

Introduction

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*The world, like everything in-between, relates
and separates men at the same time*

Hannah Arendt¹

In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* Raymond Williams argues that “the most active problems of meaning are always primarily embedded in actual relationships, and that both the meanings and the relationships are typically diverse and variable, within the structures of particular social orders and the processes of social and historical change” (22). This volume is devoted to two “keywords” laden with such telling semantic histories: the “individual” and the “mass.” Interpreting these terms in diverse ways, the authors in this volume offer historically and theoretically informed analyses of literary and cultural representations of the relations between the individual and the mass, exploring such areas as the individual and the community, the subject and the Other, collectivity and universality, heterogeneity and homogeneity, individuality, individualism, the massification of society, mass culture, (mass) media subjectivities, and organic, imagined and virtual communities. With the focus of papers ranging from post-revolutionary America to contemporary Britain, this volume illustrates how concepts of the “individual” and the “mass” are historically contingent, with the notion of “mass” in particular taking on new meanings in the global environment of postmodernity.

The Individual, Individuality, Individualism

Originally meaning “indivisible” (a negative form of the Latin verb *dividere*—to divide), the word “individual,” according to Raymond Williams, has “an extraordinary social and political history” (161), with modern notions

1. Arendt 52.

of individuality inextricable from the break up of feudalism (163). Primarily a pejorative adjective for “idiosyncratic,” it was not until the nineteenth century that it functioned as a singular noun in social and political thought, denoting “a fundamental order of being” (163). Following the model of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century logic and mathematics, where the individual was posited as the entity from which other categories were derived, the political thought of the Enlightenment believed argument to begin with individuals, who had an initial and primary existence (164). However, Williams asserts, Liberal thought that focused on the individual as origin was criticized both from conservative positions and, in the nineteenth century, from socialist positions, most obviously by Karl Marx, “who attacked the opposition of the abstract categories ‘individual’ and ‘society’ and argued that the individual is a social creation, born into relationships and determined by them” (164).

Williams also notes that from the nineteenth century a distinction began to be made between individuality and individualism. Individuality, the older term, emerges from “the complex of meanings in which ‘individual’ developed, stressing both a unique person and his (indivisible) membership of a group” (165). It is this inflection of the term “individual” that is invoked in numerous papers in this volume, many of which focus on the relationship between the individual and the group (Peters, Detsi-Diamanti, Koustinoudi, Ramel, Ciugureanu, Gentles-Pearl, Apostolou, Dimitriadis), threats posed to individuality in modernity and mass society (Butter), as well as the desirability of and potentiality for individual (artistic) expression in mass society (Constantinidou, Siropoulos). Individualism, on the other hand, was coined in the nineteenth century to refer to “a theory not only of abstract individuals but of the primacy of individual states and interests” (165), and continues to have great political resonance. From the left, it is deemed as an ideology that supports capitalism by producing a society of isolated monads, a society that puts individual interests before the collective good. For instance, Susan Buck-Morss has recently argued that neo-liberalism is characterized by individualist articulations of social problems; thus, while the “individual subject, armed with abstract, universal rights and self-chosen identities,” sets out to confront forms of cultural populism such as fascist nationalism and racist xenophobia, it is paradoxically complicit in producing those forms, which are its “ideological correlate” (71). In both neo-conservative and neo-liberal discourse, the rights of the individual are hotly defended, though liberals frequently decry hyper-individualism, what President Obama has termed “that old, tired ‘me first’ approach to life” (qtd. in Ward), whilst steering carefully clear of radical, collective politics.

The semantic complexity of notions of the “individual” is evident in the work of Theodor Adorno, an important reference point for several of the papers in this volume. Adorno feared the loss of the individual in mass society, a fear inextricable from the legacy of the totalizing system of fascism which dominated his conceptual framework. While his valorization of the individual might ostensibly seem to contradict his Marxist critique of capitalism and the atomization of the social, in fact Adorno’s critique was rooted in the ideal of a classless society of *free, autonomous, rational* individuals. Adorno thus rejected the type of individuality promoted by mass society and the “culture industry,” which he regarded as the “pretence of individualism which necessarily increases in proportion to the liquidation of the individual” (40). Adorno also argued that the common focus on an individual character in mass culture “already succumbs to ideology” (65), a point relevant to the film *The Interpreter*, which Fotini Apostolou analyzes in this volume. Here the story of an individual white African woman narrativizes the story of the collective trauma of a fictional African country. Such “individualizing narrative paradigms,” to use Fredric Jameson’s phrase (*Geopolitical Aesthetic* 41), are the rule in a Hollywood suspicious of collectivity, while racial hierarchies are also at work in determining which individuals get their stories told in mainstream cultural productions.

Comparing the Frankfurt School’s attack on the “old bourgeois ego” with that of the poststructuralist, anti-humanist critique of the subject, Fredric Jameson notes that while the Frankfurt School lamented the “depersonalization and desubjectification . . . imposed by the emergence of the monopolies and their new conglomerates,” the poststructuralist announcement of the “death of the subject” “in effect celebrated this eclipse of bourgeois individualism” (*Singular* 133).² Key to this attack on the unified, bourgeois individual was, of course, Lacanian psychoanalysis, which, Jameson suggests, may offer “a bridge between these two different versions of history” (133). Developing Sigmund Freud’s radical decentring of the individual instituted by his “discovery” of the unconscious, and rejecting American ego therapy, Jacques Lacan argued that the subject is always marked by lack, resulting in “the self’s radical ex-centricity to itself” (189). Lacan’s most radical contention, however, is that “the big Other, the symbolic order itself, is also *barré*, crossed-

2. In *A Singular Modernity* Jameson himself refers to the utopian and revolutionary potential of “depersonalization” (136), and elsewhere “insist[s] on a third possibility beyond the old bourgeois ego and the schizophrenic subject of our organization society today: a *collective subject*, decentred but not schizophrenic” (Stephanson and Jameson 21).

out, by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/ traumatic kernel, around a central lack” (Žižek, *Sublime* 122). This symbolic lack not only “splits the essentialist conception of individuality” but also “introduces divisions into human collectivity” (Stavrakakis 40). The result is “the deconstruction—but not the ‘destruction’—of the dominant bipolarities individual/ collective and subjective/ objective” (40), as illustrated by Anna Koustinoudi’s and Annie Ramel’s Lacanian analyses of community in this volume.

Some theorists, though, have greeted poststructuralist proclamations of the death of the subject with suspicion: Elisabeth Fox-Genovese, for instance, states, “[s]urely it is no coincidence . . . that the Western white male elite proclaimed the death of the subject at precisely the moment at which it might have had to share that status with the women and peoples of other races and classes who were beginning to challenge its supremacy” (qtd. in Shohat and Stam 345). The history of identity politics has shown that the valorization of difference has been politically powerful in forcing attention on those previously excluded from humanist constructions of a universal subject, an investment in difference that undergrids Kamille Gentles-Pearl’s and Fotini Apostolou’s papers. However, several contemporary political theorists, inspired by Martin Heidegger’s deconstruction of the subject/ object distinction, as well as Lacanian and other poststructuralist strands of thought that reject the metaphysics of the Cartesian *cogito sum* and posit “a Subject who—even empirically—cannot be reduced to an individual” (Badiou, “Idea” 2),³ have also attempted to relinquish identity-based models of sociality, which, they argue, by investing in identity and difference rather than universality, ignore what unites rather than divides us, carry out exclusionary operations, splinter the Left, play into capitalist strategies of cooption (e.g. niche marketing, consumerism as expression of individuality),⁴ inadvertently risk re-throning the individual, and, far from bringing about radical, systemic change, merely rearrange social hierarchies (Douzinas 96).

Slavoj Žižek, for instance, accuses multiculturalist politics of suspending and renaturalizing the “global dimension of capitalism” (Butler et al 96). In

3. Badiou argues that “while remaining the individual that he or she is, he or she can also become, through incorporation, an active part of a new Subject” and “[determine] the place of a truth with respect to his or her own vital existence and to the world in which this existence is lived out” (“Idea” 3).

4. For instance, in their discussion of popular culture’s appropriation of feminist discourse, Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra wryly observe that “freedom is constructed as the freedom to shop” (107).

a typical Žižekian reversal, he states: “it is not only that every universality is haunted by a particular content that taints it; it is that every particular position is haunted by its implicit universality, which undermines it” (*Violence* 132). Ernesto Laclau, who rejects Žižek’s assertion that multiculturalism is secondary and integratable within the existing system (238), also resists the particular/ universal binary, asking whether “the only conceivable form of universalism is linked to a foundationalist or essentialist grounding” (Butler et al 7).⁵ From the field of sociology and race studies, Paul Gilroy has also made the case for “strategic universality” in his controversial conception of “planetary humanism,” which does not reclaim Liberal humanism (which was deeply implicated in racist practices) or simplistic notions of everyone being the same (regardless of oppression), but rather goes against multiculturalist tenets by rejecting the territorializations and exclusions at work in any exclusive focus on race, in particular black nationalism, though he still “affirm[s] the geopolitical potency of race” and the brutality of racism (63). His arguably utopian vision of “cosmopolitan solidarity” constitutes a multicultural politics that embraces heterogeneity by accepting “the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other” (4). Gilroy thus echoes Laclau, who argues that universality is “simultaneously impossible and necessary” (Butler et al 84).

As Ruth Parkin-Gounelas traces in her review essay in this volume, a similar thesis is shared by other contemporary theorists, indebted to Heidegger’s notion of “Being-with” others (*Mitsein*), whose notions of the constitutive alterity of both the self and the other necessitates a re-theorization of traditional concepts of the “individual,” the “community” and the relation between both categories. Giorgio Agamben, for instance, rejects the binary “between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal” (1). He calls for an end to the “search for a proper identity in the already improper and senseless form of individuality,” imagining instead “a singularity without identity,” a community “without subjects” (65), where every condition of belonging is replaced by the sheer fact of “belonging itself” (85)—an assertion echoed by Jean-Luc Nancy, who argues that “the thinking of community as essence . . . is in effect the closure of the political” (xxxviii). Roberto Esposito, who opens his *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of*

5. Counter to the Marxist tradition, Laclau controversially argues a need to go beyond the notion of “class struggle” (248), regarding class and all other categories as “contingent and particular forms of articulating demands, not an ultimate core from which the nature of the demands themselves could be explained” (250).

Community with the declaration, “Nothing seems more appropriate today than thinking about community; nothing more necessary, demanded, and heralded by a situation that joins in a unique epochal knot the failure of all communisms with the misery of new individualisms” (1), rejects traditional notions of community as a collective bond that unites previously distinct individuals (the communitarian position) but rather sees community as “the relation that makes [members] no longer individual subjects because it closes them off from their identity with a line, which traversing them, alters them” (139). Costas Douzinas puts it this way: “Being in common is an integral part of being oneself: a self is exposed to the other, it is posed in exteriority, the other part of the intimacy of a self” (99).

The bounded “individual” has also been challenged of late by the so-called “turn to affect” in the humanities and social sciences, “affect” being a polysemous term that gestures at “something that perhaps escapes or remains in excess of the practices of the ‘speaking subject’” (Blackman and Venn 9). Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, for instance, in a volume of *Body & Society* (2010) devoted to affect, argue: “If we start from an assumption of singularity and separation, then this frames the question of relationship as an ‘interaction effect’ between pre-existing entities, rather than the conjoining of thoroughly entangled processes” (10). Such work rejects the poststructuralist tradition, which, they suggest, by prioritizing language, discourse and representation, “inadvertently end[s] up reinstating different kinds of separation and occlusion” (10). Drawing on Deleuze, they use the term “individuation” rather than that of the “individual” in order to refer to “the creative evolution at the heart of becoming” (21). Categories such as the individual, the body, the human, the subject, as well as the group, are also rethought in the influential work of Nigel Thrift, who rejects the notion of the body as a “preformed entity” and sees the world as “jam-packed with entities” so that “increasingly what counts as ‘we’ is being redefined by a range of transhuman approaches” (17).

The Mass(es), Mass Society, Mass Mediations

The word “mass” is perhaps more complex than that of “individual,” while the plural “masses,” Williams notes, is less complex but more ambivalent, “a term of contempt in much conservative thought, but a positive term in much socialist thought” (192). In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the key term of political contempt was “multitude,” often reinforced with adjectival phrases such as “many-headed” (192)—recalling Coriolanus’ sneering description of the Plebians as “[t]he beast/ With many heads” (Shakespeare

4.1.1-2). In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the term “multitude” was steadily replaced by “mob,” which stems from the Latin phrase *mobile vulgas*—the unstable common people (193). This notion persists in modern usage, but since the early nineteenth century denotes an unruly crowd, while the sense of a general condition was evoked through the term “mass” followed by “the masses” (193). The French Revolution predictably marked a decisive shift when comments applied to “the multitude” during the English Revolution were now applied to “the mass,” which, by the 1830s, gained common currency (193-94).

The pathologizing model of the “mass,” discussed in Rosemary A. Peter’s paper, is evident in studies of what Laclau terms “the *grande peur* of the nineteenth-century social sciences” (19)—“mass psychology”—epitomized by Gustave Le Bon’s *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896). Le Bon’s class-based anxiety stemmed from his self-confessed fear that the masses desired to “destroy society as it now exists” and restore the primitive communism of pre-civilization (9). While accepting that many types of crowds exist (11), Le Bon generally deems the crowd as a contagious, irrational, uninhibited force (17), characterized by the “inferior forms of evolution” mostly seen in “women, savages and children” (20)—an account that, for Steve Reicher, is inextricable from the fact that Le Bon was writing at “the birth of mass society” when fears about social control headed the political agenda.

Freud’s intervention into these debates on mass psychology was marked by his absence of contempt for the masses. Rather, as Adorno puts it, “in the spirit of true enlightenment,” Freud asks: “what makes the masses into masses?” (135). The answer, for Freud, set out in “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,”⁶ was a libidinal bond, a bond Giorgos Dimitriadis explores in his discussion of the film *300*. Recognizing the gratification of group ties and the power of *eros*, as well as the import of a leader in group formations, Freud rejects Le Bon’s notion of a herd instinct, which Freud regarded as an effect rather than cause (Adorno 136). Instead, Freud, who opens his study proclaiming that the individual is always tied to others, and who applied to the group many functions that had been thought to be exclusive to the individual, insists on the importance of identification in group formation, especially groups with a leader, resulting in his famous definition:

6. The recent translation by J. A. Underwood uses “mass” rather than “group” for the German term “die Massen,” the less political term “group” previously preferred by translators for “caus[ing] less of a conceptual stir” (Rose xi). I am grateful to Ruth Parkinson-Gounelas for alerting me to this fact.

“A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego” (147). However, he suggests that groups without leaders, where members are united by an abstraction, might be less primitive. He also explores the constitutive role of hostility towards an out-group in cementing in-group bonds (129), using the example of Christianity, which calls itself a religion of love but “must be hard and unloving to those who do not belong to it” (128). The pivotal role played by aggression and scapegoating in shoring up mass formations is central to many papers in this volume, most notably those by Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, Ramel and Dimitriadis.

Freud’s interventions have proved pivotal to political theorists on the left, such as Adorno, who explored how the masses were exploited by “fascist propaganda,”⁷ or more recently by Laclau in his attempts to reclaim the “people” as a political category (250). But Freud’s actual description of the mass departs little from Le Bon’s, since he also considered the crowd to be irrational, de-individualized and temporarily freed from the repressions demanded by civilisation (Freud 101). Popular culture also often represents the mass as mindless and de-individualized (with the exception of military groups that are represented more positively), whether it be the zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero 1968) that have been interpreted as representing Cold War fears of communism, the indoctrinated Space Monkeys in *Fight Club* (David Fincher 1999) that are divested of their names and blindly obey Tyler’s (Brad Pitt’s) orders, or more comically, the followers of Brian (Graham Chapman) in Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* (Terry Jones 1979) who, when told by Brian that they are all individuals who need to think for themselves, echo in chorus, “Yes, we are all individuals.”⁸ Negative depictions of collectivity, often inscribed through class discourse, are equally evident today in media accounts of “riots” (as opposed to social protests) or football “hooliganism,” for instance. The problem, Reicher argues, is that abstract accounts divorce masses or crowds from their social context, whereas in fact crowd action “is shaped by ideology and social structure.” Reicher notes that crowds or masses can “bring about social change,” citing the Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia as an example, and might form a necessary site for resistance to power or stimulate productive cooperation.

7. See Adorno’s “Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda” in *The Culture Industry* pp. 132-157.

8. I am grateful to Anna Koustinoudi for reminding me of this scene.

This, then, recalls the positive meaning of mass that Williams notes, one formed in the socialist/ Marxist tradition, where the sense of mass as “dense aggregate” was given social significance, denoting solidarity, “an avoidance of unnecessary division or fragmentation and thus an achievement of unity” (194). Mao, for instance, preferred the term “the masses” to “class” as a political category in his desire to underscore that workers were not the sole representatives of a communist politics (Balso 21). However, the crisis of many mass movements of the twentieth century, epitomized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, led to the modern bourgeois state, buttressed by globalized capitalism, “having no rivals in the ideological field,” according to Alain Badiou, and thus confusion and fragmentation among the popular masses (“Idea” 13). That said, the economic and financial crisis of 2008, according to many theorists in a recent collection entitled *The Idea of Communism* (2010), has ushered in “an extraordinarily rapid sea-change in the realm of political imaginaries” (Hardt 131) that has installed a “return to history,” “[n]ew forms of radical militancy and mobilization” and a re-animation of the masses (Douzinas and Žižek viii), such as witnessed in recent Greek and French responses to the imposition of austerity measures. Nonetheless, some theorists argue that the new, globalized modes of production of capitalism, along with the concomitant emergence of micro-collectives and micro-politics (often linked to new media technologies), necessitate a re-thinking of “the masses” as a political category. Michael Hardt, for instance, controversially points to the emancipatory potential of the “immaterial and biopolitical production” that has replaced industrial production in late capitalism, invoking Marx in suggesting that capitalism is “creating its own gravediggers” (143).⁹ A rather different approach is that of Alain Badiou, who defines emancipatory politics as “the politics of the anonymous masses” (“Idea” 9) but rejects the totalizing social bond that consolidates the masses, which, he argues, results in a submission to the cult of the state; instead, he proposes an “unbinding” of the masses (*Metapolitics* 71), one which would allow subjects to “break with routine and empower themselves as collectives” (Barker xiii).

While antithetical notions of “the mass” as a many-headed multitude and/or as a positive social force persist, from the twentieth century onwards, new inflections of the term also developed that revolved around mass productions and mass consumption (Williams 195). As Williams aptly puts it, “the *many-headed multitude*” became “a *many-headed multitude* with purchasing power”

9. Jacques Rancière criticizes this thesis for imagining “the victory of the communism of Capital over the communism of the communist” (174).

(195). Overall, the sense of “mass” denoting a large number of people has dominated, especially as far as mass communications and mass media are concerned, with “[s]everal senses fused, but also confused” (196): “the large numbers reached (*the many-headed multitude* or *the majority of the people*); the mode adopted (*manipulative* or *popular*); the assumed taste (*vulgar* or *ordinary*); the resulting relationship (*alienated and abstract* or *a new kind of social communication*)” (196). As Williams notes, these competing, semantically shifting notions of mass render it “possible to visualize, or at least hope for, a mass uprising against mass society, or a mass protest against the mass media, or mass organization against massification,” the distinction being made in these political deployments depending on whether the mass is the subject or object of social action (197).

Key to debates about the role played by “mass society,” “massification,” “mass culture” or “mass media” as “modes of disarming or incorporating the working class, the proletariat, the masses” (Williams 196) is Adorno and Horkheimer’s notion of the “culture industry,” a key reference point in papers by Kamille Gentles-Peart and Vagelis Siropoulos. Adorno and Horkheimer deployed the term “culture industry” rather than “mass culture” to exclude from it the notion, “agreeable to its advocates,” of “a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves” (Adorno 98). Instead, by yoking together two normally opposing terms, they suggest mass culture to be a fully-integrated, standardized form of mass production which “impresses the same stamp on everything” (Adorno and Horkheimer 120) and simultaneously “impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals,” “making [the masses] into masses and then despising them” (Adorno 106). While Adorno saw mass culture as infantilizing (he termed it “babyfood” [92]), passivity-inducing and inherently supportive of the status quo, he regarded high modernist art as an autonomous form that offered an aesthetic critique of modernity (György). Such distinctions between high and low art, however, which have led to accusations of elitism, are no longer tenable in postmodern culture, as Siropoulos argues.¹⁰ Adorno has thus been criticized for assuming mass culture consumers to be “cultural dupes,” though in fact his later work explores the knowing complicity of consumers, along with their ability to resist “total inclusion” (Adorno 197).¹¹

Guy Debord and the Situationists generally updated the Frankfurt school in thinking through the role of electronic mass media, while maintaining their

10. In fact, Adorno himself also blurred this distinction in later work. See Adorno 93, 98.

11. See Bernstein; György.

damning ideological critique. Guy Debord's notion of "the society of the spectacle" is an important departure point for any consideration of the individual and the mass, since Debord regarded the spectacle as an instrument not only of unification (that is, as a denial of class divisions) but also of alienation under post-War capitalism. Pre-empting Baudrillard in arguing that "everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation," Debord makes an important distinction: "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a *social relation among people, mediated by images*" (emphasis added)—as suggested in Adina Ciugureanu's analysis of the Great Exhibition in this volume. In other words, the spectacle manipulates collective public perception and human relationships, rendering it "materially 'the expression of the separation and estrangement between man and man.'" However, he also entertained the possibility of resistance, unlike Baudrillard, whose work suggests we are entering "the postmodern society of the simulacrum, an abstract non-society devoid of cohesive relations, shared meaning, political struggle, or significant change" (Best and Kellner 95).

The possibility of resistance to mass culture is also a key tenet of the cultural studies tradition, as exemplified by Gentles-Peart's paper. At the extreme side of the spectrum are media theorists such as Jon Fiske, who argues that "popular culture is made by the people out of the products of the mass media—it is not imposed upon them by the media and their power-bloc allegiance" (46). More nuanced readings come from theorists such as Stuart Hall, who embraces the possibility of oppositional readings of mass culture while recognizing that there is "*no* whole, authentic, autonomous 'popular culture' which lies outside the field force of the relations of cultural power and domination" (67). Douglas Kellner also challenges Adorno and Horkheimer in pointing out that mass cultural products, by attempting to please a mass audience, may end up "however unwittingly, engag[ing] in social critique and ideological subversion" and fragmenting "the ideological hegemony which was once the fragile accomplishment of the culture industry" (203).

The Frankfurt School's notion of the passivity induced by mass culture has become harder to maintain in the light of new media technologies, what Henry Jenkins has termed "participatory culture," in particular the Internet. On such grounds, numerous theorists have argued that the Internet has the potential to extend democracy and civic participation, include more marginalized voices, invigorate the public sphere, challenge capitalist notions of ownership, and create new forms of affective ties and personal relations (e.g. social networking sites), new modes of belonging and community, as well as new forms

of political mobilization.¹² Others have attributed to new media technologies increased atomization, social seclusion, the privatization of existence, and a withdrawal from civic engagement.¹³ For some, virtual communities are as “real” and nourishing as organic communities, while for others virtual communities compensate for the fragmentation of traditional communities under late capitalism (Fernback 39-40; Rheingold), a fragmentation attributed to increased spatial and geographical mobility, combined with the attendant “time/ space compression,” to use David Harvey’s term, that characterizes postmodernity.

The alleged loss of traditional social bonds, what Stella Butter in her paper terms “the isolation of the individual in the mass,” remains the subject of endless debate from all quarters. Neo-communitarian theorist Robert D. Putnam, for instance, in his bestselling *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), argues that there is a general trend of civic disengagement in the US, resulting in a loss of “social capital,” which impoverishes both individuals and communities. For Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, the communities of “liquid modernity” are “hard work,” “a frantic search for communal grounds of consensus” that likely results in “more dissipation and fragmentation, more heterogeneity”; for that reason, “[t]he only consensus likely to stand a chance of success is the acceptance of heterogeneity of dissensions” (*Intimations* 138-39). Others suggest that social bonds of connectivity have merely transmuted, not dissipated. The work of anthropologist Michel Maffesoli has been influential in this respect. Maffesoli argues that mass culture has disintegrated, resulting in new, smaller forms of collectivity he dubs “neo-tribes,” which are characterized by more fluid, transient, affective group ties, “an empathetic ‘sociality’ which is expressed by a succession of ambiances, feelings and emotions” (11). However, his work has also been criticized for underestimating new modes of mass protest, such as the anti-globalization movement (Weinzierl and Muggleton 12-14)—again indicating the way in which new media technologies, in conjunction with the ongoing globalization of economic and cultural production, have inevitably impacted on relations between individuals and groups, creating the formation of new communities (“real” and virtual), new modes of collective mobilization, new political alignments, new audiences, new subjectivities, and new tensions between the local and the global.

While some argue that traditional social bonds are dissolving in postmodernity, as Mina Karavanta argues in her review essay, this must be con-

12. See, for instance, Rheingold.

13. See Stevenson.

textualized against the continued, often violent force still enacted by the categories of belonging that marked modernity. Her essay analyzes Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's notion of the multitude, which she defines as "the signifier of a polyvalent, international political subjectivity that is capable of representing different interests that share a common goal, the 'promise of democracy.'" Their post-empire imaginary and notion of a heterogeneous, fluctuating multitude, "a totality of desires and trajectories of resistance, struggle and constituent power," as Negri puts it (163), inevitably bring to mind the trend of re-conceptualizing community in non-essentialist ways evident in the work of Agamben, Nancy, Esposito, Laclau and Gilroy, to name but a few of the theorists discussed above. However, as Karavanta warns, the rise of xenophobia and racism, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, economic inequality, along with other ongoing social antagonisms, introduce divisions that threaten this notion of the multitude as a vehicle for social transformation.¹⁴

Thus, to turn to the related question of the mass formation of "nation" that is central to many papers in this collection, assertions that global capitalism, along with other transnational developments, has eroded the nation state¹⁵ must be put alongside the power that "nation" as a signifier still wields, whether it be the passion induced by the FIFA World Cup, the rise of the far-right in Europe (e.g. the anti-Islamic, anti-immigration English Defence League), or France's recent forced deportations of the Roma. Indeed, while, as Benedict Anderson has famously argued, nation is an "imagined community," over the past two centuries millions of people have been willing not only to kill but also to die "for such limited imaginings" (7). "Nation" may be a performative construct, but it is a powerful one that enacts sustained, material force, even as its very citational nature means that it requires constant consolidation, as the first paper of this volume by Zoe Detsi-Diamanti illustrates.

14. Their assertion that the "creating forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire" (Hardt and Negri xv) has been accused of suggesting "the more capitalism there is, the better are the chances for communism to emerge" (Bosteels 49).

15. Manuel Castells, for instance, argues that in the "information age" the nation state has been eroded due to competition as diverse as "networks of capital, production, communication, crime, international institutions, supranational military apparatuses, non-governmental organizations, transnational religions, movements of public opinion, and social movements of all kinds, including terrorist movements. And below the state, there are communities, tribes, localities, cults and gangs" (357).

The Individual and the Mass: Literary and Cultural Reflections

In order to trace the shifting notions of the individual and the mass, this volume follows a chronological trajectory. The first section opens with Zoe Detsi-Diamanti's analysis of Robert Munford's play *The Patriots* (c. 1777), in which she highlights that, despite the republican discourse of a homogenous nation, post-revolutionary America was traversed by internal dissensions and fears of a disrupted "unqualified" mass of individuals who, Munford suggested, threatened social and national cohesion. Invoking Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined community" and Laclau and Mouffe's notion of the "egalitarian imaginary," Detsi-Diamanti asks what violent exclusions are at work in discourses of nation, a question equally relevant today.

Rosemary A. Peters also explores post-revolutionary discourse, this time in nineteenth-century France. Her paper traces not only the socio-cultural connotations of "mass" in the nineteenth century, but also its religious connotations, reminding us that etymologically, one sense of "religion," stemming from the Latin *religare*, is "to bind tightly together." She shows how the work of the priest Prosper Guéranger and the fictional work of Karl Huysmans sublimated the personal to the collective, but with the paradoxical intention of elevating the individual; thus, she notes, in Benedictine religious discourse, "the individual *is* the Mass."

Similar to Peters and Detsi-Diamanti, Anna Koustinoudi explores communal ties at a time of rapid social change—in this case a small rural community soon to be transformed by the shift to an industrial economy. Her paper addresses the "community narrative" of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), exploring the tensions not only between the individual and community—mainly the liminal narrator's resentment at the subjugation of her desires in the name of conformity—but also within the individual "I." In so doing, her psychoanalytic reading shows the inherent aggressivity underpinning the subject, as well as the ambivalent relationship between the individual and the community, both marked by divisions and lack.

Also deploying a Lacanian framework, while "revisiting" the Ancient Greek theory of the scapegoat,¹⁶ Annie Ramel analyzes the relationship between Thomas Hardy's tragic heroines and their respective communities in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Return of the Native* (1878). Both

16. The scapegoat is a figure that occurs in the work of community theorists as diverse as Thomas Hobbes, Freud, and René Girard. As Girard puts it, "[t]he sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from *its own* violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself" (qtd. in Esposito 33).

Hardy heroines are solitary individuals, alienated from the community, “out of place,” or rather, occupying “a place which should normally be vacant” by filling the gap of *objet a*. They thus act as surplus objects that stand for the “unspecularizable” *objet a*, which can only be looked at awry if horror is to be kept at bay. In other words, they are no longer “the elusive blind spot in the field of the visible” that supports the Other (Žižek, “I hear you” 94), but rather uncanny harbingers of death, filling in the void which should remain unfilled. They thus threaten the community with disintegration and must be expelled if normality is to be restored.

Adina Ciugureanu focuses on an unprecedented event of modernity, mass entertainment and mass tourism, the Great Exhibition (1851), which resulted in the social classes mixing on an unparalleled scale, mediated by the spectacle. For Ciugureanu the event marked a turning point in the meaning of “masses”—from “mob” to a more positive connotation of socio-economic category.¹⁷ The middle-class-addressed *Punch* cartoons that Ciugureanu analyzes depict the working classes sympathetically, while exposing class divisions. However, *Punch* cartoons were less generous with foreign others, who were represented as an invading, violent mob—representations that no doubt worked to cement imperialist discourse and mask internal national divisions.

Also focusing on visual culture, Despina-Alexandra Constantinidou traces Salvador Dali’s use of the “mechanism of paranoid interpretation” in order to purvey individual meaning and mediate the unconscious of the individual to an external world. His paranoiac-method, which Constantinidou exemplifies through a reading of “Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion,” thus bridged the unconscious of the individual and the mass.¹⁸

While Constantinidou explores the potential of modernist art to express individual meaning, Vagelis Siropoulos uses the case study of Julie Taymor’s 1997 staging of Disney’s *The Lion King* to explore the possibilities for avant-garde artists to maintain their individual vision when working in corporate-produced, mass cultural forms. For Siropoulos, the postmodern turn marked a transformation in “the role of the individual artist and his/her relation with the masses.” The postmodern reunification of high and low art has resulted in increasingly sophisticated audiences (a far cry from Adorno’s vision of mass culture as “babyfood”). However, Siropoulos warns, avant-garde

17. Taking place close on the heels of the Chartist rally (1848), the Great Exhibition has also been interpreted as an attempt to cover over class tensions (Saville qtd. in Purbrick 4).

18. Recent work has explored the relation between surrealism and mass culture. See Mendelson; Walz.

practices have themselves been thoroughly coopted and commodified and can “[serve] perfectly the economic interests of late capitalist society, where commodity production and consumption are intertwined with image production and consumption.”

Kamille Gentles-Pearl also concentrates on mass culture, though with an interest in consumption rather than production. Deploying the Bakhtinian concept of dialogical selves in order to explore the multiple, dynamic, culturally-hybrid subjectivities of second generation, West-Indian immigrants to the US, she considers how media engagement reflects and constructs identity formation, both individual and collective, in this case the identity positioning of non-Western “minorities” in dominant Western communities. Her ethnographic study, in the cultural studies tradition, explores the viewer’s ability to negotiate their subject positions and interpret popular texts in accordance with their own individual experiences, thereby “challenging the very notion of the ‘mass’ in the mass media.”

Fotini Apostolou also focuses on the cultural construction of female identity by inserting the question of sexual difference into the professional codes of interpreting, codes that demand objectivity and a lack of individual involvement. Focusing on two films, *Woman Times Seven* (1967) and *The Interpreter* (2005), Apostolou argues that the desired professional neutrality proves impossible when the interpreter is a woman, though this difficulty is screened in different ways in each film due to the thirty-eight years separating them and the influence of feminist discourse in mainstream cultural productions.

While Apostolou considers the divestment of individuality required by the professional interpreter, a divestment that she reads as a form of self-annihilation, Giorgos Dimitriadis considers the loss of individuality intrinsic to military formations. Examining Zack Snyder’s filmic adaptation of Frank Miller’s graphic novel *300* (2007), one of the mass of versions of an individual event—the Battle at Thermopylae—he explores how its use of digital technology affects its representations of the individual and the mass. The film’s computer-generated imagery enables near identical images of hypermasculine soldiers—a visual homogeneity that evokes the uniformity and group cohesion of the Spartan army, a cohesion he explores through the Freudian model. Their Persian adversaries, on the other hand, are represented as an irrational, feminine mob.¹⁹ Such representations of the good Westerners and corrupt

19. The demonization of the Persians, through imagery of male effeminacy, combined with a disparaging comment by King Leonidas about Athenian “boy-lovers,” has resulted

Orientalism, which inevitably caused controversy, are read by Dimitriadis as a post-9/11 narrative of Western alliance against terrorism, an alliance forged through the demonization of an out-group. With the film foregrounding its hyperreal status (which Dimitriadis reads through the Deleuzian as opposed to the Baudrillardian model), this also raises questions about social mediation by the spectacle in digital culture.²⁰

Lastly, Stella Butter, intervening in debates around social bonds and community in late capitalism, explores four contemporary literary texts concerned with the question of “how individual identity may be forged within a society marked by processes of abstraction and depersonalization.” In her analyses of Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* (1991) and David Harrower’s play *Kill the Old Torture Their Young* (1998) she notes that the individual is thrown into crisis due to the alienating forces of capitalism and abstract society. However, she identifies a rather different trend with McGregor’s *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (2002) and David Mitchell’s *Ghostwritten* (1999), the first of which explores spiritual connectivity and the second of which suggests the potential interconnectivity of individuals in the interplay between the global and the local.

Whether one feels that traditional communal and social bonds, at least in Western cultures, have disintegrated in “abstract society,” or whether one feels that modernity’s categories of belonging continue to wield force, or that social ties have merely changed their form, the fact remains that the desire to

in the film being called homophobic, while others note the film’s heterosexualization of the Spartans, who in fact “incorporated a form of pederasty into their educational system” (Cartledge). The negative representation of the Persians as an uncontrollable, passionate, incoherent, corrupt mob has also been criticized, with the film banned within Iran. Echoing the film’s rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion articulated through nationalist discourse, as well as underscoring the film’s political resonances in a post-9/11 world, Frank Miller made the following controversial comment just before the release of the film:

For some reason, nobody seems to be talking about who we’re up against, and the sixth century barbarism that they actually represent. These people saw people’s heads off. They enslave women, they genitally mutilate their daughters, they do not behave by any cultural norms that are sensible to us. I’m speaking into a microphone that never could have been a product of their culture, and I’m living in a city where three thousand of my neighbors were killed by thieves of airplanes they never could have built. (“Talk of the Nation”)

20. Chris Sharrett, for instance, has asked whether filmic violence remains connected to shared myths that still shape society and the viewer’s place in it, or whether the national myths have been destroyed in postmodern culture, leaving only the images themselves, defined by their value as commodities (26).

belong has not diminished, even with the recognition that “belonging” is never total and often imagined. To quote Bauman, as existence becomes increasingly privatized, “we all feel time and again an overwhelming ‘need of belonging’—a need to identify ourselves not just as individual human beings, but as members of a larger entity” (*Life in Fragments* 275). However, as illustrated throughout this volume, some forms of belonging rest on violent exclusion and others are more embracing of difference. Moreover, modes of belonging, rooted in historical contexts, shift and mutate, as do concomitant notions of “the individual,” “community” and “mass,” as the historical scope of this volume aims to illustrate. Recent attempts to re-articulate these key notions bear witness to the fact that, however semantically laden with historically-bound social processes and attendant ideologies the keywords “individual” and “mass” might be, the project of theorizing the continually shifting relation between the individual and the mass remains a political and theoretical necessity.

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