

IDENTIFICATIONS

**Performing Counter Discrimination
International Conference**

ABSTRACTS & BIOS

Panel 2

Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Department for Philosophy and Cultural Heritage
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PANEL 2:

Embracing Difference.

Identification, Tension, and Unity

Chair: Prof. Francesco Della Puppa (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Keywords: difference; the imaginary, mimesis; fantasy's traversal; the Möbius strip.

1. It Is Our Sameness, Not Our Difference, We Can Not Accept.

Isak de Vries

Jacques Lacan and Rene Girard offer sophisticated accounts of how images are correlated with aggression. Lacan's conception of the Imaginary dimension stresses the formative role images play in constructing one's psyche and identity, and how one's identification with images eventually releases delusional and narcissistic passions that violently seek to annihilate differences in ourselves and others. By contrast, Girard's theory of mimesis stresses the interpersonal dynamics of desire and how mimetic desire forms the gender norms in which we get trapped. Girard's mimetic theory accounts for how the erosion of differences threatens the social order, requiring scapegoats to re-establish recognizable yet arbitrary differences for individual and communal identities. Lacan and Girard's theoretical visions dovetail, overlap, and extend each other, especially concerning the identification and internalizing of others, the nature and process of desire, and the (m)Other's penetrating Gaze and its effects. This paper reads Lacan and Girard together from the context of clinical work with transgender patients. Doing so offers opportunities for a deeper understanding of how identities form and function, particularly concerning the role images and aggression play in the formation of gender and the phenomenological experience of gender dysphoria. Implications for other individual and communal identities, and the social-political conflicts they entail, are implied throughout.

Isak de Vries, LCSW is a psychoanalyst in private practice in New York. He is a psychoanalytic candidate in training at the Centre for Modern Psychoanalytic Studies in New York, New York, and a host at the New Books in Psychoanalysis Podcast.

2. Performances of Solidarity, Sacrifice, and What Could Have Been: The Sir George Williams University Protests as Counter-Logic of Ethical Politics

Reid Kleinberg

Simultaneously one of the most explosive and one of the most overlooked moments in Canadian political history, the Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) protests occurred in Montreal between January-February 1969 amidst the height of Quebec's nationalist and Black Power/pan-Caribbean awakening (Eber 1969; Forsythe 1971; Mohabir and Cummings 2021; Austin 2013; Mills 2010). Frustrated with unfair treatment, Black and Caribbean radical student groups occupied the University's computer centre while Quebecois nationalist and white left-wings student groups lent assistance. But were the acts of solidarity and racialized and nationalized autonomy performed during the protest enough to break through ideological partisanship and emotionally embedded identifications to produce a transnational, multi-racial left-wing front? The embodied protests were limited in their ability to crystallize a formal coalition across national and ideological lines. Yet assessing the embodied protests and works of memory (scholarship, film, storytelling) in conjunction contributes to a counter-hegemonic logic (Glynos and Howarth 2007) that illuminates the feasibility, practices, and dynamics of such a coalition. This paper draws on archival research conducted at Concordia and McGill Universities as well as past and contemporary media memorializing the events (Action 1973; Ninth Floor 2015; Turner 2021). Utilizing Discourse Theory (Glynos and Howarth 2007) I articulate this counter-hegemonic discursive logic. I turn to Psychoanalytic Political theory (Glynos and Voutyras 2016; Stavrakakis 2011) to discuss how the discursive logic sustains a 'traversal of fantasy' between its disparate actors and subsequently is productive for constructing cross-ideological coalitions (Žižek 2009). I focus on characterizing the sites and practices where the militants articulated an 'ethics of loss', the necessary work of reflective distance towards and sacrifice of one's own ideological goals in recognition of an other (Howarth 2008). The paper aims to develop case-analysis of how Lacanian concepts of 'fantasy traversal' enable cross-ideological left-wing coalitions by specifying practices of sacrificial solidarity.

Dr Reid Kleinberg is a Teacher in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex and a member of the University of Essex's Centre for Ideology and Discourse Analysis. His research interests are Discourse Theory, radical politics, nationalism and transnationalism, and intellectual history. His doctoral research examined the normative and strategic problems of left-populist nationalist discourses and the case of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's 2017 presidential campaign in France. Other avenues of Reid's work concern far-right articulations in the United States such as the Trump movement, oligarchy, and paleo-libertarianism. As well as the history

of transnational left-wing radicalism in late 1960's Quebec. He has published with the Journal of Political Power and Bloomsbury.

3. Dramatic Reversals: Performance, Identification, Extimacy

Kate Katafiasz

For Donna Haraway difference has to be taken seriously in postcolonial worlds. For her, this can only be done in in practice that

cobble together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures (2003: 7).

Identity and difference are irreducible, as Martin Heidegger tells us – post Holocaust – in 1957. Identity concerns semblance, iconicity, mimesis; things that Aristotle associated with the theatre, and things that allow us to differentiate ourselves from others. This paper will propose a new way to understand and develop drama's political radicalism; one that demonstrates how drama can take us beyond identity; using difference to 'cobble' us together into democratic unity.

The paper will use examples from plays the late dramatist Edward Bond wrote for young people in Birmingham, one of the UK's most diverse cities. It will suggest that these plays build on the legacy of ancient dramatists, by using a *skene* – the wooden wall that separated the visible and invisible aspects of the stage at the Theatre of Dionysus. When the play's action takes place behind the *skene*, our visible and auditory fields no longer ground each other, destabilizing the physical unity – the identity – that Lacan tells us we acquire at the Mirror Stage (2006: 78). The paper will explore the nature of this intersubjective, or extimate space, using Lacan's example of Moëbius topology (1992: 139), whereby a surface appears to be two-sided, but in fact has only one side. The model takes us from subject to object without crossing any boundary, to locate the subject outside itself; but it also puts the strangeness of the other at the heart of our subjectivity.

Dr. Kate Katafiasz (k.katafiasz@gmail.com) was Programme Leader for Drama at Newman University, Birmingham in the UK until she retired in 2022. Originally a schoolteacher specializing in Drama in Education, Kate obtained her PhD in 2011. Her work investigates the pleasure of plays and playing in ancient, educational, and post-structural contexts; specifically,

how drama can disturb habitual relationships between bodies and words in profoundly creative ways.

Chair

Francesco Della Puppa (PhD) is Associate Professor in General Sociology at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of Ca' Foscari University of Venice and member of the Master on Migration and Social Transformations at the same university. He is interested in international migration and asylum, migrant family and family reunification, gender and migration, labour, social conflict, migrant work, digital work, citizenship. Lately, he has been interested in social sciences and comic, (ethno)graphic novels, and in establishing academic, scientific, social and human relations with Cuba.