the earth to bring into the world their uniqueness: a politics of freedom. For there exist similarities in the ideas of Arendt and hooks on what activities and conditions should be met in order to actualize such a politics. They both reimagined the public sphere and politics and concluded that they required a recognition of the existence of others, and an activity that reveals the self to others. Moreover, Arendt and hooks both reserve a specific place for love in their work. Since both writers come to conflicting conclusions on the role of love in politics, whilst sharing ideas on what a politics of freedom should look like, I argue that Arendt and hooks together can teach us about the strengths and pitfalls of love as a communal bond in politics. But, before we can interweave their perspectives and discover a communal bond that leaves space for (loving) political action, without resulting in a subversion of politics, we must set out and even the playing field of the two authors. What did each of these thinkers mean by love and politics, and the relationship between the two?

Politics and apolitical love in the work of Hannah Arendt

In *The Human Condition* (1958), her most prominent philosophical work, Arendt argued that human existence is fundamentally political because of the condition of plurality. Plurality refers to the fact that we are a multitude of people, simultaneously different and alike. As we all have our unique positionalities, we have to make ourselves known to others through speech and action, in order to confirm and build our shared world (Arendt [1958] 1998, 176). Politics must be understood precisely as this performance of action, which has the potential to bring into the world the radical newness that belongs to each unique positionality and to change the course of history [Arendt 1958] 1998, 7–9).

Yet, Arendt observed that modern society is undermining possibilities for action, because in modern mass society, the lasting common ground to which we can all equally relate, the site of political action, does not appear to us. Because of the rise of the capitalist economy and the scientific revolution, modern society is preoccupied with the satisfaction of our private material needs, causing an infinite production of consumer goods. This is problematic to the condition of plurality, for consumer goods do not build a world of lasting presence, but one that is consumed. Arendt concluded that we are alienated from the world we build, inhabit and most importantly, share (Arendt [1958] 1998, 248–256). Furthermore, our private material needs have become the subject of our politics in the public sphere, which blurs the lines between these strictly separated spheres and causes spaces for action to collapse (Arendt [1958] 1998, 29, 50–58). While the public sphere is accessible to all and world-affirming, the private sphere is concealed from the world, which makes matters of the private household, the body, and mind, opaque, unreliable, mysterious, and inaccessible for shared perception (Arendt [1958] 1998, 50–51). Consequently, when politics is based on matters that are concealed from common experience, the condition of plurality is undermined, because there is no equal opportunity for all to relate to the same world and express to each other the unique positionality one takes within that world. In short, in modern mass society, we have lost our shared world because it is no longer created physically, rather our creations are immediately consumed. In addition, the

world is not acted upon through our politics because the public sphere is overthrown with private affairs (Arendt [1958] 1998, 52). Therefore, Arendt hoped to revive this shared world (and politics), by way of investigating a communal bond that ties people together and at the same time upholds plurality (Chiba 1995, 510).

Importantly, the communal bond cannot be love, considering that in Arendt's view, love is a bodily emotion and can easily fall prey to passionate outburst and emotional bias (Chiba 1995, 511). As sentiment, love is a private affair, always concealed from the world. Love dissolves the boundary between people, which unites them into a couple or group. In this way, love renounces plurality by "[destroying] the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others" (Arendt [1958] 1998, 242). For example, compassion, being a form of love, dissolves the boundary between the miserable and the onlooker, because the latter unites themselves with the experience that belongs to the sufferer (Reinalda 2022, 191). Consequently, by placing oneself in the position of the other, the heterogeneity of positions disappears, and the space with potential for political action collapses.[1] Thus, for Arendt, love is apolitical and can never be put in service of political worldly affairs without becoming sentimental or overthrowing the public sphere with private matters (Arendt [1958] 1998, 52).

Instead, Arendt proposes the communal bond of *amor mundi*, a love of the world. Being mortals, we have a burning desire for earthly and worldly immortality (Chiba 1995, 518) and have a duty to build a world and bring into it things, actions, and words that outlive us (Arendt [1958] 1998, 18). Our creations, actions and deeds materialize into objects, buildings, monuments, artworks, and writings, and build a world of lasting presence that appears to us all, granting the world durability and objectivity (Arendt [1958] 1998, 137). This durable world, in which we all take our own unique position, allows for an objective relation to others. The communal bond is literally our common ground. We can meaningfully explain our own unique positionalities towards one another, meaning to act our politics, precisely because these positionalities refer to the same world. By reminding us of this love for our common ground, Arendt helps us understand that a politics of freedom requires acknowledging that we are all connected through the world, that is constitutive of our unique selves (Chiba 1995, 533).

Yet, this *amor mundi* should not be mistaken with the natural, emotional, bodily experience of love. Rather, it is an objective idea, created and actualized by the world-building activities of human beings. In this way, Arendt places the communal bond for her politics of freedom in the artificial dimension of human existence on purpose, because *there* the bond remains accessible to all and cannot fall prey to any kind of dangerous anti-political admiration of naturalistic ideas of humankind, like a shared origin, nationality, ethnicity, race, family, religion, or the body (Chiba 1995, 508–509).

[1] According to Arendt, the French Revolution failed partly because the Jacobins tried to establish unanimity amongst and for the new regime based on compassion as pity. The leaders of the new regime had as object for their politics the suffering of the poor and used their compassion as a means for political decision making. Considering the poor as one uniform group with one will, the revolutionaries silenced the poor by neglecting different positionalities amongst sufferers, killing politics. See Reinalda 2022.

Love as an act of resistance in bell hooks

In her most famous work *All about love* (2001), bell hooks developed a concept of love that functions as a political act, resisting the oppressive structures of modern society. She built her work on an understanding of politics as a dimension of human existence that shapes society, culture and communal relationships. hooks did not define politics herself, but while developing her feminist theory, she often explicated the relationship between political and philosophical ideology and society, culture and community. In hooks' view, politics is an activity. It is an approach to the world through which one actualises relationships and the structures of society. One example is the political approach of "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy", which has led to relationships and structures of domination (hooks 1982, 27). In response to such structures of domination, hooks aimed to find a new ethic, that relieved all forms of oppression.

Like Arendt, hooks recognised that the public sphere in the twentieth century is signified by a desire for the satisfaction of our material needs (hooks 2001,105). This modern materialism is aimed at the "I" and makes us forget about others. Therefore, hooks believed that an act of politics that is constitutive of freedom, requires a recognition of the existence of others and of a bond that brings them together. In turn, this revolutionary approach to the world is love (Biana 2021, 129).

hooks builds on M. Scott Peck's definition of love as "an act of will — namely both an intention and an action" (Scott Peck 1978, quoted in hooks 2001, 4–5). This will is directed at nurturing one's own "spiritual growth" and that of another (hooks 2001, 6). Love as a will means that it is a choice and does not come easy. Love is a path of learning, and therefore, it is a recurring practice. "Growing up is, at heart, the process of learning to take responsibility for whatever happens in your life" (hooks 2001, 209). To choose love means addressing our fears, so they will not stand in the way of how we think and act. Since our fears will not go away, love is not so much about learning how to block fear, but rather about learning how to navigate it. In this way, love is self-actualisation and self-transformation, a manner of understanding one's own situatedness in the world and bringing the renewed self out into the open.

Moreover, following M. Scott Peck's definition, love does not only concern the self, but is aimed at others too. "The choice of love is a choice to connect — to find ourselves in the other." (hooks 2001, 93). Love is about understanding and embracing each other's differences (Biana 2021, 132).

For hooks, love requires self-investigation, and therefore, it is a form of critique that reveals patterns in one's historical, cultural and political situatedness. By bringing these structures to light, they can be critiqued and thought anew, which changes the self and, accordingly, the world. Love thus harbours a critical political consciousness with the potential of transforming the world, it is an act of resistance (Biana 2021, 132). In addition, love, whether romantic, platonic, familial or sacred, is about openness, honesty, integrity, and care (hooks 2001, 88). Therefore, abuse, neglect, and domination cannot find a place within these relationships, nor in a culture of love (hooks 2001, 6). In this way, the act of love cannot result in a politics of domination. Love bonds people together while simultaneously upholding each other's differences, which frees them politically.

Making way for love in politics

Considering the positions of the two thinkers on love and politics, we find an interesting crossover. Namely, for both Arendt and hooks, a politics of freedom requires a recognition of one's own position in the world and the difference of this position with that of others. Moreover, an activity is needed that affirms this positionality — brings it out into the open, without losing sight of what connects this unique position to others, who have a unique position of their own. For Arendt, it is *amor mundi* that reminds us that we are connected through our common ground and action is the consequent activity to uphold plurality. For hooks, love simultaneously encompasses the recognition of one's situatedness amongst others and is the activity that reveals the self to the world. Then, we must ask: can love, in hook's terms, be equated to Arendt's action?

The short answer is no. We learned that Arendt excludes love from politics as a private matter that constitutes uniformity amongst people, rather than plurality. All love that concerns bodily sentiment is prone to emotional bias and seclusion from the shared world, and consequently cannot form the communal bond that is necessary for action. For this reason, contrary to hooks, Arendt introduces the communal bond *amor mundi*, a theoretical concept that is objective, stable and equally accessible to all, through time and space.

However, I argue that by breaking through Arendt's sharp private/public distinction, we make room to interweave her idea of political action and hooks' notion of love, without immediately resulting in a collapse of politics. In *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt,* Bonnie Honig builds upon Arendt's theory but radicalizes her notion of the public realm, because she is critical of the idea that political action does not extend to the private realm. Therefore, Honig disentangles the public sphere from a specific geography, away from the physical earth, and reinterprets the public realm as "a metaphor for a variety of (agonistic) spaces, both topographical and conceptual, that might occasion action" (Honig 1995, 146). In Honig's interpretation of Arendt, sites for action are no longer confined to physical spaces equally accessible to all, but may concern a much broader range of spaces that can be physical, as well as conceptual. This does not mean that suddenly everything is politicised, but rather that "nothing can be ontologically protected from politicization" (Honig 1995, 147). In this way, sites of action might be the body with all its different features, the physical world, nature, God, technology or any kind of instance with respect to which every being takes a unique position. Consequently, now that we have broken through the private/public distinction through Honig's radicalisation of the public sphere, the intimate embodied experience of love is no longer banned from political territory, and we can examine in what way hooks 'notion of love can function as a site of action.

To begin with, I argue that love upholds plurality, rather than subverts it. In hooks 'terms, love starts with an investigation of the self. It means to become aware of and reflect on the ideas of the self, of others and the world that are rooted in our bodies and affect all of our actions. In this way, love reveals the positionality of the self with respect to others and the world, but also makes way for recognition of the self in others. Love thus fosters both individuality and interdependency. For this reason, as a communal bond, love embraces plurality and forms a site for action.

Furthermore, we can start to think about love as a performance of action itself. For hooks' interpretation of love as a verb, as self-investigation, self-actualisation, and self- and world-transformation, shows important similarities with political action as understood by Arendt and Honig. Because love starts with reflecting on the self and its position in the world, it allows one to discover which selves are possible beyond an identity that is bound by fear and essence. In this sense, love has the potential to understand the "I" and the structures that determine culture, politics and society in new and unexpected ways and to transform the self (hooks 2001, 209). Through self-actualisation, this transformed self is brought into the world and revealed to others. It is one's attempt to show up to others and explain to them who you are. Furthermore, as reflective practice, love harbours a critical political consciousness, which means that love not only has the potential to transform the self, but also the world. With every attempt to publicly show the renewed self, through every act of love, novel ideas and actions set foot in the world and shape our politics. In this way, love is, like action an activity that brings into the world the new and unexpected and with it, the potential to change the course of history.

Summarising, the long answer to the question of equating hooks' notion of love to Arendt's notion of action is yes. After building on Honig's radicalisation of action we find that love is simultaneously a site and a performance of action, a noun and verb.

However, before we surrender to love as political practice, it is important to pay attention to the difference between *amor mundi* and love as starting points of action and uncover potential risks. Love is like *amor mundi* a site of action, but they are not the same. *Amor mundi* is an artificial and objective idea that reminds us of our common ground and connects people because they share an earth. Love is a natural, embodied and intimate experience and connects people because they share life. Right here, we must recall that Arendt brought forward *amor mundi* as a communal bond for a politics of freedom, precisely because she was worried that a bond relying on the natural dimension of human existence could fall prey to any kind of dangerous anti-political admiration of essentialist identities, subverting plurality and political freedom. So, when we argue that love is a starting point for action, like *amor mundi*, we are challenged to ask whether love, by virtue of its embodied and natural properties, inevitably sets forth fixed and essentialist identities.

I argue that any form of essentialism does not arise from love itself, but from a misunderstanding of what it means to love, when we believe it will lead to a final conclusion on the self and the other, on our history and our future. Or, when we refuse to face the historical production of what is in- and outside of us and consequentially become loveless instead. Acting (from) love always means self-investigation, self-actualisation, and self-transformation. Therefore, following hooks' interpretation, love resists essentialism, because the critical dimension of love reveals the historical, cultural and social layers that constitute the fixed identities of essentialism, and as a result changes these "identities" permanently.

Then, what we should be wary of when we act (from) love in politics, is to not love blindly, but to love critically. This requires a connection between mind and body, a consciousness of feeling. It means to think critically about what one feels and to feel consciously when one speaks, because through feelings we connect to one another and through words and deeds we make ourselves known, and reveal to each other our unique positions. Only in this form, love can function as a performance of political action, because

critical love debunks fixed identities and constitutes relationships that uphold plurality, fostering both individuality and interdependence.

Love, a world-changing activity

The goal of this essay was to find an opening for love in politics. Studying the positions of Arendt and hooks on love and politics, I showed that love can be both a site and a performance of political action, when it is understood as an approach to the world that concerns self-investigation, self-actualisation, and self- and world-transformation. Love harbours a critical consciousness that activates the self to think about one's positionality with respect to others, while it also establishes a bond between people. In this way, love upholds plurality and can function as a performance of action, which proves love has a worthy place in politics.

Even so, when we make appeals to love in politics, we must remember it is not a call for some simple undertaking by means of which we start liking each other, such that we can agree on everything. The possibility of anti-political essentialism is always lurking around the corner. Therefore, it is vital to understand that to act (from) love in politics means to love critically. Love is a noun and a verb, both thought and work, a joint effort of mind and body. To choose love means to investigate what resides in- and outside of us, to confront discomfort, pain and fear and to think the self anew. Love requires a continuous effort, but when it is actualised, the outcome is of significant importance.

For the attitude of critical love makes way for actual political change. Against the stream of polarisation, which divides groups over similarities and differences, love bonds people together through their likeness and diversity. Then, bonded together by love, the reflective aspect of love brings to the surface those structures that compromise freedom, which consequently offers lovers the possibility to make amends with their past and to think the present anew, such that the future is not a mere repetition of the past. Brought to the surface by love, any politics of polarisation and oppression lay bare and fragile, awaiting to be crushed and changed by those with a big heart. No, when we choose love, we rise to the occasion of resistance and surrender to be reborn through action, endlessly. We make love and politics.

References

Arendt, Hannah. (1958) 1998. *The Human Condition*. University of Chicago Press.

Biana, Hazel T. 2021. "Love as an Act of Resistance: bell hooks on Love". In *Love and Friendship Across Cultures,* edited by S. Hongladarom and J.J. Joaquin. Springer.

Canovan, Margaret. 1992. Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought. Cambridge University Press.

Chiba, Shin. 1995. "Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship, and Citizenship." *The Review of Politics* 57 (3): 505–35.

Honig, Bonnie. 1995. "Towards an Agonistic Feminism." In *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, edited by Bonnie. Honig. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

hooks, bell. 1982. *Ain't I a Woman. Black Women and Feminism*. Pluto Press.

hooks, bell. 2001. *All About Love: New Visions*. HarperCollins Publishers.

Reinalda, Allegra. 2022. "The Cruel and Benevolent Knife: Hannah Arendt's Critique of Compassion in Politics." *Critical Horizons* 23 (2): 188–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/14409917.2022.2081411

Roberts, Kenneth M. 2022. " Populism and Polarization in Comparative Perspective: Constitutive, Spatial and Institutional Dimensions." *Government and Opposition* 57 (4): 680–702.

Tömmel, Tatjana, and Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves. 2025. 'Hannah Arendt.' In Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2025 edition, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archIves/spr2025/entries/arendt/.

Urbinati, Nadia. 2019. *Me the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy*. Harvard University Press.

ESJP
#27 | 2026

Joyful Contingency: *Notes on Event and Political Affects*

Heloísa Nerone

To say that we live in tumultuous times is an understatement. Televised genocide, ethnic cleansing, coup d'état attempts in Western countries, abrogation of minorities' rights, dismantling of public institutions and social safety nets, rampant industrial expansion despite the climate crisis—the list goes on. All of this, of course, does not go without resistance, but both the spontaneous and organised struggles we see emerging around us do not seem to be able to reach the radical change they aim for. The market stumbles here and there, but things seem to go on as usual. Why is that so?

In the following pages, I propose to analyse the question of effectiveness of political action through the lenses of *affects*. We will follow the idea that affects are central for thinking about political change. If affects are a constitutive part of human existence, they also permeate the political struggles we take on together in the form of *political* affects. They do so in the Spinozian sense, as the emotions and passions that drive collective action and politics in general and, more importantly, as *marks of power*. I believe that affects are a fundamental part of the conditions under which radical political transformation becomes possible.

The text will move between two lines, first setting out a way to think of political change as an immanent part of reality, and then turning to the role of affects within it. This ontological structure of political change will be briefly discussed in the first section of the text through a post-foundationalist framework, a position I consider to be very powerful insofar as it treats political systems as necessarily temporary configurations, always exposed to competing claims and forces. Within this framework, I work specifically with Alain Badiou, because of his focus on the *turning points* in politics – which he calls *events* – that have the potential to bring about radical change, in the sense of fundamentally opposing the status quo. Badiou's ontology only makes sense if we assume the possibility of *revolution*, of a movement *radically* breaking with "business as usual" – the contours of which will not be the object of discussion here. Nonetheless, I use Badiou in a stretched way, not necessarily thoroughly committed to his ontology; in the second section, we will explore some of his shortcomings, especially those related to the political activity in times that *precede* events, which open a fruitful path to think about political affects. We will discuss the double role of affects as *result* of events, but also (and more importantly), *pre-conditions* for events to emerge in the first place. In other words, we will use Badiou as a starting point to defend the position that radical political change requires a world that is *receptive* to this change, something that is conditioned by the *affects* circulating in this world.

In the second half of the text, we will most concretely investigate *which* political affects are in play in this process, that is, which affective configurations can act as a catalyst for political change, and how they

can be fostered. For this, I turn to Spinoza – through the interpretations of Gilles Deleuze and Marilena Chaui –who believed that affects are the main drive of politics and can therefore provide us with the necessary vocabulary for our investigation. Spinoza already appears in Badiou's work, but mainly at the level of method; here, I follow a different line. Both Deleuze and Chaui, who contemporize Spinoza's work, focus on affects and on how they are produced and organised, allowing us to take a closer look at the affective dimensions of politics. Just as with Badiou, I will not do a full or systematic reading of Spinoza but try to propose a generative reading of his work on affects in connection to the post-foundationalist framework, despite the tensions that might arise from this combination. With Spinoza, we can think about how collective dispositions form and shift; also, we ask which affective configurations can support political change, and how they might be sustained over time—which is a fundamental problem for Badiou and for the effectiveness of political action in general.

Ontology of political change and the event

As mentioned, Badiou conceptualises radical political change through the notion of the *event*. For him, an event is a disruption in the state of the situation. In other words, putting Badiou's specific vocabulary aside for a second, an event occurs when *something* happens that shatters the status quo, so radically that we lose the necessary reference points from which we could make sense of what happened. We are talking about very profound political changes, which are, for this very reason, not something we experience every day.[1] The main point here is that Badiou opens up the space to think about other possible configurations of political and social orders. How does he do that?

In Badiou's ontology, reality is a multiplicity that is presented in different *situations,* which structure our experience in specific ways. Implied in the *specific* is that it is not the only *possible* way—there is always something that exceeds reality, something that does not belong, that is not counted, absolutely unpresentable from the point of view of the situation (Badiou 2005, 53). Nonetheless, the situation presents itself as a unitary whole, *as if* there is no outside of it. More precisely, the situation is *represented* by the *state of the situation* (or simply, the state),[2] the system of rules that counts, organises, names, and categorises the elements of the situation, maintaining its consistency and actively reinforcing it. And the situation must be reinforced, otherwise it would be too vulnerable to the interjection of that which does not belong to it. What the state does is to actively ensure, by force or (as I will defend) through the modulation of collective affective moods, that we are not able to recognise anything besides the consistent multiple, as if nothing exists outside of the situation, *as if the situation is universal and true*. This is why, for Badiou, the essence of politics (and, therefore, of the event) is emancipatory, since it is, by definition, directed against the state (Marchart 2007, 121); in other words, without an emancipatory and egalitarian core, we will never talk about an event, but a moment that reinforces the situation.

---

1 Badiou gives only a limited number of historical examples that would fall into this category, including the French Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871, the October Revolution of 1917, and May 1968 (Badiou 2006).

2 According to Peter Hallward, in his introduction to Badiou's *Ethics* (2001, ix), "Badiou's use of the term 'state' incorporates a classically Marxist understanding of the political state as much as it overlaps with a simple intuitive understanding of the 'status quo.'"

The language of logic and set theory used here is abstract, but we can make this more concrete by thinking, for example, being faithful to his Marxist heritage, of the way in which capitalist ideology works to conceal certain aspects of reality, while presenting the system as natural and inevitable. We can also think of Foucault's regimes of truth, referring to the systems of rules, institutions, and discourses that define what is accepted as true in a specific historical context. Badiou is giving us an ontological account, so he is on a different register than the one of ideology or discourse, but the kind of logic operating here is the same.

The event, therefore, erupts from the excess that remained confined, or 'kettled,' as it were, in the space of the excluded part of the situation. It cannot be predicted, "as it constitutes a break with all available knowledge, procedures or calculation that could allow for a prediction" (Marchart 2007, 117). In this sense, the event simultaneously belongs and does not belong to the situation: on one hand, it emerges from the non-counted part of reality and challenges the situation; on the other hand, it also belongs to the situation insofar as we can identify it once it has happened. The event itself is counted and recognisable, even though its individual elements are not: it is "a multiple 'admitted' into the count without having to result from 'previous' counts" (Badiou 2005, 175).

The *recognition* of an event is, for Badiou, more important than the moment of the event itself. Political rupture lies in the choice to retroactively recognise the event and act accordingly (Johnston 2008, 120). This is when the task of politics starts, by giving consistency to the event and sustaining its effects. In this sense, "insofar as (Badiou emphasizes this point again and again) a true Event is not merely a negative gesture, but opens up a positive dimension of the New, an Event IS the imposition of a new world" (Žižek 2007). This imposition will be carried out by the political subject, which emerges through *fidelity* to the event—that is, a continuous commitment to the unfolding of the consequences of what has happened—, a process marked by a series of decisive moments (also called *points*), where the subject must choose how to continue in relation to the event (Badiou 2018, 341). These points are not given in advance; they are situations where the subject must actively intervene, deciding what the event demands in concrete terms. From this point of view, we can say that the initial event is only an *opening*, which may or may not be seized.

Whether a point can be treated depends not only on the subject's will, but on the structure of the world in which they act. For Badiou, the event can only actually challenge the situation if it happens in a world that is neither atonic, stable, inconsequential, inactive nor inorganic (Badiou 2018, 426). A tensed world, for example, is one charged with intensity, where things matter; an *atonic* world, on the contrary, is dull, "so ramified and nuanced—or so quiescent and homogeneous—that no instance of the Two, and consequently no figure of decision, is capable of evaluating them" (2018, 361). Similarly, a *stable* world is too rigidly ordered, with no (visible) cracks or contradictions to be exploited, so that change appears unnecessary or impossible—no events arise, just facts or mere modifications (2018, 426). What Badiou is saying is that, for an event to actually happen (that is, for us to be able to recognise it and for its effects to unfold), the world must be already alive and with conflict, significance and potential, even if those forces are not yet fully visible. The world must be *at risk*.

Political change as affective change

Radical political change, therefore, can only come about in a very specific conjuncture, one that allows for the emergence of the event and, at the same time, is dynamic and structured enough to sustain the work of politics. Atonic and stable worlds (to stick to the same examples explored above) are not merely abstract conditions, but descriptions of environments in which people are unable to perceive ruptures as meaningful or to pursue the consequences of these ruptures. As we noted in the introduction, market stumbles here and there in the face of political unrest, but things seem to go on as usual. If the world's configuration in the *present* hinders *future* political transformation, and if these configurations are related to the way in which we *experience* and *perceive* change, then an affective analysis of the world we find ourselves in is necessary to ground political action.

To do so, however, we need to go beyond Badiou. Badiou's ontology secures the *formal* possibility of change, by insisting that no situation is ever complete, giving a philosophical delineation to the political intuition that things can be otherwise. But by defining an event as unpredictable and incalculable, Badiou proscribes the contemplation of *preconditions* for events (Johnston 2008, 105). As we just saw above at the end of the previous section, the more palpable part of Badiou's theory, regarding the work politics, is completely focused on the *post-evental* moment, what happens after the event. In this view, we—the political actors of the present—are given no role in the emergence of the event itself. Our job only starts afterwards, when we are given the chance to choose, retroactively, whether what just happened will or will not be named as an event, and if we will remain faithful to it in the political decisions to come. But assuming that we are not currently living amidst an event, if radical political change seems out of reach, the question then becomes: what do political struggles stand for in the meantime? Do they not have any role in the constitution of a world that is receptive to an event—in other words, do they not shape the terrain on which future events become possible? Here we turn the *affective* dimension of political change, because it allows to think about conditions of possibility for the eruption of an event and account for the experience of the subjects who exist before an evental rupture, and yet somehow remain faithful to the possibility that something new *could* happen.

We should note that affects are not without a place in Badiou's thought, but they are mostly treated as the *result* of events. For Badiou, enthusiasm, pleasure, happiness, and joy, are the anthropological signs of the new relationship brought about by events; on the other hand, terror, anxiety, courage, and justice are signs of the subjective engagement in the follow-up of the event (Johnston 2008, 119). Badiou makes an interesting use of courage, specifically, in the process of *forcing*, understood as the post-evental activity through which the political subject must *act as if* the unforeseeable consequences of the event are already present, *as if* the radical change has already taken place. The commitment to an event requires that we have confidence in a fiction of a world-to-come, anticipating its results. This is a necessary fiction as it inspires courage in the political subjects, an affect that will enable "the subject-of-an-event to make choices whose calculability and outcomes aren't given in advance by the existent re/presentational order of the state-of-the-situation" (Johnston 2008, 109). This is a great example of how a certain affective disposition can serve as catalyst for political change. Nonetheless, courage and other political affects remain confined in the post-evental moment, and, in Badiou's opinion, it is not as important for the unfolding of the event as the

act of naming what has occurred and is still occurring (Johnston 2008, 111). Through the act of naming, the subject, in a performative fashion, decides what belongs to the event and what does not, and recognises new elements that the old situation did not acknowledge as such. This is more than a description and has an ontological force as it transforms what is visible and sayable. Thus, the subject must name what the event makes possible (or intelligible) and remain faithful to it. Political affects would follow from the subject's fidelity to the event, and not as central component of this fidelity.

Yet, considering the relation between the event and the situation, the conditions for an event to unfold, and the active attempt by the situation to block these conditions, are there not enough reasons for thinking differently about the status of affects, especially the role they play *before* the event and the process of subjectivation? Could we not argue that courage, for example, is not just a feeling the subject has after naming an event, but what makes naming and forcing possible in the first place, as the affective condition that sustains the subject through uncertainty? This is what Adrian Johnston does, for example, when he defends the existence of a "pre-evental form of forcing" (Johnston 2008, 5), that is, the willingness to believe in transformation in the absence of any guarantee that such change is possible—something that by itself would challenge the atonicity of a world, paving the way for transformation to *actually* happen. Reversely, we can also think of circumstances where affects can undermine political transformation: think of the anxiety of "non-evental claustrophobia, the agitated, nervous feeling of being trapped in the stasis of a system that seems to be highly resistant to extreme and extensive modifications" (Johnston 2008, 28). If we are stuck in such an anxious state, the work of actively looking for tension points in the situation becomes hard and, once again, change becomes a matter of chance.

Modulation of affects, domination, and the situation

What we want to do, therefore, is to recognise the labour political movements perform in resisting the closure of the world to change, and at the same time explain how subjects become attuned to a break that has not yet happened, which then give us a different perspective to think about political action in our non-evental conjecture. What makes someone engage with the desire for political change in the first place? After all, even in the absence of an event, subjects are never neutral or unaffected—affects like anxiety, fear, hope, or frustration saturate pre- and post-evental life and can be politically mobilised, reinforcing the surface of stability of the situation or eroding it. As mentioned in the introduction, I believe that Spinoza can provide us the vocabulary we need for this discussion because, as we will see, he gives an account of the nature of affects, how they interact with each other, and, more importantly, how they are the main drive of politics.

Spinoza defines affects (*affectus*) as "affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the idea of these affections" (E III, D3). An affection (*affection*) happens to the body, and it corresponds, in the mind, with a certain idea. The ideas we have of an affection result in a variation is our power of action (*potentia agendi*), the passing from one degree of perfection to another—this variation, continuous and perpetual, is exactly what an *affect* is (Deleuze 1978, para. 17). For Spinoza, we are defined by this capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies (E III, post. 1 and 2), whether persons, institutions, or images. These encounters are 'good' when bodies compose with ours, and 'bad' when they decompose it. In the first case, our power of acting increases and

is experienced as *joy*; in the second, our power of acting decreases, which produces *sadness* (Deleuze 1988, 50). In this sense, joy and sadness are not mental states, but modes of existence. There are, for Spinoza, different kinds of joyful affects: they can be *passive* (that is, *passions*) when caused by external bodies; on the contrary, they can *active* (that is, *actions*) when we understand their cause and act from our own power (E III, D1–3). Sad affects, by contrast, arise only from external causes; because we strive to persevere in being, we tend to avert sadness (Chaui 2011, 150), making it always passive, never active. Action is freedom; passivity, servitude (Chaui 2011, 148).

From this, two political consequences follow. Firstly, affects are *markers of power*: they are not private feelings arising from a neutral reality, but products of interactions that indicate where we stand in relation to each other. At the collective level, a society saturated with sad affects (such as fear and despair) produces bodies with diminished power of existence. As Deleuze reminds us, "inspiring sad passions is necessary for the exercise of power" (1978, para. 18), and from this the second consequence follows: political transformation is affective before it is cognitive. For Spinoza, "an affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained" (E IV, P7). If submission is sustained through the circulation of sad affects, then increasing the *potentia multitudinis*—the arrangement of many individual powers of action (TP II, 13)—requires less rational persuasion than the cultivation of joyful encounters, and thus the disarming of sad affections.

Connecting back to the discussion in the previous section, we can then ask which specific affects can stabilise or destabilise worlds, making them receptive, or not, to political change. I begin with hope and fear, the principal passions of political servitude, according to Spinoza.

In Spinoza, both fear and hope must be thought together. Both arise from uncertainty about the future: hope is the expectation of an uncertain good (E III, Def. Aff. 12), whilst fear is the apprehension of an uncertain evil (E III, Def. Aff. 13). As Chaiu notes (2016, 337), our imagination collapses the temporal distance between our feelings and its object: past or future things (which are feared or hoped) are felt as present, producing a sense of contingency[3] and uncertainty (Chaui 2016, 337). Suspended in doubt, hope and fear form a single system: those who hope, fear the opposite outcome; conversely, those who fear, hope that what they imagine will not occur (E III, Def. Aff. 13, Exp). Ultimately, both as passive affects and expressions of our finite condition: if we cannot help but experience the world as contingent, time becomes something discontinuous and unpredictable, and the feeling of uncertainty grows to the extent that anything can be the cause of joy or sadness. It all depends on whether the encounter we have composes or decomposes (in fact or in imagination) our body.

The hope-fear system has an important political use. Spinoza explains how *superstition* is born from fear in the face of the incomprehensible: imagination, not reason, generates supernatural explanations for these experiences – the same imagination that conceives freedom as the possession of a certain good (Chaui 2016, 155). For Spinoza, however, we do not desire things because they are good; we consider them good because we desire them (E III, P9S). At the heart of this desire, there is uncertainty "surrounding the

[3] It is important to note the difference in the way Spinoza and the post-foundationalists think of contingency. For the latter, contingency is ontological; Spinoza, we experience change and contingency, but, as finite modes of the one substance, we retain a single and immutable essence. Nonetheless, even if Spinoza does not give contingency an ontological status, he believes that it is the *inescapable* way in which we, as finite modes of substance, experience the world. In my argument, ontological status and inevitability collapse into each other.

act of obtaining and maintaining the enjoyment of those good things, which is expressed through the simultaneity of fear and hope" (Magno 2021, 12). This uncertainty, in combination with hope and fear, opens the door to superstition and domination. Imaginative explanations of reality are transformed into an *imaginary machine* [4] at the service of oppression, sustained even against experience (Chaui 2016, 155). Fear supports domination as the dominated fear the unknown, punishment, and the loss of regard for not complying with the system, while the powerful fear disobedience and rivals who can create more convincing illusions than theirs (Chaui 2016, 155–156). The result is a paralysed society saturated by fear of things, others, thought, and action (Chaui 2016, 156).

We can therefore read superstition not as an antique phenomenon, but as a particular structure that organises political life "according to a 'system of fear' that both ruins that sphere while producing servitude" (Magno 2021, 15). Superstition is an example of a structural form of exercise of power through the modulation of collective moods, as an affective machine managing the political body by adjusting its affective register. This helps us understand the affective infrastructure that sustain worlds that are closed off to evental rupture (atonic, stable, inconsequential, inactive or inorganic). In all these cases, fear and superstition can work to block transformation: "the daughter of fear, born of it and by it, superstition is a desperate and delusional *attempt to find an imaginary unity*, capable of *covering* and *reconciling* a reality perceived as *fragmented* in space and time" (Chaui 2016, 162, free translation, my emphasis). Would that not be exactly what the state of the situation seeks to do in its attempt to avoid the catastrophe of presentation which would be its encounter with that which exceeds it (Badiou 2005, 93)? For example, in stable worlds, so rigidly ordered that change appears unnecessary or impossible, the fear of disorder or exclusion can be mobilised to make people not only believe that nothing should change but actively defend the given situation as if any transformation were a threat. In atonic worlds, where either nothing seems to matter or where everything matters at once, a diffuse background fear (of disorientation, uncertainty) disposes people to accept the situation instead of questioning it.

This reinforces our earlier point: that political transformation is affective before it is cognitive. Rational argumentation alone cannot dismantle the fear that can block political change; it must be countered by stronger affects, ideally active ones, which increase our power to act and that emerge from within, rather than being imposed from outside. "From within" here refers to the adequacy of the ideas that form the affect, and not isolation: on the contrary, such affects are always political, formed through collective processes. From this perspective, political resistance is, therefore, affective.

A move towards action

If modulating fear is part of the strategy of the situation to shield the world from change, we must nurture a different affective configuration. Within a Spinozian framework, the remedy for fear is not hope: despite it being a joyful passion and preferable over fear, hope is not the negation of fear but its reciprocal affect, grounded in the same uncertainty and passivity. Together, they keep the subjects oscillating between two poles and, thus, incapable of action. The real task is to break with this oscillation. Since fear and hope are

[4] "Machine" is used here in the sense given by Deleuze and Guattari, as a system of desire production.

unavoidable parts of human existence and cannot be suppressed, the question is not so much how to abolish fear, but how to make it weaker.

As Chaui notes (2016, 169), fear and hope stem from the perception of contingency of things and events. As passions, they are weak affects, as they are tied to external causes; on the contrary, stronger affects (actions) follow from internal and necessary causes. Yet, as we have seen, reason alone cannot overcome passions, so the (first) transition from fear to hope must occur *in the field of passions itself*. For Spinoza, all affects, even passive ones, express of the *conatus*, the striving for perseverance in one's being; they are not flaws, but indicators of our current state of power or limitation, and we often cannot jump straight from passion to reason (that is, to action), especially in political life. Therefore, even though the shift from fear to hope is not yet action (it occurs in the field of passion), it does mark a relative increase in power, since hope (as a joyful passion) is a *lesser form of servitude* than fear. Still, hope can be overcome in conjunction with other joyful affects, notably security.[5]

Spinoza defines security as "a Joy born of the idea of a future or past thing, concerning which the cause of doubting has been removed" (E III, Def. Aff. 14). If sadness arises instead of joy, we have despair (E III, Def. Aff. 15). Spinoza explains:

> Confidence [security], therefore, is born of Hope and Despair of Fear, when the cause of doubt concerning the thing's outcome is removed. This happens because man imagines that the past or future thing is there, and regards it as present, or because he imagines other things, excluding the existence of the things that put him in doubt. For though we can never be certain of the outcome of singular things (by IIP31C), it can still happen that we do not doubt their outcome. As we have shown (see IIP49S), it is one thing not to doubt a thing, and another to be certain of it. (…). (E III, Def. Aff. 15, Exp., text between brackets added by me)

Doing away with doubt, the main effect of stabilising hope through security is, according to Chaui (2016, 169), that it allows us to begin to realise that the necessary things (that is, the ones over which we have no doubt) are stronger than the contingent ones, and this realisation takes us away from fear. This is politically relevant, as fear causes other sad passions and superstition to proliferate, which keep us hostage to the state of the situation, unable to foster or welcome political change.

Security, however, marks only a transitional moment within this affective trajectory, not an endpoint. As passion, security is a passive affect—a state of reassurance that, while stabilising hope, reducing fear, and helping to break with superstition, is still based on external causes. But unlike hope, security has the *potential to shift into an active affect* once it is grounded in reason and an understanding of necessity. Hope cannot make this shift because it is tied to an inadequate idea: it relies on the anticipation of an uncertain, contingent future or past. Hope can be displaced by rational joy (by an active affect) as one move from imagination to reason, but it does not evolve into it. On the other hand, security, by replacing uncertainty with certainty and breaking with the fear-hope system, makes us capable of more passions of joy, increasing

---

5 In Curley's edition of Spinoza's work, which I use here as the source for all Spinoza citations, the Latin term '*securitas*' is translated as 'confidence' instead of 'security'. However, I base my analysis of *securitas* on the work of Marilena Chaui, who translates the term as 'security'. Therefore, despite Curley's choice, I will use 'security' instead of 'confidence' throughout.

our power of action. If we remain in the realm of passions, then security is likely one of the most stable, joyful affects, but it is still passive: it is more a ceasing (or diminishing) of fear than an active state. However, security strengthens the *conatus* and, by doing so, enables our move from passivity to activity: the *conatus* can become the proper cause of the internal and external effects it produces, that is, of its affections, ideas and behaviours (Chaui 2016, 170). Being proper cause is, to use Chaui's words (2016, 170), to actively exercise self-determination.

The subjective and collective labour that precedes and conditions the possibility of radical political change, the pre-evental forcing, involves acting *as if* transformation were already underway, wagering on change before it is guaranteed; or, in other words, *as if* the state, of which we do not know the size, were already diminished. In Spinozist terms, this wager becomes possible precisely when the fear-hope system is displaced by security, that is, when the subject no longer imagines its future as determined by forces entirely external to its understanding. Even though the course of things remains uncertain, security marks a shift in how the subject relates to contingency: no longer paralysed by doubt, it becomes capable of anticipating and intervening in the unfolding of the situation. In this sense, reaching security is not merely a preparatory state that precedes an event, but is in itself part of the transformation. It reconfigures the subject's affective experience by neutralising sad passion and reinforcing the *conatus*, thereby enabling a passage from passivity to activity. This is what Chaui (2016, 170) means by self-determination: to become the adequate cause of one's own affections and ideas. The capacity to act pre-eventally, to force the situation towards its limits, finding its cracks and inconsistencies and exposing the ideological structure of the state, is grounded in the strengthened *conatus* that emerges from the affective transition out of fear. It is here that we find a very practical link between security, self-determination, and the courage to act before transformation is manifest: security, by raising collective capacity and neutralising fear, to self-determination, which is a fundamental part of the creation worlds open to change.

Reclaiming joy

By tracing the ontological conditions of political transformation through Badiou's theory of the event and supplementing it with Spinoza's account of affects, I hope to have shown that even though, from a post-foundational perspective, the possibility for political change is always present, it will only have long-lasting effects if it is given space to grow. This is because any situation is inherently incomplete (as Badiou suggests), and because subjects are affected by and responsive to the world they inhabit (as Spinoza shows). Badiou provides us with the formal language to think political rupture, yet his reluctance to theorise pre-evental conditions the political work already underway before rupture even happens and does not account for how the structures of the present can determine whether an event will be recognised, sustained, or fail. I insisted that the affective configurations of a world are decisive to determine how open this world is to change in the first place: affects like fear, hope and security can diminish or expand our power to act, and are therefore central in the constitution or foreclosure of collective action, both before and after the event. Political change, therefore, depends not only on the sudden appearance of the event, but also on the important work of resisting the closure of the situation and fostering the affects that can keep us open to the new.

On one hand, this points to a need to review our political tactics, keeping in mind that we must also pay attention to the need to build the conditions (mainly affective) for political change, and not just focus on the political trigger of rupture. On the other hand, I believe that, in a world managed more and more through fear and superstition, reclaiming joy, courage and collective action as necessary for transformation is a political act in its own.

References

Badiou, Alain. 2001. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Translated by Peter Hallward. Verso.

Badiou, Alain. 2005. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham. Continuum.

Badiou, Alain. 2006. "Eight Theses on the Universal." *Lacan dot com*. https://www.lacan.com/badeight.htm.

Badiou, Alain. 2018. *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event II*. Translated by Alberto Toscano. Bloomsbury Academic.

Chaui, Marilena. 2011. *Desejo, paixão e ação na ética de Espinosa*. Companhia das Letras.

Chaui, Marilena. 2016. *A nervura do real: Imanência e liberdade em Espinosa*. Vol. 2. Companhia das Letras.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1978. "Sur Spinoza." *Cours Vincennes*, January 24. Transcribed by Timothy S. Murphy. Webdeleuze. https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/14.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Translated by Robert Hurley. City Lights Books.

Johnston, Adrian. 2008. "Courage Before the Event: The Force of Affects." *Filozofski vestnik* 29 (2): 101–33. https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/filozofski-vestnik/issue/view/281.

Magno, Viviane. 2021. "From Reality without Mysteries to the Mystery of the World: Marilena Chaui's Reading of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*." *Philosophies* 6 (2): 45. https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies6020045.

Marchart, Oliver. 2007. *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh University Press.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. 1985. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Vol. 1. Edited and translated by Edwin M. Curley. Princeton University Press.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. 2016. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Vol. 2. Edited and translated by Edwin M. Curley. Princeton University Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2007. "On Alain Badiou and *Logiques des mondes*." *Lacan dot com*. https://www.lacan.com/zizbadman.htm.

ESJP
#27 | 2026

Toward an Aesthetics of the Barricade

Pepijn Op de Beek

> Beauty is dangerous in narrow times, a knife in the slender neck of the rational man, and only those who live between the layers of these strange days can know its name and shape.
> – Don DeLillo, *Great Jones Street*

> This is so much fun!
> – A comrade, while building a barricade

One of the most important insights to come out of the autonomist tradition is the analysis of capitalist innovation as a response to workers' agitation, which awards primacy to class struggle and posits developments on the side of the exploiters as attempts at regaining ground in the face of proletarian resistance. In his magnum opus, *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin devotes a convolute to the so-called Haussmannisation of Paris. The urban planner Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann (1809-1891), under Napoleon III, oversaw a large-scale modernising renovation of Paris, in which many of the older neighbourhoods of the city were demolished. In a particularly literal iteration of (re)gaining ground, the Haussmannisation of Paris can be seen as such an instance of capitalist development functioning as counterinsurgency, one that works within a notably spatial and aesthetic register (Buck-Morss 1989, 89; see also Deleuze 1995, 158). Benjamin connects Haussmann's activity with Napoleonic imperialism's affinity for speculation and investment capital.[1] With the central marketplace as his most successful construction, "the transformations made by Haussmann appear to Parisians as a monument of Napoleonic despotism." As Jean Cassou wrote, Haussmann's demolition worked to "break up the swarming, tortuous neighbourhoods, the breeding grounds for mystery and for the feuilleton, the secret gardens of popular conspiracy." All too familiar-sounding to 21st-century city dwellers, Engels described its aim as such: "to turn the city into a luxury city pure and simple." Similarly, Le Corbusier emphasised the financial and military character of Haussmann's project (Benjamin 1999, 23; 793; 145; 125).

This counterinsurgent aim becomes most apparent in Benjamin's account through the specific connection between Haussmann's renovation and barricade fighting (121). Benjamin writes:

> The true goal of Haussmann's projects was to secure the city against civil war. He wanted to make the erection of barricades in the streets of Paris impossible for all time. […] Haussmann seeks to forestall such combat [barricade fighting] in two ways. Widening the streets will make the erection of barricades impossible, and new streets will connect the

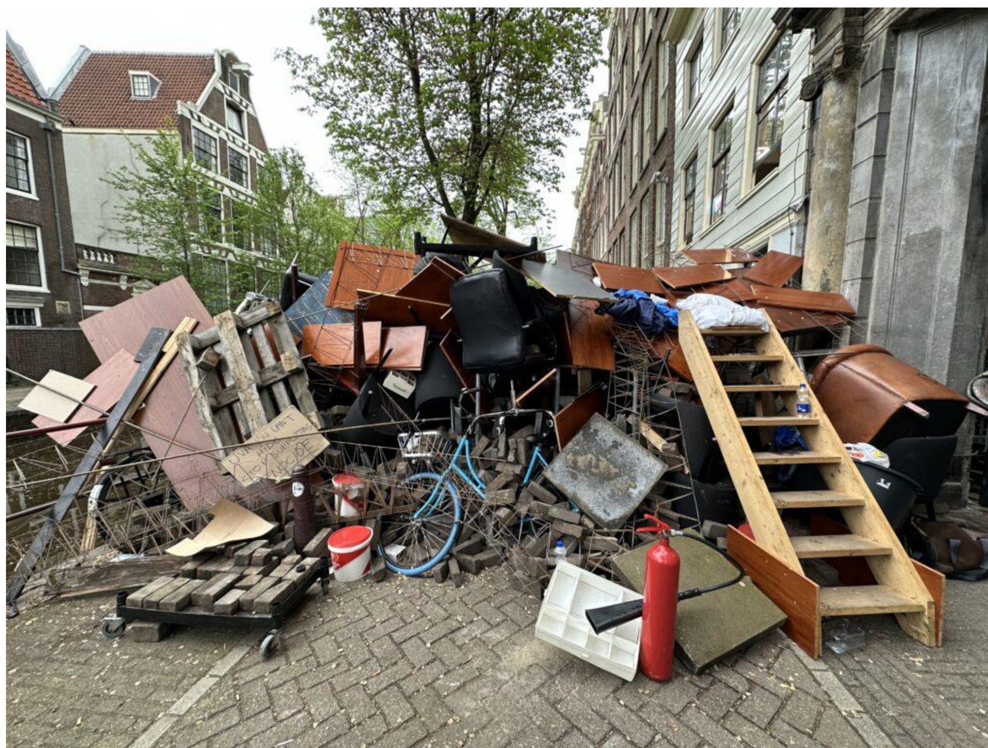
[1] So, already in the 19th century we can see the emergence of what Fredric Jameson (1998, 57) would later describe as particular to postmodernity, namely that "demolition, under these circumstances, begins to take on new and ominously urbanistic overtones, and to connote the speculations of the developers far more than the older heroic struggles of oppositional intellectuals."

> barracks in straight lines with the workers' districts. Contemporaries christened the operation 'strategic embellishment' (23).

Unable to effectively halt revolutionary turmoil however, during the Paris Commune the barricade is resurrected, "stronger and better designed than ever. It stretches across the great boulevards, often reaching a height of two stories" (24).

But let us, as Brecht said, not start from the good old things but from the bad new ones. Just as ours is still a time of capitalist and imperialist destruction, it is one of barricades and revolt. Living in the wake of what has been called the long 2020, with the George Floyd Uprising at its centre, new struggles have emerged (Heatwave 2025; see also Vortex 2023). In response to the genocide in Gaza, in 2024 many Palestine solidarity encampments erupted, while at the time of writing, the brutality of the fascist regime in the so-called U.S.A. has sparked large militant mobilisations against I.C.E., notably in Los Angeles, but also elsewhere (Artola 2025; Anonymous 2025a; Anonymous 2025b; Anonymous 2025c; Bernes 2025).

Amidst these tensions, this essay considers aesthetically that peculiar architectural object that time and again recurs in these struggles: the barricade. In doing so, it takes particular inspiration from the barricades erected in the spring and summer of 2024 in Amsterdam (depicted throughout the text), during what have been the most disruptive of the Palestine solidarity student protests in the Netherlands so far.[2] It first discusses the artistic style of the barricade-form as it emerges on the street, then analyses and evaluates two contrasting uses in fine art. Further, it discusses Anna Kornbluh's recent work in Marxist aesthetics and applies it to the cultural logic of the barricade, arguing that it is a helpful framework that is limited, however, by Kornbluh's totalizing critique of all anti-political action as unmediated negativity, leading her to identify local insurgencies as fruitless activity that fails to organise constructively.



[2] For an engagement with the role of art in these protests, see Ackerl 2025.

Importantly, this essay does not analyse the barricade strategically or tactically, granted that such practical analysis is the most important kind.[3] And yet, this text starts from the notion that the aesthetic quality of the barricade is not to be ignored and is worth meditating upon, in hopes of contributing to the formulation of aesthetic concepts useful for the purposes of communism.[4] The aesthetics of resistance matter, precisely because of their political contiguity. As a matter of fact, irreducible to practical benefit, barricades have always carried with them this important aesthetic aspect. As Engels (cited in Benjamin 1999, 123) remarks:

> even in the classic period of street fighting […] the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military. If it held on until this was attained, then victory was won; if not, there was defeat.

The fight includes a tug over superior morale (Anonymous 2025d). This involves affect, imagination, originality, and even beauty.

An evaluation of the artistry of the barricade must start from the observation that barricades contain a profound creativity. Spanning many different forms and styles through the use of varying materials, they are the ultimate form of *bricolage*. Anything and everything can be (a part of) a barricade, in which the present state of these things is abolished. *Objets trouvés* range from paving stones to all sorts of (street) furniture, cars, rope, bikes, e-scooters, plants, umbrellas, bottles, signs, trash, fires, fences, and bodies (see Benjamin 1999, 139; 142). *Umfunktionierung* as a mannerism of rebellion, estrangement of the deed. Who knows what anything can do? Objects of the world, unite! The construction of a barricade always becomes a montage in which the non-identity of objects sublates them into a higher form of being (Buck-Morss 1989, 66). Rejecting the teleology of things gives rise to the astonishment of discovering them for the first time, corresponding to an abolitionist apperception that is the "secular revelation" that things need not be as they are (Benjamin 2006, 304; Buck-Morss 1977, xiii).[5] To uproot a paving stone and make it into a barricade is to rescue it from its neglected state. Downtrodden by the boot of mundanity and reified sameness, it dreams of a higher form.[6] This dream cannot be extinguished so easily. The ordered pavement is forever haunted by the anarchy of the barricade, just as capitalism broadly must forever carry within itself its negation, the negation of negation that is the messianic curse at the heart of its violence (Marx 1990, 929; see also Althusser 2005). One need only to read one of Benjamin's (1999, 141) quoted passages to vividly experience this affective delight of barricade assemblage:

---

[3] Just as every strategy and tactic, from the picket to the occupation and the temporary autonomous zone to the propaganda campaign, the barricade must first and foremost be seen as a tool that must be wielded to its finest effect. Radical action requires a commitment to continuous study of the tactics available to determine how proletarian insurgencies and anti-fascist resistance can lead to revolutionary measures. Crucially, when it comes to any such revolutionary activity, constant attention must be paid to the racial and gendered dynamics thereof. Especially given the reactionary masculinist under- and overtones that direct action can carry with it, it is essential to center a steadfast focus on the necessary symbiosis of insurgency and care, of revolt and love, as the only possible ground from which fertile subversive compositions may spring. See also: Anonymous 2022.

[4] This is also a dangerous effort, the risk consisting of "the transposition of revolutionary reflexes […] into objects of distraction, of amusement, which can be supplied for consumption" (Benjamin 2005b, 424). Historically, to claim something as art goes hand in hand with its commodification (Benjamin 2002, 240).

[5] When done by students in the context of protest against their university, this can also be read as a refusal of their studies having as narrowly defined aim "to steer [them] to a socially conceived individuality and service to the state" (Benjamin 2004, 38).

[6] Not incidentally, Walter Benjamin's historical method consists of erecting a barricade on the one-way street of bourgeois-historicist progress. See Op de Beek 2024.

> At the entrance to a narrow street, an omnibus lies with its four wheels in the air. A pile of crates, which had served perhaps to hold oranges, rises to the right and to the left, and behind them, between the rims of the wheels and the openings, small fires are blazing, continually emitting small blue clouds of smoke.

That these situations carry with them an acute aesthetic quality is further attested to by the barricades that have been constructed within the realm of fine art. Take Santiago Sierra's 2000 work, "Obstruction of a Road with Different Objects." This performance consisted of a street barricade in front of Limerick's central police station, which included twelve burning tyres and three overturned cars, as well as four big rocks. Permission from local authorities for the construction of this artwork, which was to take place on a Friday afternoon, was required, sought and given. After the construction started though, the police quickly shut it down due to the inconvenience it would cause. Ultimately, the performance took place on a Sunday in the early morning, when it would least inconvenience the city's security and traffic (Sierra 2000).

The barricade is also the object of Ahmet Öğüt's artwork titled "Bakunin's Barricade" (2015). This work is a barricade that is inspired by Bakunin's unrealised proposal from 1849, when Prussian troops were attacking the May insurgency in Dresden. Bakunin suggested that as an act of deterrence, paintings from the National Museum's collection were to be placed on the barricades, so that Prussian soldiers would not dare to attack the barricades – since doing so would inevitably damage the valuable artworks. The artwork by Öğüt thus combines barricade materials such as scrap cars, police fences, plastic tubes and bricks with at least five works of art from the museum's collection. Part of the work is a loan contract which "stipulates that the barricade may be requested and deployed during extreme economic, social, political, transformative moments and social movements." These are defined in the contract as "moments and social movements that are intended to express serious public concern about social or political problems and are intended to bring about changes in public institutions or social relationships," and related to fundamental human rights in an article of the document (Öğüt 2015).

During the transformative moment and social movement of Palestine solidarity action in May 2024 – what has been called the Student Intifada – a collective of cultural workers, artists and activists did indeed submit a loan request in line with the contractual agreements to the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for "Bakunin's Barricade" to be used in the student protests as a protective measure. The museum ultimately refused to honour the request, unwilling to use and thereby expose a selection of original artworks – after all arguably the most important part of the barricade-artwork that Öğüt created in Bakunin's spirit. Instead, in a particularly Benjaminian stroke of irony, the museum proposed to use reproductions. The Not Surprised Collective (2024) rejected this as an "aestheticisation of politics without putting the actual art pieces at risk." Resorting to the usual tepid conversationism of bourgeois institutions, in a placid statement, the museum said that it would showcase the installation within its walls, inviting the collective to co-design the program around it, where the artwork would act "as a catalyst for talks and discussions" (Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 2024).

In response to these events, Ahmet Öğüt criticised the decision of the museum and their appeal to a particular contractual clause that supposedly entailed the option to offer reproductions instead of original artworks when loaning the installation. He stated: "I do not agree with the current state of my work being confined within the museum, detached from its real intent and distanced from its revolutionary potential during these turbulent times." Ultimately, after negotiations, the artist demanded the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam take down "Bakunin's Barricade," which the museum ignored (Öğüt 2024).

While the aforementioned power of the barricade's *détournement* and its arresting elegance as a contingent constellation of previously disparate artefacts is displayed with distinctive aesthetic allure in these works, these two cases also, and most importantly for our purposes, expose the limitations of a barricade that is erected within the domain of capital-a Art. Despite best intentions, Sierra and Öğüt came up against particular bourgeois institutions and the institution of fine art more broadly speaking – both have at their core nothing but the commodity form. The artists ultimately acquiesced to working within the lines drawn by the state and its agents, exemplifying at once the repressive character of the notion of an author, as well as the complete irrelevance of the author's motivations (Adorno 2007b, 181) Öğüt's artwork was not so much, as he said, distanced from its revolutionary potential; it was rather made clear that its revolutionary potential was simply negligible.[7] Having the museum as its limiting orientation, their work remains incarcerated in the referentiality of the white cube. This is the functioning of what Derrida described as the *parergon*: the supplementary framing that is the constitutive outside to the artwork at stake inside it. The *parergon* is "an ill-detachable detachment." Although both artists were seeking to exit the museum – and more generally, the institution of fine art – it is precisely in this attempt, the fantasy of the critical outside, that they are most intimately reinscribing their place within it. The street, for these artworks, is no blank canvas to act upon, but an indissoluble complicity, an addition that is at the same time indispensable to the museum itself (Derrida 2000, 419–23). This shows that the art of abolition must necessarily mean the abolition of art. It can be found in the street barricade. Like the photographs of Atget, the barricade makes the street into the scene of a crime (Benjamin 2006, 258; 27). This is the scandal of abolitionist politics, those "plans hatched darker than blue, on the criminal side, out of love" (Harney and Moten 2013, 77).

7 It should be noted that at least Santiago Sierra maintains no illusions about art and has a reasonable understanding of his function as interior decorator for the cultural elite, as evinced in Sierra 2004; 2011.

To help us elucidate further the meaning of barricades as aesthetic configurations, we can look at Anna Kornbluh's book *Immediacy, or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism*. She puts forward immediacy as the dominating factor in the contemporary aesthetic and cultural landscape, revolving around non-representational directness, constant emphasis on the phenomenology of the personal, the proximity and speed of extreme affect and unmitigated flow of suffocating presence. This style is the cultural and aesthetic expression of the current conjuncture of capitalism, wherein, as has been the refrain for longer, circulation has acquired a relative dominance that is compensatory for the crisis of production (Kornbluh 2023, 28–30; see also Jameson 1998, 136–61). The immediacy and speed of information, trading, lean manufacturing and just-in-time logistics, as well as the "virtualization of the exchange sphere," give way to expressions in art and culture that mirror these economic developments, such as "the hyperfunctioning of visuality" (Kornbluh 2023, 33; 43; 45; see also Schinkel 2020).

Within this analysis, the barricade as an aesthetic object takes on a polyvalent character. While it can be said to contain an immersive element, given its intimate connection with ephemeral moments of insurgence, this is not – as is the case with the installations that Kornbluh (2023, 2) describes – with the aim of consumption and optimisation but to establish friction. Overcoming exactly any "banal functionality," the barricade functions beyond immersion as blockade against the constant flow of liquified capital indispensable for the current order of things (5; 25). No business during genocide as usual. Interrupting immediacy, its result is the "dislocating and defamiliarizing [of] existing spaces" (203). As such, it appears as a constructing mediation that activates a critical reception of the given, a fissiparous process that goes beyond intensity and towards, quite literally, "drawing lines in the sand," laying bare the discrepancy between muted possibilities and a stagnant social order that stifles any such liberating potential (154; 174). On top of the pavement, the beach!

As non-art rather than anti-art, the barricade does not succumb to the bourgeois fetishes of 'outsider art' or 'relational aesthetics' and is instead constructed through anonymous collectivity. It has no author, but is the rhizomatic concatenation of a crowd of masked protestors, their faces covered by keffiyehs (see Bifo 2012). While such anonymity, much like the barricade itself, is first and foremost of a logical, strategic and tactical nature, we see this bleed over into powerful aesthetic gestures.[8] Anonymity as form, or style, is a negation of "the injunction, everywhere, to '*be someone*'" (Invisible Committee 2009, 30; emphasis added). It is completely at odds with the command of personal identity and individualist self-expression that is so predominant, especially in the saturated spectacle of the algorithmic overflow of social media (Kornbluh 2023, 97).[9]

However, just as every other image, the barricade is prone to capture and can be swallowed up into the spectacle, losing its critical potential (Baudrillard 2000). It can work to reorient the senses, but it can just as well be assimilated into what Kornbluh (2023, 115) calls "the stream," the "increasingly homogenous customized content in a continuous loop of deformatted genre-fluid absorption," which describes the doomscroll just as much as the streaming service. The aesthetic-political overload and affective tetanisation of the screen easily envelops gestures, symbols and situations in its spasmodic noise. Besides building barricades, you can also take selfies at the encampment, and it is the aesthetic component of the barricade that might very well enable this relinquishing of critical affect and action in particular.

A truly dialectical analysis of the barricade, then, takes it to be one space among many that "is a complex ecology of different tendencies," located within the uneven and combined developments of capitalism (bergman and Montgomery 2017, 24; Jameson 1998, 41). The point is to inhabit the contradictions without guarantees and to, in a given situation, nurture those 'emergent sensibilities' that are most capable of challenging capital and Empire (bergman and Montgomery 2017, 26). Such is the commitment to revolutionary instrumentality. How does this work, what is its potential, for which ends can it be used or repurposed?

Eschewing the pitfalls of orthodox Lukácsian mediation, in Adorno's dialectical considerations we find such attention to the contradictions within a social reality which, as can be said of the non-art of the barricade, both bears capitalism's scars and contains Utopian elements of change (Lukács 2007, 37; Adorno 2007c, 123; 2007a, 173; Rose 2024, 119–22). As such, its function is to be "the antithesis of that which is the case" (Adorno 2007a, 159). It should not and can not be so in didactic terms of message and audience, intent and effect, which it can never guarantee and which entails itself an "accommodation to the world" (Adorno 2007b, 193; 2007a, 168; Rose 2024, 105). It aims not for "ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions," but instead it is to "resist by its form alone the course of the world" (Adorno 2007b, 180). The barricade contains in its construction such a negative knowledge that points to difference beyond itself. It is not just the salvation of the artifacts taken up within it, but the prefiguration of an end to this order.

[8] In this sequency, the barricade avoids some of the traps of primarily-aesthetic audience-oriented counternormative self-indulgence that Lauren Berlant describes as "conventional avant-garde strategies" (2011, 233-38).

[9] Something that was already lamented by the xenofeminists, see Laboria Cuboniks 2015.

That being said, there are also limitations to using Kornbluh's framework for analysing the barricade, which, in its direct action, for her undoubtedly is embedded in the anti-politics she dismisses as "immediatism," incapable of adequately responding to our omnicrisis (2023, 17).[10] Deriding anything that smacks of anarchism, abolition, or communisation as "vitalist immanence," she critiques these tendencies as misguidedly shunning robust and institutional organising, instead naively dwelling in the merely momentary, the local horizontalism of volitional rebellions (173; 7).[11]

The age-old charge of nihilism is dusted off, and in the absence of "positive formulations," Kornbluh finds in anti-politics nothing more than sabotaging desecration and ruthless destruction, instead preferring attempts at revalidating and defending the less immediate, more vehicular political instruments of the union, the party, and the state (178; 22). Surely there are those that do not look beyond the "intoxicating component [that] lives in every revolutionary act," which Benjamin (2005a, 215–6) already criticised as a myopia that subordinates "the methodical and disciplinary preparation for revolution entirely to a praxis oscillating between fitness exercises and celebration in advance." But in writing off all anti-politics as anti-organisational destruction devoid of any positive content, Kornbluh (2023, 182) ignores the ways in which anarchic destruction always has as its necessary counterpart the construction and nurturing of different forms of life.[12] This means passing over the affirmative aspect of abolition. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2023, 350–1) often reminds us, abolition is more than pure negation, instead it is "a fleshly and material presence of social life lived differently."

Those for whom the state is not a mediation they wish to entertain, continuously rely on this generative abolitionist sociality of which insurgency is but an extension. Such constructive collectivities exist in the more quotidian subversions of social life as decreed by the state, and make up what Daniel Loick (2024) has described as counter-communities. The organised pessimism of the barricade always carries over into the social formation of the commune, for which care and reproduction are most essential. Barricades are made in the communal kitchen. Even within the heat of revolt, a barricade is "less a singular object, and more a network of devices that require occupation and interconnection, less an insurgent architecture than an insurgent infrastructure" (Grace 2021). Rather than a vandalisation of relation and mediation, these are part and parcel of the primary structure upon which insurgencies are built. An infrastructure of relation in which we come together, in which plans are made and questions are hashed out.[13]

---

[10] Anti-politics here being the name given to a diverse group of political and theoretical tendencies, traditions and currents, similar in e.g. their insistence on the autonomous insurgent activity of proletarians, critique of institutionalized political forms and vanguardism and emphasis on direct action, strikes, sabotage, riots and refusal.

[11] For an elaboration of this view, see Dean 2018.

[12] And even so, as Adorno (cited in Buck-Morss 1977, 113) said, we must not be "afraid of the reproach of unfruitful negativity. […] If philosophical interpretation can in fact only prosper dialectically, then the first dialectical point of attack is given by a philosophy which cultivates precisely those problems whose removal appears more pressingly necessary than the addition of a new answer to so many old ones." Compare also the *juxtapolitical* (Berlant 2011, 232).

[13] Importantly, this includes those comradely relations involving conflict and interpersonal transformation.

This is what it comes down to: revolt cannot be disengaged from broader struggles and care practices, and achieves most in conjunction with the kind of organising that accommodates and strengthens spontaneity. This ungovernable reality exists underneath the current order that the barricade makes visible and sabotages. Within this unruly reality, a different logic then emerges, one not just different from but incommensurable with the commodity form, a logic of which the barricade is an aesthetic expression. As the artist-protagonist of Hari Kunzru's *Blue Ruin* (2024, 58) remarks:

> It was a refusal, a way to separate myself from all the other artists who were jostling at the money trough for a chance to dip their snouts. Instead of accumulation – of money, recognition, a 'body of work,' it was deliberate wastefulness, a way to expend my creativity without hope of recompense.

Benjamin (1999, 141) notes that "the building of barricades appears in Fourier as an example of 'nonsalaried but impassioned work.'" It is this anonymous and joyful collective expenditure that practices the value-destroying economy which bears within it the communist horizon.

References

Ackerl, Nena M. 2025. "Art in Times of the Student Intifada, or How on Earth am I Supposed to Study Right Now?" *Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy* 25: 7–13.

Adorno, Theodor W. (1958) 2007a. "Reconciliation under Duress." In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Verso.

Adorno, Theodor W. (1962) 2007b. "Commitment." In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated by Francis McDonagh. Verso.

Adorno, Theodor W. (1970) 2007c. "Letters to Walter Benjamin." In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated by Harry Zohn. Verso.

Althusser, Louis. (1965) 2005. *For Marx*. Translated by Ben Brewster. Verso.

Anonymous. 2022. "Black Armed Joy: Some Notes Towards a Black Theory of Insurrectionary Anarchy." *Haters Cafe*, January 18. https://haters.noblogs.org/post/2022/01/18/black-armed-joy-some-notes-towards-a-black-theory-of-insurrectionary-anarchy/.

Anonymous. 2025a. "FUCK I.C.E. CITY-WIDE: LOS ANGELES GOES UP." *Ediciones Inéditas,* June 18th. https://ineditas.noblogs.org/post/2025/06/18/fuck-i-c-e-city-wide-los-angeles-goes-up/.

Anonymous. 2025b. "Melt ICE, Be Water. Report-back from a Hot Summer Demonstration in Austin, Texas." *CrimethInc*, June 11. https://crimethinc.com/2025/06/11/melt-ice-be-water-report-back-from-a-hot-summer-demonstration-in-austin-texas.

Anonymous. 2025c. "We Are Not Demonstrating, We Are Fighting. Migrant Defense in Seattle, June 9-14." *CrimethInc*, June 19. https://crimethinc.com/2025/06/19/we-are-not-demonstrating-we-are-fighting-migrant-defense-in-seattle-june-9-14.

Anonymous. 2025d. "Fire and Ice: Lessons From the Battle of Los Angeles." *Ill Will*, June 14. https://illwill.com/fire-and-ice.

Artola, Victor. 2025. "Los Angeles, or, The End of Assimilation." *Ill Will*, June 15. https://illwill.com/los-angeles.

Baudrillard, Jean. (1987) 2000. "The Evil Demon of Images." In *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Edited by Clive Cazeaux. Translated by Paul Patton and Paul Foss. Routledge.

Benjamin, Walter. (1982) 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Belknap Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2002. *Selected Writings. Volume 3, 1935-1938*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Belknap Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2004. *Selected Writings. Volume 1, 1913-1926*. Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Belknap Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2005a. *Selected Writings. Volume 2, part 1, 1927-1930*. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Belknap Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2005b. *Selected Writings. Volume 2, part 2, 1931-1934*. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Belknap Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2006. *Selected Writings. Volume 4, 1938-1940*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Belknap Press.

Berardi, Franco 'Bifo.' 2012. *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*. Semiotext(e).

bergman, carla and Nick Montgomery. 2017. *Joyful Militancy*. AK Press.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press.

Bernes, Jasper. 2025. "For a Summer against ICE, in Memory of Joshua Clover." *Verso Blog*, June 17. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/for-a-summer-against-ice-in-memory-of-joshua-clover.

Buck-Morss, Susan. 1977. *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*. Free Press.

Buck-Morss, Susan. 1989. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. MIT Press.

Cuboniks, Laboria. 2015. "Xenofeminism. A Politics for Alienation." https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation/.

Dean, Jodi. 2018. *Crowds and Party*. Verso.

Deleuze, Gilles. (1990) 1995. *Negotiations*. Translated by Martin Joughin. Columbia University Press.

Derrida, Jacques. (1987) 2000. "The Parergon." In *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Edited by Clive Cazeaux. Translated by Geof Bennington and Ian McLeod. Routledge.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2023. *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation.* Edited by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano. Verso.

Grace, Charlotte. 2021. "Blanqui and the Barricade, the Cosmos and the Commune." *The Funambulist* 34. https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/the-paris-commune-and-the-world/blanqui-and-the-barricade-the-cosmos-and-the-commune.

Harney, Stefano and Fred Moten. 2013. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Minor Compositions.

Heatwave. 2025. "The Case for Letting the World Burn." *Heatwave*, April 1. https://heatwavemag.info/magazine/issue1/preprint-editorial-031125.

Invisible Committee. 2009. *The Coming Insurrection*. Semiotext(e)

Jameson, Fredric. 1998. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. Verso.

Kornbluh, Anna. 2023. *Immediacy, or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism*. Verso.

Kunzru, Hari. 2024. *Blue Ruin*. Scribner.

Loick, Daniel. 2024. "The Superiority of Surplus: An Interview with Daniel Loick." By Lietje Bauwens and Tivadar Vervoort. *Krisis* 44 (2): 31–42. https://doi.org/10.21827/krisis.44.2.42390.

Lukács, Georg. (1938) 2007. "Realism in the Balance." In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Verso.

Marx, Karl. (1867) 1990. *Capital Volume 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Penguin.

Not Surprised Collective. 2024. "Stedelijk Museum Fails to Loan Artwork by Ahmet Öğüt to Protect Students in Amsterdam." *Network Cultures*, June 28. https://networkcultures.org/ourcreativereset/2024/06/28/stedelijk-museum-fails-to-loan-artwork-by-ahmet-ogut-to-protect-students-in-amsterdam/.

Öğüt, Ahmet. 2015–2024. "Bakunin's Barricade." https://ahmetogut.com/Bakunin-s-Barricade.

Op de Beek, Pepijn. 2024. "A Multitude of Impulses: Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History." Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Rose, Gillian. 2024. *Marxist Modernism: Introductory Lectures on Frankfurt School Critical Theory*. Edited by Robert L. Scott and James G. Finlayson. Verso.

Schinkel, Willem. 2020. *De Hamsteraar: Kritiek van het Logistiek Kapitalisme*. Boom.

Sierra, Santiago. 2000. "Obstruction of a Road with Different Objects." https://www.santiago-sierra.com/20002_1024.php.

Sierra, Santiago. 2004. Interview by Teresa Margolles. *Bomb Magazine*, January 1. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2004/01/01/santiago-sierra/.

Sierra, Santiago. 2011. Interview by Paco Barragán. *Art Pulse Magazine*. https://artpulsemagazine.com/interview-with-santiago-sierra.

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. 2024. "Statement Stedelijk following loan request." June 19. https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/news/statement-stedelijk-following-loan-request.

Vortex Group, eds. 2023. *The George Floyd Uprising*. PM Press.

ESJP
#27 | 2026

Poetry as Revolution: *A Philosophical Investigation Through Rancière's Theory and the Legacy of the 1946 Haitian Revolution*

Alice Lucchiari

> Politics occurs when those who 'have no' time take the time necessary to front up as inhabitants of a common space and demonstrate that their mouths really do emit speech capable of making pronouncements on the common which cannot be reduced to voices signalling pain (Rancière 2009, 24).

The lack of time that the philosopher Jacques Rancière talks about in this passage is the material impossibility of groups of people, not recognised as political beings, to participate in the common good. Rancière is referring to those in society who are treated *as if* they lack the time or the qualification to engage in politics, because of a naturalised prohibition to hear their words as meaningful speech. Politics, in Rancière's conception, begins when these social groups break with the established order and claim a space in the public sphere, demonstrating that their voices cannot be dismissed as background noise. This political struggle is reflected and reinforced on the plane of the sensorial, which refers to the distribution of bodies in space and time. It is in this sense that politics and aesthetics are inextricably intertwined.

To explain this, Rancière introduces the concept of the distribution of the sensible, which refers to how the world is shared and partitioned, determining what may be collectively experienced and what is ultimately thinkable. It is in the reconfiguration of a community's distribution of the sensible that politics takes place, which entails the creation of dissensus (Rancière 2009, 24). It is worth noting that, for Rancière, dissensus does not refer to disagreement in general but to "a conflict between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it" (Rancière 2010, 139). In this conceptual framework, art emerges as fundamentally political. Art engages in the configuration of the sensible, breaking the "natural" order that determines what is thinkable within a shared world. Art thus paves the way for alternative existences.

In this paper, I use Rancière's theory and the case of Surrealism, which played a crucial role in the Haitian Revolution of 1946, to argue in favour of a view of art as fundamentally political. By doing this, I defend its enduring potential to disrupt the established order. More specifically, I illuminate how the forms of visibility provided by Surrealism affected a change in the distribution of the sensible in 1946 Haiti. I develop my argument by analysing the significance of Breton's lectures in Port-au-Prince and by engaging with the work of the Martinican Surrealist poet, philosopher and politician Aimé Césaire. By engaging with the latter, I suggest that the political power of the poetic word can be understood in terms of incantation. This is to say, poetry is capable of reconfiguring the world because it operates in a mode congenial to magic.

The vision that lies at the root of my reasoning is that of a politics of art able to suspend, question and transform "the normal coordinated of sensory experience" (Rancière 2009, 25). The theorist of Surrealism André Breton poetically expressed a desire for such a politics of art: "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality" (Breton 1969, 14). Surreality, a place where dream and reality become one, is the revolutionary occurrence of what did not exist before and could not even be imagined. Surrealism, in an effort to fulfil its political desire to achieve surreality, offered precious intellectual and artistic tools, such as automatic writing and *frottage*[1], to equip people with the ability to imagine alternative existences. I argue that these tools, together with the Surrealist peculiar sensibility, played a fundamental role in the unfolding of the events of the Haitian Revolution of 1946, which brought about a change in the distribution of the sensible in Haiti.

In Rancière's theory, Surrealism can be understood as part of the aesthetic regime of art. In his work *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, Rancière (2009) develops the idea of art regimes to refer to sets of historical *a priori* that determine the conditions for art to be perceived as such. He identifies three main regimes: the ethical regime focused on the social role of art; the representative regime which prioritises art's mimetic ability; and the aesthetic regime characterised by art's autonomy (Rancière 2009, 29). The latter regime defines a specific mode of existence of art as free, which entails the disappearance of any necessary connection between content and form. However, it must be noted that, in the aesthetic regime, what seems to take art out of the social world, its autonomy, is the very quality that amplifies its political potential. By playing with different arrangements of the sensible, art in the aesthetic regime ruptures people's expectations of how the world should appear. In this way, artworks produce aesthetic shocks –it suffices to think of the aesthetic shock provoked by Manet with his famous *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863)– that shake individuals' blind acceptance of the *status quo* and suggest re-drawings of reality's boundaries.[2] Because of their shared interest in ensuring that the dialectic of their relationship is never definitively resolved, art and politics meet in the production of dissensus.

To better understand the political charge of Surrealism, let us refer to Benjamin's (1978) essay *Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia.* In alignment with what was said regarding the autonomy of art in the aesthetic regime, Benjamin held that we should never take the expression "*l'art pour l'art"* –often used to describe modern art– literally. Taking the case of Surrealism, Benjamin argued that the artistic enterprises of this movement worked first and foremost by means of *intoxication*. This intoxication resides in what Benjamin called profane illuminations, which can be understood as non-religious epiphanies,

[1] Automatic writing is a Surrealist practice that consists of producing a flow of connected words while suspending conscious control, therefore allowing the unconscious to run free. Frottage is an ancient technique, popularized in the twentieth century by the artist Max Ernst, based on creating a rubbing of a textured surface. These are only two of the many Surrealist practices that could be considered.

[2] Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe (1863) was rejected by the Paris Salon in 1863 and exposed instead in the Salon des Refusés, where it produced widespread shock among the public. The apparent reason for the moral outrage was the representation of a naked woman – her nudity would have been completely acceptable for the public if she were a goddess - accompanied by two well-dressed men. In the background of the painting, one can also see a disproportionate young woman refreshing herself in a mirror of water. As observed by Foucault (2009), the moral scandal generated by many of Manet's paintings "was no more than a clumsy way of formulating something that was an aesthetic scandal" (63). Indeed the painter broke several conventions of representation established at his time, from rules of perspective to lighting and proportions. In this sense the painting produced an aesthetic shock among the public, as a result of its refusal to meet people's sensory expectations.

powerful doors of light opened by the Surrealist image. Under this light, everything belonging to the ordinary is puzzlingly estranged, rendered uncanny, as if discovered for the first time. Perhaps with fascination, perhaps with uneasiness. A profane illumination is a "materialistic anthropological inspiration" able to transform something as mundane as "the first glance through the rain-blurred window of a new apartment" into something revolutionary (Benjamin 1978, 49, 50).

Let us now consider the explicit political stance of Surrealism. The movement was founded on a Marxist understanding of history and a total rebellion against Western civilisation and the values of bourgeois life. It became more politicised and overtly anti-colonialist after the 1926 rebellion of the Rif in Morocco, during which Surrealists supported the rebels. To mark this ideological shift, they redrew the world map in Surrealist fashion in 1929 to make their opposition to France as a sovereign state tangible. Moreover, Surrealists encouraged the boycott of the 1931 Paris Exhibition in celebration of the French Empire and organised a counter-exhibition entitled "The Truth about the Colonies". A particularly important product of Surrealist anticolonialism is the publication of a tract in Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology* (1996), which offered a complex critique of imperialist psychology, denouncing the practice of exoticization so typical of European avant-garde art (Richardson 1996, 3–5). The Martinican intellectuals Monnerot and Yoyotte were among the many Surrealists who signed this tract.

In this atmosphere, Monnerot and Yoyotte together with a group of Martinican students at the Sorbonne, attempted to form a Caribbean Surrealist group. This resulted in the publication of the journal *Légitime défense*, an important instance in colonised black re-appropriation of their own collective voice. Crucial figures in this context were Martinican Surrealist writers Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, both affiliated with the Négritude movement and teachers at the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort de France. Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, together with other intellectuals, founded the literary magazine *Tropiques*, which served as a platform for international Surrealism and contributed to the development of a black consciousness in Martinique. The journal's aspiration to develop an international Surrealism reflected a desire to transcend the problematic "antinomies of black/white, European/African, civilised/savage" and to establish a multi-centric artistic constellation in which Surrealism emerged as a horizon of hope (S. Césaire 1996, 126). Another important avant-garde literary and political journal founded in that period was *La Ruche*. This journal was founded by the Haitian intellectuals and artists Depestre, Alexis, Baker and Bloncourt, with the aim of inviting both young and old Haitians to act upon their anti-colonial democratic dreams (Richardson 1996, 4–17).

I wish to focus on Haiti in more detail, since the events of 1946 represent a unique case to explore the revolutionary potential of art and the serious, concrete interactions between aesthetics and politics. First of all, it must be emphasised that Haiti witnessed the "world's only successful slave rebellion" (Richardson 1996, 2). It was fought from 1791 to 1804 and led to Haiti's independence from the French power and establishment as the first republic ruled by former slaves. After this unprecedented event, Haiti began to be viewed as a threat by European colonial powers and the United States, which responded to its independence by economically and ideologically ostracising it. This resulted in a French economic blockade that was not lifted until 1825 and the demonisation of Haiti as a place of cannibalism and violence. Internal tensions grew as a result of Haiti's social isolation, which led to a 19-year US occupation. Among Haitians,

this catalysed questions around their cultural identity, which found creative expression in the avant-garde group Les Griots. The aim of this group was to bring back to Haiti the African values that had previously been suppressed, and Surrealism was embraced as a means of establishing legitimacy for this endeavour (Richardson 1996, 18–20).

André Breton, who at the time was in exile in New York, was invited to give a series of lectures at the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince in 1945. His speeches struck a chord with the Haitian population, as manifested by *La Ruche's* special end-of-year issue that paid homage to Surrealism and invited insurrection against the authoritarian, USA sympathizer, president Élie Lescot. Depestre, one of the founder of the literary and political journal *La Ruche,* retroactively commented how the speech of Breton inflamed the listeners' imagination: "they applauded fit to burst, they stamped their feet, they soared on Breton's contagious lyricism like birds discovering the tree in which they have landed is a marvel of music and liberty" and became aware "that the time was ripe in Haiti to unleash, before the event and *mutatis mutandis*, a terrific May '68 in the tropics!" (Depestre 1996, 232). The president reacted to the heated atmosphere by confiscating the special issue of *La Ruche* and imprisoning many of its editorial members. Following this, a student strike arose, which quickly escalated to a wider revolt against the president. The revolution of 1946 led to a change in the distribution of the sensible, as the government of Lescot fell and the progressive Dumarsais Estimé was elected as president. Estimé tried to break the dependence on the USA, but such an attempt failed, and the situation prior to the revolution was restored with a *coup d'etat* in 1948 (Richardson 1996, 18–25). After this event, the army took control of the country, allowing the dictator François Duvalier to reduce Haiti, in Depestre's words, to "the animal condition which still characterises it in 1991" (Depestre 1996, 233). Today, the situation has not improved, and Haiti is experiencing a humanitarian crisis, which is marked by extreme poverty, widespread gang violence, and susceptibility to natural disasters.

In light of Haiti's tragic socio-political situation, largely if not completely determined by its colonial history, I believe it is still important to remember the events of 1946. In that instance, *poetic knowledge* made tangible an alternative scenario to a situation of unfairness in the distribution of power (A. Césaire 1996, 145). In fact, Lescot was widely perceived as unrepresentative of the majority of Haitians and as a fascist. Closely associated with the country's lighter-skinned elite, he often privileged them in government appointments and economic opportunities (Richardson 1996, 18–21). The revolution of 1946 can thus be understood as an occurrence of politics, a conflict over "the designation of objects as pertaining to the common and of subjects as having the capacity of a common speech" (Rancière 2009, 24).

The relationship between Surrealism and Haiti has been one of mutual recognition and enriching communication. On one side, Surrealists were attracted to Haiti's folklore and to its "inalienable enthusiasm for liberty and its affirmation of dignity above all of obstacles", as emphasised by Breton in his lecture at the Rex theatre (Laraque 1996, 221). On the other side, Haitians experienced a sensation of collective identification in their discovery of a cultural affinity with Surrealist values. This is to say, Haitian culture was marked by elements congenial to Surrealism, starting from their practice of the voodoo religion, to their "refusal to be overwhelmed by the values of the capitalist world economy" (Richardson 1996, 22). It is important to note that Breton was very careful not to reify the Haitian culture and was well aware of the dangers of exoticization and *othering*. This would have been incompatible with the ideological basis of

Surrealism and would have caused tensions with the Haitian community. On the contrary, Breton's visit was particularly appreciated by Haitian student rioters and intellectuals. To give a few examples, the poet Laraque would call him *Magus* and Depestre dedicated beautiful pages to him, praising his human qualities and warmth towards everybody in the community (Depestre 1996, 229–233).

With this reflection, I do not mean to emphasise the role of Breton as the initiator of the revolution, a label that he never accepted, but rather to raise a broader question regarding the revolutionary power of art. Given its capacity to play with alternative distributions of bodies in space and time, what role may art – in this specific case Surrealist poetry - take in creating aesthetic dissensus that eventually leads to tangible political change? Surrealism as a movement can be understood as an expression of dissensus which starts from the quest for a new sensory relation between words and their meaning, between "life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low" so that these contradictions cease to be perceived as such (Breton 1969, 123).

To better understand the way Surrealism establishes new sensory relations, I suggest looking at Aimé Césaire's poetics expressed in *Poetry and Knowledge,* which he wrote during his stay in Haiti in 1944 (Kelley 2000, 17). For Césaire, poetry is revolutionary as it allows for "a blossoming of man in the world's measure", which means that it allows for an expansion of the poet's soul so incredible that poetry stops being human and becomes cosmic (A. Césaire 1996, 140). In this view, the poet emerges as someone who is able to restore universal harmony, reminding human beings that the "withered branches" that are their arms were originally destined to embrace life (A. Césaire 1996, 139). The poet, by playing with words in her compositions and investing in them everything she has lived, is capable of such magic. Through this attitude of play, humour and love -Césaire emphasised- Surrealism gives birth to revolutionary images able to break through the rules of conventional thought, so that "in the image A can be not-A" (A. Césaire 1996, 142). In this sense, the Surrealist image's dialectics is infused with a magic that transcends all contradictions:

> You in whom so many raspberry laughs
>
> Are a flock of tame lambs
>
> (A. Césaire 1996, 142)

Looking at this through the lens offered by Rancière, I argue that Surrealism has a powerful political charge, not because it conveys political messages, but rather because of its constant engagement in the creation of spaces of visibility which defy our expectations. Surrealism becomes political as it provokes "a rupture between perception and consciousness of a subject touched by an image" (Foster 1996, 42). This traumatic point of rupture is what Barthes (2012) calls *punctum*, the element of the image that like an arrow perforates the subject's gaze, awakening their bodies and minds. In this sense, Surrealism creates the possibilities of existence for a new form of common life and contributes to the establishment of a sensorium other than the dominant.

In the wake of Césaire's insights about poetry, I suggest that the poetic word, thanks to its affective charge and its directedness towards the reader's senses and emotions, can be understood as a form of incantation. But what does it mean to speak of the poetic word as magical? If we take Bennett's (1997)

definition of magic as that which "breaks down the usual structure of something (a structure that pulls each of its elements together as a whole) and then enables a surprising reconfiguration of the newly released bits" (8), then the poetic word is magical insofar as it is able to bring about radical change in the configuration of bodies in space and time. It does so by means that exceed rational logic and that invest readers in their whole being: those are the means of repetition, rhythm, and enchantment. The poetic word explodes with ever-changing flares - those of joy, anger, hope, love, humour, fury –trembling as the quicksilver skin of water caught in its play with the sun. Thanks to its mysterious means, the poetic word is capable of producing emotional resonance, synchronising its beating with that of a collective heart. In this way, poetry becomes something that goes beyond literary expression, and it becomes political: a tool of liberation.

In his famous essay *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire (2000) uses language precisely in this way:

> A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.
>
> A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.
>
> A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization.
>
> (A. Césaire 2000, 31)

As noted by Kelley (2000, 10–17), in this essay the revolutionary poetics that Césaire theorised in *Poetry and Knowledge* is put into practice for the purpose of exposing the violence of colonialism and triggering the imagination to envision a different future.

In conclusion, Surrealism, which has evolved vibrantly from a movement intended to free the mind from the chains of reason to one devotedly committed to the freedom of all peoples, is first and foremost a movement of liberty (S. Césaire 1996, 124). In this paper, I explored how the political potential of art lays primarily in its ability to offer new configurations of reality, rather than in the political messages or content that it might express. My argument is grounded in Rancière's theory and draws significantly on Aimé Césaire's poetics. I supported this argument by illustrating the complex interactions between aesthetics and politics in the historical context of 1946 Haiti, with particular focus on the concrete political effects of Surrealism's encounter with the Haitian community. As pointed out by Rancière (2009), art opens the way to concrete alternatives for a future life, establishing a new distribution of bodies in space. To fully grasp this last note of wish, let the Surrealists conclude:

> This summer the roses are blue; the wood is of glass. The earth, draped in its verdant cloak, makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live that are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere. (Breton 1969, 47).

References

Barthes, Roland. 2012. "From Camera Lucida." In *Theatre and Performance Design*, edited by Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet, 43–50. Routledge.

Benjamin, Walter. 1978. "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia." *New Left Review* 108.

Bennett, Jane. 1997. "The Enchanted World of Modernity: Paracelsus, Kant, and Deleuze." *Cultural Values* 1 (1): 1–28.

Breton, André. 1969. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. University of Michigan Press.

Césaire, Aimé. 1996. "Poetry and Knowledge." In R*efusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, edited by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 134–46. Verso.

Césaire, Suzanne. 1996. "1943: Surrealism and Us." In *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, edited by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 123–26. Verso.

Cunard, Nancy, and Hugh Ford. (1934) 1996. *Negro: An Anthology*. Bloomsbury.

Depestre, René. 1996. "André Breton à Port-au-Prince." In *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, edited by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 229–233. Verso.

Foster, Hal. 1996. "Death in America." *October* 75: 37–59.

Foucault, Michel. 2009. *Manet and the Object of Painting*. Edited by Maryvonne Saison. Translated by Matthew Barr. Tate Publishing.

Kelley, Robin D. G., Aimé Césaire, and Joan Pinkham. 2000. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. Monthly Review Press.

Laraque, Paul. 1996. "André Breton in Haiti." In *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, edited by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 217–228. Verso.

Rancière, Jacques. 2009. *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Polity Press.

Rancière, Jacques. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. Continuum.

Richardson, Michael, and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, eds. 1996. *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*. Verso.

ESJP
#27 | 2026

A Correspondence Between Ahmet Öğüt and Derman

By Umut Derman Tacyildiz

I contacted Ahmet Öğüt via email on March 14, 2026, at 00:57 to express my interest in interviewing him. Despite his busy schedule, he graciously accepted my request. In our following exchange, we discussed practical matters such as time constraints and word limits, and he proposed reversing the format of the interview by asking the questions himself instead of answering mine. I had never encountered such an approach before and saw no reason to refuse. I wanted to present the emails to the reader in their original form, without editing, except for major typographical mistakes that could alter the meaning of the words. In doing so, I follow in the footsteps of bell hooks and attempt to move away from traditionally restrictive writing formats. Lastly, I would like to thank our editor-in-chief, Sterre Kanon, for giving the green light to this interview, and Milan Stürmer, whom I believe to be the best moderator in the universe, for his uplifting support throughout the process.

MONDAY, 16/03/2026, 10:08. AMSTERDAM, (GMT+2), ELEVATION: -2 M.
Ahmet Öğüt:

Hi Derman, when did you first come across my work, and where was it? Could you tell me what you remember about that particular piece?

TUESDAY, 17/03/2026, 03:04. ROTTERDAM (GMT+2), ELEVATION: 2 M.
Derman:

Hi Ahmet, thanks for having me (I guess)! Well, I am not famous for my memory for sure, but I remember that moment precisely. I was taking a course called “Media Aesthetics” by Christoph Brunner, and for that course we had a paper by Sven Lütticken called “Social Media: Practices of (In)Visibility in Contemporary Art”. This paper literally starts with your work “Bakunin's Barricade (2014)”. I was fascinated by it and thought it was an incredibly clever and bold idea. And of course, I also wondered how you managed to incorporate that red sedan into the barricade. I remember that after seeing your work, I stopped reading the paper and did a Google search about you. It was either late evening or night and I was in my dorm room. Regarding when, it should have been somewhere in the first or second week of January 2024. It made such an impact on me because back then I was reading Foucault’s Discipline and Punish, and your work reminded me of its opening part. Also, that year I did not go home (where is home, right?) for Christmas, and seeing someone from where my father briefly studied made me feel like I had already made that round trip.

TUESDAY, 17/03/2026, 09:15. AMSTERDAM.
Ahmet:

Thanks for your answer, Derman. I actually remember Sven Lütticken’s article around 2015, shortly after I did the first version of Bakunin’s Barricade at the Van Abbe museum. I had come across Mikhail Bakunin’s

never-realised proposal in an academic article, and I took it and eventually transformed it into an actual proposal challenging institutions through a conceptual contract. Now we both know that an academic article can trigger more than thinking, it can also lead to action. Michel Foucault was someone I was reading in the early years of my university studies, but mostly through Turkish translations. So I'm never entirely sure how much of it was lost in translation. But sometimes what is lost in translation can also inspire an artistic interpretation. I wanted to ask you something about encountering a work of art without actually seeing it in person, knowing it only through rumour or documentation. Many people know my works in that way. Even some of my friends have never seen them in person, only through digital images. Especially in a time of artificially generated knowledge and visual culture, can a rumour, or even a black-and-white photographic documentation, sometimes be enough for a work of art to exist? Do you think the actual impact is keeping the possibility of the action alive rather than one time action?

WEDNESDAY, 18/03/2026, 02:54. ROTTERDAM.

Derman:

First of all, I must say that I am one of those who have not been able to see your works in real life. Normally, not having done or being unable to do something one loves is considered a negative thing. But here, as in your question, there seems to be a hidden potential. I think that even a rumour or a simple out-of-focus photograph is enough (though not 100%) for a work of art to exist.

Let's take 4'33" (1952) by John Cage as an example. I have never seen it or heard it — probably nobody has. Also, it looks relatively easy to replicate. However, I can still enjoy 4'33", think about it, let it inspire me and admire the idea behind it. This also does not mean that we should only focus on experiencing artworks through different media or channels — or translations as you mentioned — but experiencing a Picasso through a black-and-white photograph still means something. And since this process of translation/experience is not solid but fluid, I believe there is room for imagination. So yes, the actual impact for me is keeping the possibility alive, I would say. I should also note that in my eyes, these two forms of experiencing an artwork do not always produce the same outcome. In that sense, it is similar to the difference between attending a concert and listening to an album at home.

SATURDAY, 21/03/2026, 18:49. ISTANBUL (GMT+3), ELEVATION: 40 M.

Ahmet:

Would it be possible for you to revisit the same question with an answer using more contemporary examples; ideally including living artists, and perhaps a broader range of perspectives beyond the conventional white, male, Western–centered canon?

MONDAY, 23/03/2026, 21:18. ROTTERDAM.

Derman:

I would be happy to revise my earlier perspective and offer a more personal one. I want to give two different examples: one installation with performative activations that I experienced in person, "FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER (2024)" by Mary Maggic at Transmediale 2024, and the other your piece "The Swinging Doors (2009–2018)."

In "FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER," I experienced something that was not mentioned in the description or documented in any medium. During the performance, three artists (called "riders," representing the ideal bodies that everyone aspires to have) took several large sips from their drinks, which represented SCOBY (symbiotic cultures of bacteria and yeast, found in kombucha), and then began to spit this liquid into the crowd. Some people stayed, but most immediately ran away. During this, I was standing

on a balcony above, so I was able to observe everything. This lived experience gave an additional layer of meaning to the installation. However, there is another side to consider. Returning to "The Swinging Doors (2009–2018)," based on what I have read and seen, I can imagine myself passing through and touching these police shields repeatedly. Reflecting on, what is force, is it the same for everyone?, and recalling times when I was tear gassed. Perhaps your initial intention was different; however, what I felt was already quite significant for me. Since I did not experience the artwork in person, I may be missing certain aspects, but I believe that in this way I (or viewers in general) can develop an alternative perspective. Following your point, what is lost in the process of translation also makes it possible for me to reflect on my own experiences and interact with the artwork. I also believe that experiencing an artwork through different mediums can democratise the process by bypassing institutions or laws. In sum, I think that a rumour or even a simple low-resolution image can be enough for a work of art to exist. Similarly, I believe that the impact of keeping the possibility of the action alive is important.

TUESDAY, 24/03/2026, 10:43. ISTANBUL.
Ahmet:

This is a good one. My experience is actually quite the opposite; I didn't experience Mary Maggic's performance in person, but I did experience The Swinging Doors. I've seen the performance through documentation, yet having been in that exact spatial environment before helps me imagine the spatial sensation, perhaps similar to watching from a balcony, where distance still allows for a certain embodied understanding without direct interaction such as the one you mentioned. From cycling to hydrating to scraping, I understand this performance as a critique of the loop of capitalist simulations, which leads to a kind of dystopian statement. I'm not sure whether audiences leave such performances with optimism, or if they instead surrender to a kind of dystopian nihilism. In The Swinging Doors, however, what becomes useless is precisely the blocking function of the status quo. Passing through the original police shields with a push produces a certain pleasure; especially for those who have experienced protests or uprisings just like you. There is also something important in how the collectors and curators become part of the work. By asking the institution or collector to handle the negotiation themselves; finding a way to convince the police to loan or permanently give the original shields; the work is extended into bureaucratic and political reality. I find that aspect particularly important. For example, in Brazil, it took a collector a month and multiple meetings to convince the police department in order to get the original police shields, only after that the collector was able to buy the work. That negotiation itself becomes a form of artwork. My next question is if you were to curate a solo show of mine, which works you would assemble together and why?

THURSDAY, 26/03/2026, 09:42. ROTTERDAM
Derman:

I have been fantasising about it for a long time. Let me describe my imaginary exhibition space. For the entrance, I want to create an immediate impact and provoke thought from the very beginning. For this reason, I would select "It Can and Has Been (2021)". This choice is deeply personal. During my bachelor's studies in Turkey, I travelled countless times by bus between Sivas and Izmir — a journey of roughly 1100 kilometres that took around 15 hours. Since I cannot sleep during such trips, this time became a space for reflection. It felt as though time was frozen; and because my freedom was temporarily restricted, arriving home produced an intense feeling that I could do anything. I associate this experience with what Martin Heidegger calls Augenblick (blink of an eye). In transit, one is released from the immediate demand to act and enters a suspended state between departure and arrival. Here, time continues to pass, but it is no longer structured by urgency or obligation. This empty time opens up a temporal horizon in which the future can

once again be experienced as a possibility rather than necessity. That feeling starts to fade away when one steps out of the bus of course.

Directly in front of the exit door of the bus, I would position the second work, “Swinging Doors (2009-2018)”. Here, I want to abruptly disrupt that feeling of limitless possibility by confronting the viewer with an authoritarian presence. The aim is to expose how fragile personal dreams are when faced with the power of the state. Yet, those who continue forward will still find a way to pass through.

After this threshold, I imagine a large room where I place “Jump Up! (2022)”. This work represents the fundamental unfairness of life — how access to art and culture often requires disproportionate effort. This connects closely to my own experience: within a few months in Rotterdam, I encountered more artworks than I had in sixteen years in Sivas. That realisation leads me to the next piece: I would place "Non-existent Art Encyclopedia Volume 2 (2025)" in a very small, confined room, ensuring that the audience fully feels this disparity in access and visibility.

Finally, toward the end of the exhibition, I imagine a narrow corridor, about ten meters long, where I install “Day After Debt (2014)”. This piece reflects my current financial situation and questioning the universities' role in contemporary time. Going back to Foucault, reflection on: do universities exist to educate and support us, or to control and oppress us through legal mechanisms such as the production of knowledge and the regulation of truth.

SUNDAY, 29/03/2026, 11:36. ISTANBUL.

Ahmet:

Starting from my early interviews, I have always spoken about the importance of the notions of time, speed, and distance in my work. I had a similar experience in my youth. Before taking short flights, I had to take many bus journeys between Istanbul and Diyarbakır (1,442 km) which stretched time in a way that refuses to obey any simple equation. Distance was no longer measured in kilometres but in layers of perception. Reality itself became unstable, extended across geographies.

I see you chose works that resonated personally with you. Which of my works did you feel no personal connection to, and why do you think that was the case?

THURSDAY, 02/04/2026, 04:02. ROTTERDAM

Derman:

This is a hard one. It is easy to see my reflection in your works, and most of the time, I find myself thinking, “my dad would love to see this.” So, in addressing your question, I first had to set myself aside and consider which of your works my dad might not grasp at first sight. The answer is “Pleasure Places of All Kinds (2014).” It is easy to see why: neither my dad nor I have sufficient knowledge about the housing situation in China. Moreover, I am not much different from a random tourist in Istanbul — I had to look at a map to see where Fikirtepe is situated. In other words, since I do not have enough knowledge about the places presented in this artwork, I could not form a direct personal connection.

That said, when I say, “Your artworks represent me politically,” I mean that it creates an experience that resonates with my lived political reality. This reminds me of Gilles Deleuze: “art is not a mirror of reality but a machine that produces percepts and affects, shaping how we perceive and feel.” Regarding Pleasure Places of All Kinds (2014), because of my lack of knowledge, I did not fully grasp what it generates — or I was out of its affect range.

FRIDAY, 25/04/2026, 18:59. TUNIS, (GMT+1), ELEVATION: 4 M.

Ahmet:

I just arrived at Tunisia for the first time. Most of my interviews and writings happen while I'm on the road. Right now, I'm in a car for a 4-hour 24 mins ride from Tunis to Gabes. While I've been asking you these questions I have been answering one other interview and wrote one other text. In the text I talk about what Nawal El Saadawi who argues, terms such as "Middle East" or "Far East" are products of a colonial worldview that positions Europe—historically London—at its center. What is deemed "middle" or "far" is always relative to Europe; hence, terms like "Middle West" or "Far West" sound unfamiliar, because the West has long defined itself as the norm. As Saadawi points out, this hierarchical organisation places Europe at the centre and renders others as peripheral. Today, many scholars challenge these terms, proposing alternatives such as West Asia or Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA). Do you think issue is not merely linguistic, but conceptual? Is it about how we position ourselves in relation to the world? Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembène rejected the need for Eurocentric validation with a simple assertion: "Why be a sunflower and turn towards the sun? I, myself, am the sun." As you left Sivas and now based in the Netherlands, I'm curious to hear what you think about recalibrating the center point, as I'm asking this while being in Tunisia?

FRIDAY, 01/05/2026, 18:45. ROTTERDAM

Derman:

I know that the lines you are about to read are the final part of this interview, so I am responding a little late in order to make the most of our time together. I actually decided what I would write last Tuesday, but since I live in a country where today, May 1st, is not a public holiday and is hardly ever celebrated, I wanted to give my answer specifically on May 1st as it is related to your question. I hope you will forgive me for this.

As for my answer, I have a few anecdotes related to this. First, whilst I was still an undergraduate philosophy student, I started researching master's programmes at universities in countries where I could learn more. Apart from academic, and merit-based admission requirements, each university's application criteria varied depending on whether the student was domestic or international. However, Turkey's situation was particularly absurd. Compared to the United Kingdom, Turkey was categorised as the Middle East; compared to the United States, as Asia; and compared to Europe, as a non-EU country.

Nodding to Foucault: the fact that these supposedly prestigious and wealthy universities, which produce knowledge and largely shape society through that knowledge, do not even have a clear idea of a country's geographic position confirms that the issue you mentioned is more conceptual than linguistic. However, when we raise this issue, we are often met with arguments from those who hold the power to produce knowledge, such as: "If the problem is conceptual, you can raise it yourself and object." Yet, as in Foucault's example, the fact that many people from the so-called 'Middle East" raise this objection echoes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's idea that "the subaltern cannot speak."

Influenced by commodity fetishism, people often expect validation from what they consume. The influence of films, music, and TV series is undoubtedly significant. But I do not believe that humanity should seek Eurocentric—or any kind of—validation. Of course, one can simultaneously prefer Maradona to Pelé while enjoying Turkish coffee made from Arabica Brazilian beans. However, as with the gastronomic story of döner, defending such preferences against Western-centric thinking is not necessarily easy, especially when these perspectives/practices are not profitable. Still, the distinction between easy and difficult is not the same as the distinction between colonial and decolonial. It does not seem right to me to accept colonial or Eurocentric thinking simply because it is easier. (Maybe my mind is preoccupied with food because I am

hungry, but) to give another example, I can use the idea of the "exotic fruit". Exotic—but according to whom? For a Colombian, avocado is probably not exotic at all.

Following the trace of "exotic" or "orientalist" notions—in Edward Said's terms—I was already exposed to them as a child in Sivas, through Western brands and Hollywood clichés. Like many children, I sought white validation for a few years. Then I realised that liking döner more than a fast-food hamburger does not make me less intelligent or less valuable, and vice versa. Another example: in the summer of 2016, before Couchsurfing became fully commercialised, I hosted two friends in Sivas for two days—one from Tübingen, Germany, and the other from Sarajevo, Bosnia. On the evening of the first day, whilst driving to a nearby lake, my German friend looked around and said how incredibly beautiful everything was. I was surprised and asked, "There's nothing to see here—why are you so impressed?" She goes, "I am impressed by not seeing anything human-made for the last half hour." At the time, as a silly teenager, I did not fully understand this, but I do now.

Years have passed, and we are conducting this interview. Am I the Sun? Yes. For my parents I am the Sun; for some I am just a random star; and for others I am only a steppingstone. For me? I am Derman. I am fine with all of this. I learnt not to seek Eurocentric or colonial validation from the hard way. Just as the Sun has its own solar system, I have also overcome many difficulties in traveling from Sivas, in the Anatolian steppes, to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, to create my own center of gravity. My greatest fortune on this journey was my father's books; by chance, I was able to read the texts that helped me establish my own center. It was incredible to go from mountainous Sivas to the warm, green Macondo of García Márquez in Latin America within just a few minutes.

As I go out to celebrate the Labor Day, I want to return to your example: Ousmane Sembène's Black Girl (1966) (La Noire de…) depicts a nanny/servant who becomes a symbolic commodity. Diouana, beyond her physical labour, is practically rendered invisible in France. As Jean-Paul Sartre's theory is often critiqued, Diouana exists, in a way, because she works or can work; in reality, like many workers, she has very limited choices.

I wish you a nice Labour Day: I hope Tunisia is treating you well! And I genuinely thank you for your time and your wonderful questions!

Ahmet Öğüt photographed by Derman 13-06-2026

ESJP
#27 | 2026

On Spells and Situations

An Interview with Dr Irene van Oorschot

By Georgina Aránzazu Dijkstra

On an unusually warm and sunny March 19, 2026, Irene and I went for a walk around Campus Woudestein. A walk felt like an appropriate medium. We talked, thought out loud, occasionally lost our threads and found them again. A little rushed, at times — a consequence, perhaps, of my enthusiasm. I got to know Irene earlier this year beyond the familiar orbit of our small philosophy faculty. Since then, I have come to admire both her work and the generosity with which she shares it. Before long, I knew I wanted to share her thinking with you. It is in that spirit that I am happy to present this conversation to the readers of this journal. On and beyond the sunny campus grounds, we found moments of quiet *thinking-with*. We wandered through questions of infrastructure, expertise, resilience, ecology, and care, and dwelt once more on how worlds are held together through relations, and how imagination might open possibilities beyond critique alone. We stayed with the refrains of our thinking, between plots and courtrooms, infrastructures and animals, forests, films, and feminist love letters. And spells. A lot of spells.

Georgina: *Irene, you teach the course Infrastructures of Power in the MA Sociology, and I have to say that while following that course, suddenly a lot happened for me intellectually. As someone who has studied quite a bit of philosophy, I found it extraordinary how tangible and alive the thinking suddenly became. It felt as if theory became suddenly so entangled, moving through pipelines, extraction, logistics, colonial histories. Where does that way of thinking begin for you?*

Irene. That is a huge compliment, but I get why you say that. I actually have that same feeling in teaching the course myself. I think it has to do with two things: historicization and materiality. What I'm always searching for is a way of bringing history into thought. That is also a bit of my problem with a lot of sociological theory, because it can quickly become quite ahistorical. I always try to historicize in my teaching, and teach about path dependencies and the larger global processes we are constantly moving through. Processes like extraction, colonialism, logistics, state formation, these are ongoing processes. And in this course, we encounter these histories through very concrete objects. We discussed the text *Carbon Democracy*, and talked about the Middle East through Timothy Mitchell, for example, but also about pipelines, energy systems, extraction[1]. So on the one hand there is historicity, and on the other hand materiality. They are two sides of the same coin for me, entering the world of things and their histories.

[1] Timothy Mitchell, "Carbon Democracy" (2009); later expanded into *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (2011). For related discussions of pipelines and extraction, see also Anne Spice, "Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations against Pipelines" (2018).

In my own thinking, *material semiotics* has been hugely influential: the idea that we do not exist in a cloud of ideas, meanings, and theories, but that our existence and that of the world is completely, without exception, mediated by materialities. The world is the way it is not only because people keep stubbornly repeating the same ideas, but because pipelines exist, and borders, classifications, and so on. These structures have a certain durability. We have to understand these precisely because power operates there, and because these materialities endure. This also means we have to think differently about critique. A house is not going to collapse because you have developed a good critique of the way it is built.

Georgina. *What I find powerful in your work is that historicity never becomes abstract. Lauren Berlant once remarked that "always historicize" can itself become strangely ahistorical, or somewhat contradictory, as if history turns into another method operating at a distance.*[2] *In many disciplines there is a constant pressure to narrow things down, to isolate and delimit. But your work seems to move into the world itself, and take seriously what it encounters there. Space is made for relations to become visible, and for other ways of living and thinking to become imaginable.*

Irene. Yes, this touches on a formulation by Isabelle Stengers that has always stayed with me: *"to give to the situation the power to make one think."*[3] It is something stilted, or awkward about the formulation that, to me, really unsettles something. She gives you a kind of hook: something that stays with you and keeps thinking going. In that same text, she makes a subtle distinction between thinking and *recognition*. Recognition plays a major role in many forms of critique. You analyse something and think: 'there it is again!' Capital, whiteness. And those are important, necessary analyses. They give us the tools to understand and organise resistance. But at the same time, there is always more happening than what we already recognise. That is precisely why I think it is important to give a situation the chance to genuinely move you and to make you think, rather than simply recognise what you already believed.

This also connects to the reductionism that is often built into scientific thinking. Vinciane Despret writes beautifully about this in her book *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* (2016) She looks at animals in behaviourist research, and shows how they are often placed in experimental situations where only one answer is really possible: the answer the researcher has already prepared. And that kind of research is then used to demarcate between humans – who can love, think, improvise, work, communicate – and animals, who are rendered dumb because of the experimental apparatus used. Despret asks a different question: what happens if we ask different questions? Or if we listen more carefully to what animals themselves "talk back" to, or even what they protest against? That immediately opens up the question of expertise. Because to answer those kinds of questions, you cannot only rely on the scientist isolating variables in a lab. You also have to take seriously the knowledge of people who live in close relation with animals. Trainers, farmers, caretakers, pet owners, people who work with them every day. Their knowledge is often treated as less legitimate, even though it is precisely crucial. Again, I return to Stengers: how can a situation make me think? That also changes the question of where knowledge already exists, and who we take seriously

---

[2] In between the lines of *Cruel Optimism* (2011) by Lauren Berlant.

[3] From Isabelle Stenger's "Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices." (2005).

as knowers. Where can I turn for forms of knowledge that animal trainers, for example, already possess? I find that a beautiful pluralization of knowledge, and of what counts as knowing in the first place.

Georgina. *We've been talking about animals, veterinarians, farmers, animal trainers, but you've also done research on the law.*[4] *One could almost speak of "human tamers" there.*

Irene. That's a good one, yes. Judges as human tamers.

Georgina. *Although I doubt the police would appreciate that description.*

Irene. They probably want to be the only ones taming humans. But it is a striking image!

Georgina. *What I mean to ask, is that you have worked in domains such as the law, but you have also worked in forests. Recently, you published a piece on the ideal of resilience in Dutch forestry.*[5] *Law and forests seem like very different domains at first, but throughout your work I get the sense that these systems are not as separate as they appear. Certain logics seem to return across them. How do you look at that now*?

Irene. Yes, it is quite a leap, from judges to forests! But throughout my work, I have always been fascinated with the way people navigate tensions, the way they figure things out on the fly, often responding to pressures and demands outside of their sphere of influence. And in the role of materialities that mediate these practices. A judge has to be accountable to the public, to the law itself – but also work with recalcitrant objects: the case file, for instance. Which is both a material thing – it can be messy, unorganised – and a container of text and meaning, containing contrasting narratives. In a way this is close to how I explore the notion of resilience in forestry. Forests are such fascinating places. They are immensely contested.

In Europe, the forest became historically tied to timber production; at a certain point, that effectively became their primary function. That development was deeply connected to the formation of states as we know them, shaping the centralisation of power. Alongside of this came the rise of a particular field of expertise we now know as 'scientific forestry'. Within that logic, the forest became something to be managed rationally, as a matter of national resources. But at the same time, there is also an almost opposite image of the forest: as a space outside civilisation, a place of wilderness. And on top of these contrasting conceptions of forests, nowadays forests are increasingly enrolled in environmental governance as sites of biodiversity and carbon compensation. What I find so interesting is that there is a whole group of people who have to negotiate all these competing desires we project onto the forest. They have to prioritise them, balance them, and ultimately *act* on them. Because a forest is never simply left alone, you are constantly doing things to it. Organizations like *Staatsbosbeheer* are continuously reshaping, cutting trees down, regenerating. And all of that takes place within fundamental tensions between those different demands, but also within a broader uncertainty about the future.

---

4 Irene van Oorschot, *The Law Multiple: Judgment and Knowledge in Practice* (2021). The book is based on her doctoral dissertation *Ways of Case-Making / Zaken Maken* (2018)

5 See Irene's article "Forest Futures in the Making: Legal Infrastructures and Multispecies Speculation in Planning Climate-Adaptable Forests" (2025).

Georgina. *In comes the speculative dimension?*

Irene. Exactly, there is a speculative dimension to it, absolutely. I have yet to encounter what Lowood calls the 'calculating forester': the archetypical scientific forester who simply tracks the accretion of timber through standardised growing models and then goes into harvest.[6] And that is what I find so interesting about resilience. The moment foresters begin thinking about the resilience of a forest, about how an ecosystem responds to unpredictable risks, their attention shifts toward relationships. Relationships between trees, between trees and soil. How do I learn to understand this soil? *What is good for the soil?* A beautiful example is what Staatsbosbeheer calls *verplegende bomen*, "nursing trees". I love that concept. A nursing tree is a tree whose leaf litter decomposes quickly and helps restore acidified soil. So, the tree is not valued because it is especially beautiful, or because it produces particularly good timber, but because it supports other trees! Care and management are, in a sense, outsourced. It's crossing species lines.

Georgina. *It's not even about the tree itself anymore, but about what the tree can do for all the others.*

Irene. Exactly. Don't ask what you can do for the tree, but what trees can do for each other! That is really the shift.

Georgina. *What becomes visible there is that the moment forest rangers have to think in that way, all these entangled relations immediately appear within their practice. For me, that is also something to learn from philosophically. A forest can simultaneously be understood as a timber reserve, a carbon sink, a space of recreation, and an infrastructural resource for states. But if you look at much political philosophy, for instance, and I mean this somewhat crudely, forests themselves rarely appear as entities that matter in such consequential sense. At most, a philosopher once sat under a tree and had an idea! It happened to Newton, Descartes... The tree becomes background for thought. But the tree itself disappears almost immediately. Your work makes visible that a collection of trees is also about states, ecologies, species, people, and forms of sense-making all at once. And that does not make the world simpler, and that is a good thing!*

Irene. Yes, it is really about taking that concreteness seriously. About thinking in relations, thinking in milieus. Thought cannot simply detach itself from those conditions. There is a tendency, among philosophers but also technocrats, to treat models developed under very specific conditions as if they possess universal validity. But ultimately that does not hold, because knowledge always comes from somewhere. And knowledge is always made together. That is also why Donna Haraway has been so important to me. The idea that knowledge is *made* somewhere, and not simply produced by humans generating meanings and interpretations. It is never only a semiotic story. There are always specific technologies, materials, and nonhumans participating in what ultimately comes to count as knowledge. But that is precisely where politics also resides, and so does partiality.

Georgina. *Thinking also becomes something that always happens together. You already mentioned some intellectual "darlings" such as Stengers, Haraway. If thinking is a kind of composition, who else inhabits yours?*

---

[6] Henry E. Lowood, "The Calculating Forester: Quantification, Cameral Science, and the Emergence of Scientific Forestry Management in Germany" (1990)

Irene. Infinitely many people, of course, and it never ends. But what has really mattered to me is this idea that thinking is always situated. Claims to universality often forget where knowledge comes from. Feminist science studies showed this very powerfully. Haraway is important there, but certainly not the only one. Behind this sits a much broader feminist and ecological tradition that shows how modern conceptions of science often carry a distinctly masculine impulse toward control, toward mastering a situation, rather than allowing that situation to make something new possible, to transform you. So a lot of my work comes very clearly out of a feminist archive.

Georgina. *Staying with that situatedness of thought: could I ask you about the project on feminist love letters? And about the rubble?*

Irene. *Haha.* I have an incredible and inspiring friend, Marguerite van den Berg. Het *Kantoor voor Feministische Liefdesbrieven*, what we call it, The Office for Feminist Love Letters, was her idea.[7] Actually, according to LinkedIn, I am an 'intern' there, since according to LinkedIn you are either the boss, *or* an intern, *or* an employee. What we wanted was to create space for something else: not just for enumerating what is wrong, but also for practising our faculties of praising, of loving. Right now we are also working on a kind of grimoire, a collection of spells. What we both noticed is that, both within academia and in broader forms of social critique, there is a strong dominance of the critical reflex. As if action first has to be legitimised by an analysis of what is wrong. And *of course* critique is important. But critique is also only partially effective. Here we return again to Isabelle Stengers.

Georgina. *After critique, nothing grows.*

Irene. Yes, not necessarily, anyway. Stengers has this beautiful line: *"Poisoning is easy, nurturing is a craft."* [8]

Georgina. *Spellcraft?*

Irene. Witchcraft! And that is partly where this project comes from for us. We can continue doing critique endlessly, but critique alone does not necessarily transform much. *If capitalism could not withstand critique, it would have disappeared long ago.*[9] In fact, capitalism is extremely good at internalising critique and creatively responding to it. It absorbs critique into itself. At the same time, critique also directs our attention and shapes where our energy goes. It even shapes the way we come together politically. If you think about discussions around *Joyful Militancy*, for example, there is this question of how to preserve joy within forms of militancy that are also necessary.[10] Social movements themselves reflect on this constantly. Sometimes very toxic dynamics emerge within movements, where people begin policing one another: "*your analysis is not critical enough",* or "*your behavior contradicts our principles*!" Critique remains important because critical theory can tell you very precisely where to aim, and that matters if your goal is aiming! And an infrastructural approach

[7] *Het Kantoor voor Feministische Liefdesbrieven* is available at www.feministloveletters.nl

[8] From Isabelle Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualism" (2008)

[9] To dwell on this line, see *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* (2011) by Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers.

[10] See *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times* (2017) Nick Montgomery and carla bergman.

– one that we develop in the course as well – can help tremendously. Just an example: a country like Iran currently has a very accurate, infrastructural understanding of power. It understands exactly how and where American power is mediated, for example through American bases in the Gulf states. Then you have a good analysis. And why is it good? Because it tells you where to intervene: where to aim your missiles, so to speak. In wars and invasions, that kind of analysis becomes essential. But the question is: *what if you also want to make peace?* Then you need something else. You need love. You need attention for everything that continuously unfolds between people, for what we want to preserve.

The Office for Feminist Love Letters, and the spellbook we are working on, come out of this intuition: that we might develop other ways of speaking. Verbs, spells, ways of actualising our capacities. Ways of making visible that this exists too, that it has always existed. And it is precisely in those everyday forms of solidarity, in small escape movements from existing logics, that we have to learn how to gather together, and sustain that gathering. In that sense we also stand in a lineage with Isabelle Stengers, and with ecofeminist traditions like Starhawk, who in the sixties and seventies were already experimenting with more "witchy," relational forms of thinking and living.

Georgina*. It appears as if this immediately becomes more experimental stylistically, as well. Because if the question is how we should live together, and how we might make a better world from within the world we are already part of, then it seems strange to restrict ourselves to only one form of thought, or one mode of critique. That also raises a question of thinking through other media that I wanted to ask you about. I naturally gravitate toward texts, literature and poetry, but thought can also happen through film, through music. I love film, though I cannot always say something intelligent about it. But it does make me think. Do you experience that too?*

Irene. I'm actually a bit like you in that sense, I love text. What is a film that does that for you?

Georgina. *For me, it's Memoria (2021) by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. It's part of what people call 'ecocinema'. Tilda Swinton is the lead, and the film takes place in Colombia. It revolves around sound and memory. At some point she suddenly hears this loud bang inside her head, and it slowly draws her deeper into the rainforest, toward this small village. The film does so much through sound and silence, through trying to understand where that sound comes from. Very little 'happens,' but it still becomes almost psychedelic simply through listening, sitting by a river, remaining with things. It genuinely affected me. There is also a strong sense of connectedness running through it.*

Irene. She never discovers where the sound comes from?

Georgina. *No, she just hears it within herself.*

Irene. I do think academics are often very text-oriented, maybe that is our affliction. But poetry and spells are interesting, because the concepts we use are also kind of magical. A concept allows you to see the world differently. And concepts operate relationally, often through power relations. Think of a concept like "efficiency." It is enormously organizing. That is really a form of capitalist sorcery! Isabelle Stengers talks about *capitalist sorcery* as a kind of magic that continuously circulates. Not only through language, but precisely because words are also material; they do things. Once efficiency becomes your governing principle, you

begin acting in certain ways. And those actions can threaten other forms of living together, of freedom, of organizing collectively.

Georgina. *And you also feel that affectively. With spells it is almost as if — boom — something happens. It does not need to be fully intelligible, but it holds something together. It's a spell. We are a little enchanted.*

Irene. Yes, and you do not know the outcome beforehand. That is precisely what is beautiful about it. A spell is not simply a name. It is not: "this is complexity, now I have identified it, now we are done." A spell is generative. It conjures something into the world, though we cannot fully know in advance what that will be. We all know those stories where something is summoned that becomes larger than ourselves, and cannot be fully controlled. It really is *The conjuring*. But that is also what political action is: *a wager*. You never fully know what you are bringing into the world.

Georgina. *Within the medium of text, then, are there works that do this for you?*

Irene. In Dutch literature, Frank Keizer is very important to me. Especially his collection *De introductie van het plot*.[11] A "plot" is of course a piece of land, but also something you scheme, a coming together, a conspiracy, *plotting*. In Sylvia Wynter's work, the plot is also the space adjacent to the plantation: where some form of sociality was maintained, where life was sustained even under the deathly regimes of the plantation.[12] I love that doubleness. And then of course Ursula K. Le Guin. Her work is incredibly generative and ecological. Her stories are deeply concerned with how people, ecologies, and material worlds exist in relations of interdependence. Those relations are not always harmonious, but they are always taken seriously. What I find beautiful about Le Guin is that she does worldbuilding by taking the world seriously. In that sense her work also feels like a counterweight to so much science fiction that is basically just *boys and their toys*, rockets, technologies, conquest, all attempts to get off ground, away. But there is more to life than that. How do we care for children? How do we love one another? In what constellations can that happen? What do we do with our bodies all day? With wind, with water, with the elements? Le Guin stays with those questions.

Georgina. *Hearing you speak, I keep thinking about mobilising the imagination we do all recognize. I think about when I was a child, and my room used to be filled with Playmobil scenes and little animals. The whole world existed there; it was no larger than the carpet. The bookshelves became mountain ranges where 'the gods' lived, I was strangely religious. I was constantly inventing systems to make everything relate to one another, because of course the stuffed animals, the Playmobil figures and the landscape itself needed to have frameworks for relating. But there was no suspension of disbelief. That was the world. I would spend weeks preparing expeditions, climbing those bookshelves with my Playmobil figures, all for no real purpose at all. And that was exactly what was beautiful about it.*

11 Frank Keizer, *De introductie van het plot* (2022).

12 Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation" (1971).

Irene. At what point does a bookshelf stop being a mountain range and become a collection of paper testifying to the thoughts of philosophers?

Georgina. *So they can see their names printed on the spine...*

Irene. Then I would still rather have the mountain range. *Laughs.* But you have studied philosophy, I never have – I always feel a bit uncomfortable with philosophy, or maybe with the discipline around it, not the activity itself. I wonder how you experienced the course, with your background. I hear from students how what we discuss is all quite complicated, and heavy material. In the master programme, we discuss massive texts with diagnoses that are sometimes difficult to digest. Capitalism, race. But precisely thinking from these places can offer forms of flight, towards a joy that can be lacking from a canon. How is that for you?

Georgina. *Maybe that matters especially now, when everything feels so exhausted and defensive. I find it beautiful when writers allow some form of affect to appear in their work, when you can feel that something genuinely matters to them and it is consequential to their philosophy, even when institutions of philosophy often try to erase that* 'aangedaanheid'*, that affect. Because, don't get me started on this struggle with philosophy! Sometimes it feels as though what is valued most is a very fixed kind of structure, "how Spinoza's conatus relates to Thomas Aquinas," for example. To treat those thoughts as isolated entities that can simply be arranged together in one abstract conceptual space requires precisely the kind of suspension of disbelief I cannot always participate in. That is where I sometimes struggle institutionally. Escaping that does not mean rejecting philosophy, or constructing some "new canon." But that is what these thinkers we talk about also immediately resist. Whitehead, Stengers, or for me it is always Lauren Berlant, they are incredibly generative. They resist becoming 'authority figures', as is sometimes the rebuttal, or let's say working on them as such, undermines the project.*

Irene. Exactly. Concepts can operate like spells. *Conatus*, for example, multiplies possibilities and relations. *It unsettles.* The question is whether disciplines still allow concepts to function that way, as speculative and generative. If it can go beyond a canon, simply as names to be categorised and mastered. That happens a lot in institutions, also around incredibly generative thinkers themselves.

Georgina. *At some point philosophy can start to feel almost necrophilic, endlessly excavating what dead philosophers "really meant," as if Rousseau needs to be ceremonially exhumed every year, his dead body hoisted and carried back into the Pantheon for yet another analysis.*

Irene. *Laughs.* Necrophilic is a good word for it. "Stop it, guys, he's dead!" And meanwhile, you read another peer-reviewed article about "the adventure of thought," and you think: okay, but when does the adventure actually begin? At some point you just want to say: go *do* it, then. Go have an adventure!

Georgina. *Maybe that is also then our final question. How do we hold onto ways of living a little better within all of this?*

Irene. I think you have to look for joy in what is already here. And love. All these incredible thinkers are already here. Film is here. Other people are here. Spells are here. If you really take that seriously, there is already an enormous amount there. Talk to a nice forester! Someone who can tell you what a tree desires, or what the soil is made of. Those are ultimately the more interesting places for thought to begin, for me. So, *go into the forest!*

Works Mentioned in the Interview – *in order of appearance*

Mitchell, Timothy. 2009. "Carbon Democracy." *Economy and Society* 38 (3): 399–432.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2011. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso.

Spice, Anne. 2018. "Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations against Pipelines." *Environment and Society* 9 (1): 40–56.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press.

Stengers, Isabelle. 2005. "Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices." *Cultural Studies Review* 11 (1): 183–196.

Despret, Vinciane. 2016. *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* Translated by Brett Buchanan. University of Minnesota Press.

Van Oorschot, Irene. 2021. *The Law Multiple: Judgment and Knowledge in Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Van Oorschot, Irene. 2018. *Ways of Case-Making / Zaken Maken*. PhD dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Van Oorschot, Irene. 2024. "Forest Futures in the Making: Legal Infrastructures and Multispecies Speculation in Planning Climate-Adaptable Forests." *Tecnoscienza: Italian Journal of Science & Technology Studies* 15 (2): 83–102.

Lowood, Henry E. 1990. "The Calculating Forester: Quantification, Cameral Science, and the Emergence of Scientific Forestry Management in Germany." In *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Tore Frängsmyr, J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider. University of California Press.

Kantoor voor Feministische Liefdesbrieven. N.d. www.feministloveletters.nl.

Stengers, Isabelle. 2008. "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualism." *Subjectivity* 22 (1): 38–59.

Pignarre, Philippe, and Isabelle Stengers. 2011. *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*. Translated and edited by Andrew Goffey. Palgrave Macmillan.

bergman, carla, and Nick Montgomery. 2017. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times*. AK Press.

Weerasethakul, Apichatpong, dir. 2021. *Memoria* [film].

Keizer, Frank. 2022. *De introductie van het plot*. Uitgeverij Pluim.

Wynter, Sylvia. 1971. "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation." *Savacou* 5 (June): 95–102.