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Coming Attractions

In 2003

Vol. 15, no. 1:
Violence and Redemption
Guest edited by the Late Liberalism Collective

Includes essays by Achille Mbembe, Claudio Lomnitz, Ghassan Hage, Michael Warner, Abidin Kusno, Gillian Cowlishaw, Tim Blackmore; responses to John Borneman by Richard Falk, Laura Nader, Steven Sampson, and Richard Wilson; and more . . .
Editor’s Note

Currencies, Crises

It is no secret that journal editors are under enormous social and financial pressure to be responsive to the state of emergency. Like many other contemporary journals, especially in North America, *Public Culture* has struggled to distribute its editorial space in a balanced way between topically focused issues (*The Millennial Quartet, Translation in a Global Market, The Critical Limits of Embodiment, New Imaginaries*) and issues whose focuses emerge from the currents of a global and cosmopolitan conversation. One of the pleasures of journal publishing is bringing together scholars to reflect on a particular subject (such as the responses in this issue to Achille Mbembe’s controversial essay, “African Modes of Self-Writing”) or reflections on topics by writers whose constituencies and modes of expression seem worlds apart. Joseph Masco’s essay on hypersecurity in Los Alamos meets Ellen Spiro’s documentary on the garbage dumps where the Los Alamos National Laboratory throws out much more than its secrets. And both cultural studies meet John Martone’s chilling representation of the ghastly museology of space wars when they land, as they inevitably do, in imperial zones like Vietnam.

Journals whose editorial missions are interdisciplinary in nature and global in reach are perhaps even more liable to the call to contract with immediacy—to produce issues that focus on debates in the current of global times. This public contract seems vital, even as we remember Walter Benjamin’s warning to distinguish the state’s emergencies from one’s own immediacies. Nostalgia, after all, is enormously productive for states and economies (Jonathan Bach) but breaks the temporality of the emergency.
Public Culture is committed to thinking about immediacy as an interval of time different from crisis. Doing so allows Public Culture to provide a space for extended reflections on the emergent: the social and cultural phenomena that arise unexpectedly and call for some immediate action, as well as the social and cultural phenomena that move through space in a different time frame, outside the discourse of the urgent. How, after all, did the commonsense idea of the state secret come to dominate public life, such that the public considers whether this or that information should be stamped “classified” but rarely debates why any information should bear this state mark? Masco’s essay on the atomic bomb and the concept of a state secret could be productively read against the continuing quasi-legal detentions of Arab and South Asian men in the United States. Likewise, Rebecca L. Stein’s discussion of Israeli tourism suggests the economy with which state borders are projected out of so-called peace processes such that a military line and a peace protest become blurred. The trick, it seems, is to use the notion of immediacy as a competitive concept in editorial airwaves that are dominated by the amplifications of emergencies—to demonstrate the world buildings and erasings that pass as development projects (Julia Elyachar, Nicholas Blomley). In this way, grassroots struggles over the control of development and decay activate our commitment to contract with the present.

—Elizabeth A. Povinelli
New York City
August 2002
Call for Contributions

miscellaneous, n.: a collection of various kinds, especially news clippings, literary extracts, postcards, and other images. Includes media accounts of items relevant to public discourse and debate throughout the world. The section seeks to highlight not only the reported phenomena as such but also the mediated nature of media coverage. *Public Culture* especially seeks pieces that are witty or (unintentionally) ironic. Submissions should include all relevant facts of publication and should be no longer than three pages.

etymologies, n., pl.: true sense or form of the network of keywords: public, publicity, public opinion, public sphere. Investigates the contemporary uses and meanings of the terms public, publicity, and public opinion. Short essays (of approximately six to eight pages) that consider the semantics and pragmatics of one or more of these interrelated terms in the context of a particular language and a particular people are welcome. How do these terms compare across cultures and languages? Do their meanings “translate,” and what do their “mistranslations” bode for comparative social theory grounded in what may be hidden ontological statements about civil society?

artworks, n., pl.: brief reports (up to 750 words) on innovative critical cultural work within and outside established institutions. Includes new kinds of museums; alternative or oral history projects; the expansion of musical performance and recording into forgotten musical histories or the dissemination of a broader range of musics; alternative publishing ventures or exhibition practices in film, theater, and dance; innovative cultural work with children; public art and art in public such as murals and graffiti; innovative uses of television, radio, or other mass media; and reports on past cultural work—the modernist, socialist, and avant-garde counterinstitutions of the early twentieth century. Send material and proposals to artworks editor Katie Trumpener.

from the field, n., sing.: briefly annotated single photographs for inclusion as a photo feature at the end of the issue. Submissions are not limited by style or content but should be glossy prints of at least 5” × 7”.

CyberSalon: To join *Public Culture’s* on-line discussion group, send an e-mail message, “Add me to on-line discussion,” to public-culture-journal@uchicago.edu.

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Controversies