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Introduction: Peripheral Visions in the Globalizing Present

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Peripheral Visions in the Globalizing Present

Space, Mobility, Aesthetics

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Introduction: Peripheral Visions in the Globalizing Present

Esther Peeren, Hanneke Stuit and Astrid Van Weyenberg

Does it still make sense to speak of centers and peripheries? Globalization discourses, whether proposing a flattened world (Friedman) or one traversed by disjunctive flows (Appadurai), tend to stress the inadequacy of center-periphery models.[1] Yet it seems impossible to understand the globalizing present without making some distinction between what is (becoming) central and what is (becoming) peripheral in geographical, political, economic, social or cultural terms. People tend to be aware of whether they or their environment, communities, activities and creations are considered – from particular perspectives and in specific respects – as central or peripheral, and they understand that this has concrete, material effects, especially in terms of the capacity to effect changes in their own position or in the world at large. The intensification of global connectivity has not done away with inequalities and hierarchies, even if their distribution across the world has shifted as a result of, for example, the rise of the BRICS economies and the recent destabilization of the European Union. Calls have arisen, too, to acknowledge other epistemologies by provincializing and decentering Europe (Chakrabarty; West) or by turning Asia into a method (Chen). Consequently, as Mary Louise Pratt insists, to reject the terminology as outdated does not diminish the degree to which power relations continue to play out across center-periphery divisions at various levels of everyday life, from the local to the global. Such a move would only make these power relations, and especially the privileged position of that which is deemed or constructs itself as central, less accessible to analysis and critique:

> To deploy the terms *center* and *periphery* is of course to revive a vocabulary now seen as anachronistic, supposedly replaced by an unaligned

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1 It should be noted, however, that Appadurai's oft-quoted statement that "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries)" (32) does not preclude the development of new center-periphery models for capturing globalization processes, perhaps not just by multiplying centers and peripheries but also by rendering them dynamic, relational and perspectival, as we aim to do in this volume.

> concept of globalization. I wish to suggest, however, that it is arbitrary
> and unnecessary to regard the concept of globalization as replacing a
> center-periphery perspective. Indeed, to do so reauthorizes the center to
> function unmarked as a center.
>
>   PRATT 23

In this volume, we follow Pratt in insisting on the continuing relevance and explanatory force of thinking through the ways centers and peripheries are constituted in relation to each other, and seek to explore the implications of this for how people live their lives in the contemporary globalizing world. Because in most considerations of center-periphery relations the emphasis is placed on the influence – whether beneficial or detrimental – of the central on the peripheral, we shift the focus to the peripheral in order to ask where today's peripheries are located and what visions of past, present and future emerge from them. In doing this, we take up the peripheral in its broadest possible sense as referring to spatial locations, social, political and economic formations, identity constructions and cultural and aesthetic practices.

We view present-day peripheries, first of all, as dynamic, shifting realities that mark changing political, economic and cultural power relations. In the context of globalization, significant transformations are taking place with regard to which parts (of the world, of a particular region, nation or city) are considered to be at the core and which are becoming more tangential. The consequences of such transformations are far-reaching and include, for example, the rise of populist nationalism in states whose centrality is perceived as being under threat, or the ways in which everyday uses beyond the purposes of business or tourism are increasingly pushed to the periphery of metropolitan cities. At the same time, contact is intensifying across the board: not just between centers and peripheries, but also among centers and among peripheries. As Walter Mignolo and Freya Schiwy point out, peripheries come into contact with each other and provide alternative perspectives on presumed centers of cultural domination, even if crucial differences between these peripheries still exist. The Zapatista movement offers an example of such a "change in directionality" in terms of translation and transculturation: the translations between its four main languages (Tojolabal, Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Chol) and the Spanish of the Marxist-Leninist theories mobilized by the movement result in a profound mixture of cosmologies entering global political discourse: "dichotomies are dissolved because these multiple others challenge the center and critically engage with each other, on its interior and exterior borders" (Mignolo and Schiwy 21, 28). In order to gain better insight into these kinds of increasingly dynamic relations, it is imperative not only to investigate the

complex relationships of peripheries to centers, but also those between different (emerging) peripheries.

Secondly, we conceive of peripheries as complex and perspectival constructs fulfilling a variety of functions. Peripheries may be discerned on global, continental, national or local scales, and a place that is peripheral on one scale, may be central on another. Similarly, what appears as peripheral from one point of view may seem central from another. In terms of their function, peripheries can manifest and be mobilized, among other possibilities, as zones of exclusion (borderlands, ungovernable regions, media black spots), exclusivity (gated communities, off-the-beaten-track tourist sites, niche cultures and media), extraction (of resources, labor or cultural forms), expression (creative subcultures, spiritual movements) or contestation (cultural or political counter-movements, social media networks). While it is important to establish what different peripheries have in common, it is therefore equally important to consider particular peripheries in their specificity.

A third dimension of contemporary peripheries that requires careful reflection is their status as evaluative and affective modalities. Being deemed peripheral has profound consequences for the organization and assessment of beings and matters, especially in terms of warranting attention, investment, care or protection. Peripheries may be valued as sites to escape the pressures of globalization, but can also become associated with less desirable effects of national, transnational and corporate policy, such as waste disposal, resource extraction, tax evasion or the containment of prisoners and unwanted migrants. We want to suggest that peripheral spaces, social structures, cultural forms and media practices yield different forms of subjectivity, affective investments and political imaginations than central ones. At the same time, peripheries emerge from specific contexts or encounters and can therefore neither be understood as necessarily nostalgic or reactionary nor as inherently progressive.

The main aim of this volume is to shed new light on how today's peripheries are lived, imagined and mobilized in the context of rapidly advancing globalization processes, and to take seriously not only external perspectives on peripheries but also those emerging from within them, as well as the interplay between the two. In concentrating on peripheral *visions*, moreover, we seek to highlight how the peripheral – as that which, physiologically, can only be partially, furtively and vaguely perceived – is not necessarily any more inconsequential or opaque than what lies in the center of the field of vision; in fact, it can almost always be brought into focus by a change in viewing position or, in narratological terms, a refocalization (Bal). Peripheral visions also imply a sense of revelation, innovation and futurity, countering the lingering association of the peripheral with stagnation and backwardness.

This introduction begins by probing the etymology of the word "periphery" in order to lay bare its most salient characteristics and tensions, before outlining the dominant ways in which the peripheral has been theorized in world systems theory, postcolonial studies and globalization studies. Next, we develop our own understanding of peripheral vision and peripheral thinking. Finally, we provide an outline of the sections of this volume and the chapters they contain.

What is a Periphery?

Etymologically, "periphery" can be traced back to the Ancient Greek *περιφέρεια* (circumference, rounded surface, curve, arc of a circle), formed after the verb *περιφέρειν* (to carry round).[2] It is, thus, in origin, not so much a term of fixed location as one of movement that, significantly, implies a sense of burden. The *Oxford English Dictionary* primarily defines "periphery" as a boundary, circumference or perimeter. The periphery is what marks inside from outside, but it is difficult to say whether it is itself inside or outside, whether it is part of what it circumscribes or not. It is said to refer to the "external boundary or surface of a space or object" and to "the region, space, or area surrounding something," yet, when applied to the human body, it can refer not only to "the superficial or outer parts of the body," but also to "an organ," which would place it firmly on the inside. This question of whether the periphery is inside or outside is deeply relevant: when power relations are articulated through center-periphery distinctions, whether the periphery is considered part of the center (albeit distant from it) or whether it constitutes its border or is external to it has significant implications for the functions assigned to the periphery and for its ability to redefine the relationship to the center.

Notably, the OED definition of "peripheral" pairs its general meaning as "of, relating to, or situated on a periphery; constituting or characteristic of the circumference or external surface of something" with a figurative meaning of "marginal, not of direct concern."[3] The notion that what is peripheral is inessential and less vital than the non-peripheral is made explicit in the use of "peripheral" for "equipment that is used in conjunction with a computer *without being an integral or necessary part of one*" and in the use of "peripheral" for "the part of the nervous system other than the brain and spinal cord" (emphasis added). Here, the peripheral is useful, like a mouse or the ability to feel

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2   *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition (2005): periphery, *n.*
3   *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition (2005): peripheral, *adj.* and *n.*

pain through the nerves in our extremities, but also expendable. If necessary, we can control the computer without the mouse and it is the central nervous system – particularly the brain – that separates life from death. Whereas in the case of computers and, to a lesser degree, the nervous system, it may be accurate to associate the peripheral with the supplementary, the transposition of this association to other types of peripheralities (geographical, political, economic, social, cultural) is what symbolically comes to legitimate relations of oppression, exploitation and neglect. It also problematically obfuscates how the peripheral does not necessarily live off the center (like a mouse powered by a computer), but is, on the contrary, often what the center lives off and profits from. In a profound sense, this parasitic position of the center with regard to the periphery in economic and other terms is a structural aspect of the relations between them, as is evidenced in the study of colonialism and, more recently, globalization.[4]

The OED recognizes the periphery as that which is exploited by the center – and simultaneously marginalized in order to conceal this exploitation – in the illustrative quotations it gathers under the definition of "periphery" as "the region, space, or area surrounding something; a fringe, margin." These quotations refer to "Spacious Peripheries of Enrichment" and to "the metropolis suck[ing] capital out of the periphery and us[ing] its power to maintain the economic, political, social, and cultural structure of the periphery." Curiously, however, a contradictory emphasis on the periphery's independence from the center is placed in the sentence that follows the above definition: "Now chiefly: the outlying areas of a region, most distant from or *least influenced by* some political, cultural or economic centre" (emphasis added). None of the quotations provided, however, actually endorse this supposedly current and prevalent sense (the entry was last updated in 2005). The closest one – "The marginal tribes on the periphery of an area are no longer truly representative of it" – pertains to a lack of likeness rather than a lack of influence between center and periphery.

Crucially, this incongruous definition points to a possible reading of the periphery as having a very different relation to the center than subordination or supplementarity. The peripheral becomes that which is most able to escape

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4 As Comaroff and Comaroff argue in their introduction to *Theory from the South*, "the edges of empire" were "fertile staging grounds for ways of doing things that were not possible elsewhere"; they point to experiments in urban planning, brutally profitable methods of labor discipline, socially engineered regimes of public health and untried practices of "governance and extraction, bureaucracy and warfare, property and pedagogy" (5). They also emphasize that none of these ways of using the global South as a "petridish" are in the distant past (Comaroff and Comaroff 5).

the center's impact and thus potentially capable of developing independently from it. Significantly, the OED refrains from defining this type of peripherality solely in terms of spatial distance – it is "most distant from *or* least influenced by the centre" (emphasis added). With many border zones across the world ever-more tightly controlled and contested, it is important to realize that the periphery may also be located elsewhere than on the borderline and may manifest as that which the center cannot (or does not want to) touch and which, consequently, may be defined or may define itself as a space of potential freedom. While such spaces may be politically progressive and inclusive (communes, artist colonies), they can also be retrogressive and exclusive (cults, militias). The idea that the periphery is located at a considerable distance from the center is complicated, however, by the fact that center and periphery are often coextensive. Individuals, things or ideas can be both peripheral and central at the same time. In Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Biutiful* (2010), for instance, the main character Uxbal can be said to be peripheral, considering that his name suggests a Roma background, he lives outside the city center of Barcelona and he considers himself a spirit medium. Yet, especially in relation to other peripheral (or perhaps subaltern) characters in the film, he occupies a central position, running a dubious yet profitable scheme hiring out illegal Asian workers to sweatshops and "managing" the African migrants who sell the goods produced there at the heart of Barcelona's city center.

The peripheral, then, can be inside or outside, and can be a space of dependency, oppression and exploitation as well as of independence and potential freedom. In addition, the OED recognizes that, especially in figurative uses that do not refer to a spatial relation, peripherality is less a fixed status than the result of an active process driven by established or emerging power structures. Thus, the entry for the transitive verb "peripheralize" defines it as "to consign to the fringes or periphery; to marginalize." Because of its transitivity, "peripheralize" always has a subject and an object: someone or something that peripheralizes and someone or something that is being peripheralized. One of the aims of this volume is to illuminate the workings, motivations and effects of peripheralization from both perspectives. How do peripheralizations unfold, what drives them and how and why are they perpetuated? Conversely, how do those who are (being) peripheralized experience and respond to this? Going one step further, we also ask whether there is such a thing as self-peripheralization, where subject and object coincide, and, if so, what might drive such a process of choosing to become or to remain peripheral. Before developing our approach to thinking the peripheral/ized further, however, a brief overview of how the center-periphery relation has been thought in world systems theory, postcolonial studies and globalization studies is apposite.

Theorizing Center-Periphery Relations

Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory sees the capitalist world economy dividing the globe into cores with "high-profit, high-technology, high-wage, diversified production," peripheries with "low-profit, low-technology, low-wage, less diversified production" and semi-peripheries with some characteristics of each (1976: 462).[5] The most dynamic of these categories is that of the semi-periphery, which, especially during global economic downturns, is able to exploit its in-between position to ascend to the core. But cores and peripheries are not stable either. While Wallerstein considers the system of "unequal exchange" that exists between and defines cores, peripheries and semi-peripheries as inherent to global capitalism and therefore as structural (1984: 38), his more recent work, in response to charges of "'nation-state centrism' and 'state structuralism'" stresses that, within this system, core and periphery are "a relation, not an essence" (2012: 525, 526). Particular countries, then, rather than *being* cores or peripheries, harbor different quantities of "core-like" and "peripheral processes" that may change over time. In other words, there may be "a seeming geographical correlation but geography does not define coreness or peripherality" (Wallerstein 2012: 526). Semi-peripheries are different in that there is no such thing as a "semi-peripheral process"; instead, semi-peripherality marks the position of a state in which core-like and peripheral processes roughly balance each other, prompting political decisions aimed at tipping this balance in favor of the core-like processes (Wallerstein 2012: 526).

World systems theory is committed to understanding the workings of the world capitalist order in order to challenge the inequalities on which it is founded and which it perpetuates. Thus, Janzen argues that the contributors to the 2011 edited volume *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World: System, Scale, Culture*, including Wallerstein himself, suggest that "we would do well to reflect on the relationship of the contingent to the system, lest we end up celebrating the peripheral without making room to conceptualize the way out of the periphery" (7). However, while there indeed seems very little to celebrate about being peripheral within the capitalist world economy and it is certainly necessary to try to conceive of an economic system that would not require core-periphery inequalities, intersections between different forms of peripherality (spatial, economic, social, cultural) may also produce attachments and affordances that complicate a view of peripherality as always to be

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5   For an overview of Wallerstein's world systems theory and its emergence as a critique of modernization theory influenced by the *Annales* school (Fernand Braudel), Marx and dependency theory (Fernando Henrique Cardoso), see Mishra.

opposed or escaped, as Sudeep Dasgupta, Durgesh Solanki, Luca Raineri, Doro Wiese, Geli Mademli and Matthieu Foucher variously suggest in their contributions to this volume.

Partly in response to world systems theory, postcolonial theorists have pointed out that the inequalities produced by the capitalist world economy cannot be fully understood without exploring its historical reliance on colonial exploitation, which should be seen as thoroughly intertwined with and in fact preceding the discourse of modernity that divided the world into economic, social, cultural and political centers and peripheries. According to Walter Mignolo, "modern world-system analysis brings colonialism into the picture, although as a derivative rather than a constitutive component of modernity, since it does not yet make visible coloniality, the other (darker?) side of modernity" (2002: 60). Crucially, Mignolo sees coloniality, or "the irreducible colonial difference,"[6] appearing in the dependency theory of Enrique Dussel and Anibal Quijano as "the difference between center and periphery, between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and knowledge production by those who participated in building the modern/colonial world and those who have been left out of the discussion" (2002: 63).[7] Here, the peripheral is at once a space of exclusion – or, in Mignolo's terms, exteriority (2002: 75) – and a privileged space of and for material and epistemological transformation, since for those living in the periphery the relations of dependency and exploitation forged by the expansion of coloniality/modernity are not to be denied. Only from a peripheral

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6   The colonial difference is defined as "a connector that, in short, refers to the changing faces of colonial differences throughout the history of the modern/colonial world-system and brings to the foreground the planetary dimension of human history silenced by discourses centering on modernity, postmodernity, and Western civilization" (Mignolo 2002: 61–2).

7   Mignolo uses the center-periphery opposition while also suggesting it may no longer be adequate for the late twentieth-century face of colonial difference: "If dependency in the modern/colonial world-system is no longer structured under the center/periphery dichotomy, this does not mean that dependency vanishes because this dichotomy is not as clear today as it was yesterday. On the other hand, *interdependency* is a term that served to restructure the coloniality of power around the emergence of transnational corporations" (2002: 62). Like Appadurai's statement quoted in footnote 1, Mignolo's formulation is ambivalent: in his view, the center/periphery dichotomy has not disappeared, but has become less clearly defined. At the same time, the colonial difference now expresses itself as also structured along relations of interdependency that run across the center/periphery dichotomy. In a later work, Mignolo proposes thinking in terms of internal and external borders – "not discrete entities but rather moments of a continuum in colonial expansion and in changes of national imperial hegemonies" (2012: 33) – as an alternative to the linear, territorial logic of world systems theory's triad of center, periphery and semi-periphery.

perspective, then, can the colonial difference be apprehended, capitalism be looked at otherwise and "alternative futures" imagined (Mignolo 2002: 76). This is not to say that a critique from the center is impossible or without value – Mignolo praises Wallerstein for mounting precisely such a central critique (2002: 78) – but that certain dimensions of the capitalist/modernist/colonialist organization of the world are only accessible from a peripheral point of view.

The emergence of a distinct peripheral perspective, which Mignolo elsewhere conceptualizes as "border thinking" or "border gnosis" (2012), from places exteriorized as lacking modernity and, consequently, the capacity to produce valid knowledge, is a complicated process, as Paulina Aroch-Fugellie's chapter on Africa's continuing exclusion from global circuits of intellectual value emphasizes. In her seminal text "Modernity and Periphery," Mary Louise Pratt discusses how the colonizing center defined modernity as emerging and diffusing from its (European) location, so that the colonized periphery could be constituted as spatially outside and temporally behind it in order to be forced into a "condition of imposed receptivity" (Pratt 35). Under this condition, the periphery cannot refuse what the center chooses to disseminate; it can only decide *how* to receive what arrives from the center, with each choice having particular, more or less dispossessing consequences. Arguing that the prevalent attitudes of contradiction, complementarity and differentiation do not escape the logic of imposed receptivity, Pratt distinguishes three aesthetic strategies that go some way toward redefining the periphery's lack (as defined from the center) as a plenitude: Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagist manifesto's resolve to absorb only the useful and expunge the rest; the way frontier aesthetics positions the periphery as a "site of creative authenticity"; and the way Latin American literature's engagement with the rural and the popular shows how the center's notion of modernity can only enter the periphery through "the very things that at the center are defined as its others" (Pratt 42–3).

Benita Parry equally rejects the reduction of peripheral modernities to entirely passive "shadow imitations" of metropolitan modernity (17), arguing, in stronger terms than Pratt, that the center's "message, bearing exploitation, inequality and injustice, was refused by significant numbers of the literate and illiterate" in the periphery (16). The secularly educated, in particular, are seen as capable of developing a nuanced position towards metropolitan modernity that, in imaginative texts, registers as "an affection for and a dislocation from tradition, a propulsion toward but not an integration into the modern as this had been received by way of a predatory colonialism" (Parry 16–7). The work of Leslie Marmon Silko, discussed in this volume by Doro Wiese, may be considered as a powerful example of an ambivalent mobilization of a peripheralized tradition that, in its cultivation of untranslatability, constitutes a refusal of the

center's construction of modernity, while at the same time challenging Parry's privileging of the secular.

What remains in both Pratt's and Parry's account is the inability of the periphery to completely evade the center's influence: it has to relate to the center in some way, as even a refusal constitutes an acknowledgment of the center's power to incite a response. However, perhaps complete autonomy is not a viable aim. If we follow Mignolo in seeing the periphery as a constructed exteriority rather than as a true outside, it makes sense that, being part of the same world-system as the center, the periphery would neither be able to function independently nor to return to some untouched, unspoiled state before modernity/coloniality.[8] Mediating between the extremes of cultural preservationism and cultural imperialism, Kwame Anthony Appiah offers "contamination" as a counter-ideal to romantic notions of cultural purity and as a way of understanding how cultural influence actually works on a local level (111). Not only do "people in each place make their own uses even of the most famous global commodities," he explains, but to overstate the influence of the center on the periphery also reveals a false and patronizing gesture which treats the latter as a tabula rasa "on which global capitalism's moving finger writes a message" (Appiah 111, 113).

While the periphery cannot totally ignore the center, neither can the center fully disavow the periphery – not under colonialism, where the center also received from the periphery in unanticipated never entirely controllable ways, as accounts of colonial intimacy have shown,[9] and certainly not under contemporary conditions of globalization. Nowadays, there is not only intensified mobility from peripheries to centers and between different peripheries, but centers have also multiplied so that they can be played off against each other: under certain circumstances, peripheries can now refuse what one center (Europe or the US) has to offer by entering into a relation with another center (Russia or China). One of the emphases of this volume is that while, on the one hand, centers often impose themselves on peripheries with extreme gravity, so that dismissing the center-periphery model altogether would mean losing a powerful way of accounting for "dramatically uneven development,"

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8   Thus, Mignolo sees border epistemologies "emerging from the wounds of colonial histories, memories, and experiences" (2012: 37) rather than from what came before. Parry, while stressing that peripheral modernities rely on "reverberations of rediscovered histories," also cautions that "this respect for the past cannot be dismissed as nativist and regressive" (21, 17).

9   On colonial intimacy, see, for example, Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Heike Ingeborg Schmidt's "Colonial Intimacy: The Rechenberg Scandal and Homosexuality in German East Africa" and Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization.*

center-periphery relations are, on the other hand, always to some extent multidirectional. They exhibit a reciprocal dimension that is foregrounded and enhanced under contemporary conditions of globalization (Young 615).

Timothy Brennan motivates the importance of continuing to think globalization's uneven development in terms of center-periphery relations by pointing to the way peripheries yield profit for global capitalism's centers not just materially, as "physical spaces where cheap manufacturing and resource extraction flourish," but also in the form of an idea (101). He calls this the periphery's "image-function," seen to convey "a sense of the rules of perception – those demands made under capitalism in a phase when production has come prominently to include information as one of its commodities" (101). As long as the periphery serves a material economic function, the idea of it will be "preserved by way of a fiercely defended set of regulations governing what can and cannot be said about it" (Brennan 101). In Brennan's view, postcolonial critiques miss the mark by challenging the idea of the periphery without acknowledging the material economic relations that require it to be kept in place. At the same time, he chides economic theory (both from the imperial myth school and dependency theory) for ignoring cultural theorists' insistence on the role played in economic behavior by affect, desire and ideology – by that which is not immediately observable or quantifiable, yet exerts considerable influence on global economic exchange.

For Brennan, the image-function of the periphery in the globalizing world is essentially to obscure; it works to create a zone of invisibility characterized by "blindness to the recidivist elements of the new economy, suppression of first world material dependencies, and ignorance of the warehousing of labor" (112). The way the dominant discourses of the global economy picture capitalism as having reached a phase in which "production has come prominently to include information as one of its commodities" conceals the vast quantity of industrial labor still provided by the periphery, as well as its essential value as a source of cheap exploitable resources (accessed through, among other practices, land grabbing and biopiracy) and a site of "soft" corporate regulation (Brennan 101). In literature, desolate portrayals of the global periphery, even when intended as critiques of global capitalism, play into the image-function afforded to the periphery by "remind[ing] the denizens of tenement halls that they are, for all that, members of the winning side" and thus keeping the underprivileged of the center from rebelling against their own peripheralization (Brennan 117). In this way, the periphery as a carefully managed and circumscribed idea veils the actual workings of global capitalism and pre-empts solidarity between the dispossessed of the center and the periphery.

Brennan's view of the image-function of the periphery is, however, not wholly pessimistic. Much like Pratt and Parry, he sees avant-garde art as one

of the "important psychological and emotional outlets" related to the image-function of the periphery (Brennan 118). It allows the periphery to act as a "repository of counter-modernity" capable of providing different values from those propagated by the capitalist center and even of generating hope (Brennan 118). For Jean and John Comaroff, the periphery pluralizes the idea of modernity in an even more radical way. Rather than linking peripheries to notions of "counter-modernity" or "alternative modernity," they insist on the fact that Afromodernity, for instance, is a *vernacular*, just like Euromodernity itself. The idea of "alternative modernity," even though it was coined to "move beyond the premodern and the modern," obscures that modernities from the South, the East and elsewhere in fact developed at the same time as Euromodernity did, albeit not independently from it (Comaroff and Comaroff 9–11). In the context of contemporary world-historical processes, these modernities are "disrupting received geographies of core and periphery, relocating southward – and, of course, eastward as well – some of the most innovative and energetic modes of producing value," as well as altering "the lineaments of global modernity *tout court*" (Comaroff and Comaroff 7).

There is, then, a possibility for multiple image-functions of the periphery to coexist and contest each other. The periphery may be imaged from the center so that, as an idea, it comes to support its own material exploitation, or it can be imaged from the periphery (in accordance with Mignolo's notion of decolonization) as a site promoting

> the art of conversation, the decrease of speed, the altruistic act of hospitality, and the decommercialization of artistic performance, all of them important psychological and emotional outlets for the negative energy overwhelming a metropolis characterized by anxiety, fear, and restlessness.
> BRENNAN 118

Although this particular citation seems to once again put the periphery in service of the center, as offering potential relief to those occupying global cities, we want to take up Brennan's suggestion that the periphery's image-function, though heavily policed in dominant discourse, maintains a certain flexibility that aesthetic creation is particularly adept at exploiting. As the chapters by Paula Blair, Ksenia Robbe and Matthieu Foucher insist, it is through aesthetic techniques that different meanings and values may be assigned to the periphery, and that those dimensions obscured by the zone of invisibility Brennan sees produced by the dominant image-function of the periphery may be brought to light.

One particular work of art that extensively explores the image-function of the periphery is J.M. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), which will be briefly discussed in order to outline what is at stake in theoretical, cultural and social uses of the periphery. Coetzee's novelistic treatment of peripherality lays bare a spatial, discursive, physical and emotional placement of the periphery that is decidedly normative in its connotations. *Waiting for the Barbarians* takes place in a nameless settlement on the border of "the Empire." The settlement is run by the Magistrate, an elderly man who spends his time hunting, philandering and studying the remnants of an ancient civilization he discovers in the desert around the outpost. The novel opens at a moment when a number of officials from the Empire's capital visit the town in order to investigate the threat emanating from the "barbarian" people living in the direct vicinity of it – officially across the Empire's outer border, but in and close to the settlement in practice. Over time, the investigation escalates into a military campaign meant to push the barbarians back further, so the Empire's provincial periphery (here seen as lying inside the border) can continue to share in the civilization diffused by the Empire's center. As the Magistrate, who functions as protagonist, narrator and focalizer, signals early in the narrative, the barbarian threat seems rather elusive, at least from his perspective: "Of this unrest I myself saw nothing ... Show me a barbarian army, and I will believe" (Coetzee 9). Whether or not the barbarians actually pose a threat to the settlement or the Empire at large remains a matter of who is looking at the situation and depends on a particular politics of vision; in the end, the outpost is never attacked. The military campaign does a lot of damage, however, to both the settlement and the barbarians in its deployment of rampant violence against anything that is considered not Empirical or "not central."

Coetzee's novel negotiates and complicates the center-periphery dynamic in powerful and suggestive ways, particularly in its description of how the people in the town – its inhabitants, the soldiers that come from the center of the Empire to defend it and the Magistrate himself – respond to the barbarian threat from outside the border. This response is characterized by a powerful mix of disgust, (sexual) fascination and fear:

> There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters.
> COETZEE 9

This citation lays bare the disconcerting emotional, psychological and social structures that underpin the construction of and response to the category of the barbarians. The latter are constructed in the public imaginary as a threat that can, at any moment, violently invade the settlement, while this imaginary simultaneously glosses over the fact that many barbarians already participate in everyday life there; the town's inhabitants trade avidly with them and the barbarian prisoners who happen to be held captive by the Magistrate when Empire arrives are held prisoner in the town itself (40–1, 4).

In portraying the liminal position of the barbarians as, in the Empire's eyes, too close for comfort and as leading to a violent campaign of externalization, the novel traces what Mireille Rosello in this volume calls the "grammar of peripheralization." According to this grammar, the center wields and seeks to consolidate its power by actively distancing those elements that it deems undesirable, confining them to a periphery that may lie inside the border or that may be pushed outwards beyond it. Revealing and describing the rules of this grammar, as both Coetzee's novel and Neill Blomkamp's film *District 9* (discussed by Rosello) do, is crucial in any attempt to revisit the idea of the periphery as potentially productive.

Peripheral Vision

Coetzee's novel sticks to the point of view of the Magistrate, so a sustained perspective of the barbarian side remains absent. Yet, in its portrayal of the Magistrate's relationship with a barbarian girl, who, as a result of torture by the Empire's investigators has lost central focus in her sight, the novel also engages this volume's focus on the idea of peripheral vision and on how the biases of vision may be otherwise imagined. As feminist philosopher Donna Haraway explains, vision is not just something we do in a biological and neurological sense. In "The Persistence of Vision," she argues that vision "is *always* a question of the power to see – and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices" (680). In order to look at such violence responsibly, it is necessary to undo Western cultural narratives about objectivity, which are "allegories of the ideologies of the relations of what we call mind and body, of distance and responsibility" (Haraway 678). The Magistrate's attitude to the barbarian girl aligns closely with this critique on the ideological repercussions of regarding "vision" as an objective and neutral denominator of knowledge, because it complicates the relation between vision and understanding.

In the middle of the girl's vision is a blurry spot, because of which she can only see from the corner of her eyes. Despite this visual impairment, however,

she is perfectly capable of "seeing" and understanding the Magistrate for what he is. Discerning that his interest in her and her scars revolves around a scrupulous attempt to decipher and understand her, which causes him to lose himself in his own dislocated desires, she resists his intrusive inquiries about her torture at the hands of the Empire. The Magistrate, on the other hand, has "normal" or "full" vision, and his assumption that the girl can be seen objectively at all renders him blind to the acuity of her alternative perspective. Throughout their liaison, he fails to see the girl in any other way but as a tortured and domesticated body to which he should, but is ultimately unable to gain full access:

> I look into the eye. Am I to believe that gazing back at me she sees nothing – my feet perhaps, parts of the room, a hazy circle of light, but at the centre, where I am, only a blur, a blank? I pass my hand slowly in front of her face, watching her pupils. I cannot discern any movement. She does not blink. But she smiles: "Why do you do that? Do you think I cannot see?"
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> COETZEE 33

Significantly, what is most disturbing to the Magistrate is that he, who is supposedly at the center (of her vision, but also of civilization and power), may appear to the girl only as a "blur" or even a "blank." His obsession with the scars on the girl's eyes is driven by his curiosity about what she can see *of him* and is thus ultimately not about her at all. Most notably, despite her repeated reminders that she can actually see, he keeps referring to her as "blind" (see, for example, 27, 31, 33, 64, 77). In the course of the novel, however, his centrality is revealed to be an illusion not only in relation to the girl but also in relation to the Empire itself. When he returns the girl to "her people" (even though there is no evidence that she has ever met these particular barbarians before), she has no qualms about leaving him. Upon his return to the settlement, moreover, his marginal position as Magistrate of a border town who has unauthorized contact with the barbarians leads to his own incarceration and torture at the hands of Empire. Ultimately, then, the Magistrate's own vision is as peripheral as the girl's, and the metaphorical affliction of his central sight undoes any straightforward relation between seeing and knowing.

From a psychophysiological perspective, peripheral vision, also known as eccentric vision, is a part of the vision of humans located on either side of the fovea, a small groove at the back of the eyeball covered with light receptor cells. Foveal vision covers everything within two degrees of the center of the

eye, while anything outside this range is called peripheral vision. This limit is more gradual than absolute, however, as the part of vision up to eight degrees from the center is still referred to as the central visual field (Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner 3). The light receptor cells covering the fovea are mostly cone cells, which are attuned to bright light and allow people to see color and fine details. They are also sensitive to movement. Rod cells, which are prevalent in peripheral areas of the eye, function better in dim light, enabling people to see in the dark (albeit without much color). Peripheral vision, however, is not just the result of the distribution of cone and rod cells in the eye. Other, more complex cells also determine how we see, and there are strong indications that sustained attention to particular objects influences vision. Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner suggest, for instance, that human vision seems to be particularly biased towards the center of vision and explain that viewers, much like Coetzee's Magistrate, tend to assume that the most important information is presented at the center of any image (41).

The Magistrate's inability to see is even more poignant in this context, since even though what is peripheral to him is in fact looking and speaking back at him, he seems unable to process this information. As such, he displays a non-physiological blind spot for what is going on in the periphery of his conceptual, discursive, social and visual world, which remains closed off to him even as he is staring right at it. In contrast, the barbarian girl is able to see eccentrically, both in the technical sense and in the sense of seeing differently or otherwise. With regard to the girl's ability to see sidelong, it is noteworthy that peripheral vision seems to provide more diagnostic information about a person's surroundings than the center of human sight, if only because eccentric vision covers a much larger part of the field of vision. Especially important in this respect is peripheral vision's function in "gist recognition" (Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner 41). Taking into account that the recognition of individual images or graphs in peripheral vision tends to be negatively influenced by crowding (by the fact that these images occur within a particular spatial distance from each other that makes it difficult to discern them from the corner of one's eye), peripheral vision is actually "better" at recognizing, for instance, the gist of landscape scenes than central vision is. Although the reasons for this are not yet well understood, Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner do suggest that a coarse categorization and unification of fragmentary information about scenes, objects, words and emotional expressions on faces takes place in peripheral vision, even when measured at larger distances from foveal vision (43–4). Thus, it seems that peripheral vision is crucial in recognizing shapes, patterns and textures in ways that support, complement and perhaps even

makes possible the detail, color and movement perception in foveal vision.[10] This foregrounds one of the main claims of this volume, namely that periphery and center exist in a dialectic relation in which each is influenced by the other, even if not always to an equal extent.

Crucially, peripheral vision can be improved through training: "Of particular relevance for basic *and* clinical research is the possibility of improving peripheral form vision by way of learning ... Perceptual learning may enhance elementary functions such as orientation discrimination, contrast sensitivity, and types of acuity" (Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner 3). This suggests that the ability to see – or not to see – something is not fixed, but susceptible to exercise and to habituation. In more conceptual terms, peripheral vision can be taught to recognize and process information that was difficult to recognize before, and this information could potentially also be made available to central vision if it causes us to turn our head.

Ultimately, however, the aim of this volume is not necessarily to turn what is peripheral into what is central. What may be much more crucial is to validate the peripheral alongside the central as offering something not inherently worse or better, but something different that should be taken into account as we try to understand the world and its ongoing globalization. Learning from Coetzee's novel, we should not dismiss the barbarian girl's impaired vision or even try to fix it, but look into the specific insights it has to offer. Accordingly, the chapters in this volume all, in different ways, address the consequences of taking the binary between center and periphery, and its metaphorically charged normativity, for granted. They propose to take visions developed in the periphery as seriously as visions of the periphery that originate from the center.

Peripheral Thinking

Similar to how peripheral vision in the physiological sense, when not properly understood, is taken as inferior or at best supplemental to central vision, the

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10   Strasburger, Rentschler and Jüttner do not draw this conclusion in the article discussed here. We are building on the fact that peripheral vision is important for gist *recognition*, a term which implies that "new" information is difficult to perceive and that better sight is based on recognizing shapes one has already seen before. Nonetheless, central and peripheral vision do seem to "need" each other, and appear to be mutually constructed in a constant oscillating movement, with central vision filling out the details provided by peripheral vision's gist recognition and framing.

notion of peripheral thinking has been used in social psychology to denote a lesser form of cognitive engagement. Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo distinguish two routes by which people may be persuaded of something: a central one where changes in attitude result "from a person's careful consideration of information that reflects what that person feels are the true merits of a particular attitudinal position" and a peripheral one where such changes "do not occur because the person has diligently considered the pros and cons of the issue; they occur because the person associates the attitude issue or object with positive or negative cues or makes a simple inference about the merits of the advocated position based on various simple cues in the persuasion context" (70).[11]

Here, the peripheral is associated with a lack of care, diligence and complexity. Peripheral thinkers are people whose "ability to scrutinize the message arguments is relatively low" or who are "unmotivated" to do so, for example because the message's personal relevance is low (Petty and Cacioppo 71). In being designated "*cognitive misers*," the latter group, moreover, is associated with a deliberate withholding that carries connotations of immorality rather than, for example, with a sensible desire to conserve cognitive energy for more pressing issues (Cacioppo et al. 1033, emphasis in text). Instead of seeing central and peripheral thinkers as differing "chronically in their tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors," this difference might just as well be seen as incidental or even strategic (Cacioppo et al. 1038).

For social psychologists, however, peripheral thinking is invariably dangerous because it opens people up to being manipulated and duped. By deliberately creating "limited-thinking situations," even those who are not normally cognitive misers can be made to privilege peripheral cues over substantive arguments, as has been shown with regard to the use of familiar phrases in commercial messages (Howard 231) and the marketing practices of online pharmacies (Orizio et al.).[12] While in a consumer-protection context, revealing such practices is necessary and laudable, the generalized dismissal of peripheral thinking is based on the debatable assumption that it is always possible to

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11   Petty and Cacioppo later specify the "simple" inferences and cues mentioned here as the presumed expertise or likeability of the one making the argument, the sheer number of arguments presented or information about how others felt about the issue.

12   Orizio et al. conclude that, by focusing on peripheral cues, "online pharmacies sell the promise of providing the desired products in an easy and inexpensive way, focusing the consumers' attention on aspects that they might find attractive, but which are irrelevant, secondary and fundamentally distorting in the perspective of being autonomous in the management of their health" (975).

determine, in an objective manner, which arguments are strong, relevant and valid, and which are not. In addition, such dismissal relies on unquestioned notions of rationality and information, and a blanket rejection of, for example, emotions, which, according to Orizio et al., "distract from critical thinking" (974).

Instead of dismissing peripheral thinking as not really thinking at all and therefore as inevitably treacherous, it is also possible to conceive of it as a different form of thinking with its own merits. This is exemplified by South African artist William Kentridge in a recent lecture on "Peripheral Thinking." Drawing on his own practice, Kentridge relates how every attempt to focus on a singular, coherent subject or thought is immediately disturbed because of all the peripheral thoughts that arise. As an example of a creative process in which "every encounter with the world is a mixture of that which comes towards us, which the world brings to us, and that which we project onto it," he lists all the things that come to mind as he tries to focus on the drawing of a tree (Kentridge n. pag.).

The tree, in Kentridge's example, is at the center and all the other thoughts are at the periphery, "coming down to sit down or weigh down or crack the branches of the tree." Whether these thoughts will make the tree richer or more meaningful, or whether they will change or perhaps ultimately even destroy it, remains unpredictable. Yet, no matter the outcome, "the tree can never just be the tree itself," as histories, memories and associations are always a part of what it is. Such seemingly extraneous thoughts, then, serve as "reminders of the things you are not focused on" and make up a "peripheral vision that is akin to peripheral thoughts." Kentridge also introduces the idea of the "porousness of focus," a paradoxical combination of words, as "focus" implies the stabilization of a single thought that, in part, relies on keeping other, possibly distracting thoughts at bay, while that which is "porous" by definition remains exposed and vulnerable to all that may permeate its surface. Here, this vulnerability is revealed as productive, as allowing for extraneous influences to become part of the focus and thereby preventing knowledge from sedimenting as rigid truth.

Peripheral thinking conceived in this way recognizes that the periphery is always already part of the center and that, in Kentridge's words, "focusing solely on the centre is in fact removing the centre itself," because "the meaning of the centre is made by the periphery" (n. pag.). Kentridge's is a creative and aesthetic model, but can also be seen as ethical in the way it calls for openness to what comes to us from beyond the borders of what we think we already know. Revisiting the periphery from this perspective allows for a renewed understanding of the center by virtue of what was initially excluded from it. Peripheral thinking, in short, rather than opening us up to manipulation may,

when we open ourselves up to it, propel our thinking in unforeseen directions, just as peripheral vision can lead us to see more rather than less.

Outline

The thirteen chapters that make up this volume develop new accounts of the peripheral – in terms of how it comes into being; its functions, meanings and effects; its relation to what is deemed central or also peripheral; and the eccentric visions of the past, present and future that may emerge from it. They do so by analyzing case studies from different parts of the world involving a range of social and cultural processes and practices. The chapters are grouped into four sections: theorizing the peripheral, peripheral spaces, peripheral mobilities and peripheral aesthetics.

The opening section focuses on theoretical conceptions of peripherality. Specifically, its first two chapters explore how peripheries are constructed and maintained as spaces of exclusion and exploitation that should, however, also be seen as constitutive of the center and as harboring a vital potential for thinking and acting otherwise. The other two chapters concretize this potential in terms of, respectively, a politics of indifference that recognizes differences between places, subjects and bodies without reducing them to set identities, locations or oppositions, and a practice of untranslatability that circulates peripheralized meanings in the purported center without rendering them fully accessible. In this way, the periphery is foregrounded less as derivative from or dependent on the center than as a site of irreducible alterity generating its own worldscapes.

Mireille Rosello presents a detailed reading of Neill Blomkamp's 2009 film *District 9*, in which a population of stranded aliens – and the man who gradually becomes one of them – is driven further and further away from the city of Johannesburg and, simultaneously, ever more rigidly separated from the category of the human. The film is seen to draw attention to the way peripheries do not simply exist, but are actively produced by an exclusive and often violent process of spatial and social peripheralization emanating from the center. This process is standardized and, consequently, functions as a grammar encompassing both the rules and their exceptions. Contesting such a "grammar of peripheralization" is difficult, since all attempts to rehabilitate the periphery end up reaffirming the binary it has been placed in. Nevertheless, Rosello argues that *District 9*, by exposing the workings and effects of this grammar to the viewer and by presenting its protagonist and its own genre as mixed (human-alien and science fiction-documentary), creates room for an "anti-peripheralization

counter-narrative." The logic at work here is not one of reversal (periphery becoming center and vice versa, leaving the binary structure in place) but one of contiguity: if an alien can be, at the same time, a human, and a science fiction film can be a documentary, then periphery and center can also relate in as yet unrealized ways.

The second chapter reminds us that the periphery is itself radically differentiated across the globe. Paulina Aroch-Fugellie examines the specific position of Africa in the post-Fordist capitalist world-system and its circuits of symbolic capital. Africa, she argues, is not just a periphery in Wallerstein's sense of a location for cheap production, but also an *infra-periphery*. On the one hand, it fulfills functions that support the world-system, such as harboring a vast labor reserve, while, on the other, it is reduced to a useless realm of abjection. According to Aroch-Fugellie, this duality is replicated in the global production of intellectual value, with Africa systematically excluded from the capacity to produce theory as self-reflexivity, while also confirming theory's scarcity and thus its value. In the face of this, Aroch-Fugellie proposes a historiographical approach able to validate a different intellectual history. The work of Tanzanian political economist Issa Shivji on the neocolonial practices of NGOs in Africa is taken as exemplary of this approach. Shivji is seen to produce theory not as symbolic capital for speculation, but as a basis for societal transformation.

Whereas Rosello and Aroch-Fugellie stress the dispossessions resulting from processes of peripheralization set in motion and sustained from the center, Sudeep Dasgupta aims to think the periphery without a center. He does so by developing, through an analysis of Sébastien Lifshitz's 2004 film *Wild Side*, the notion of a politics of indifference. This politics is connected to an aesthetic figuring of the sensuous as the realm that marks the self's inherent displacement from stable, singular identity. Dasgupta cites Barthes's concept of the Neutral as that which proposes living aporias as creation and discusses his account of visiting Morocco, where language (and its penchant for stereotype) is bypassed in favor of images that, because of their vacancy, facilitate a sensuous, relational understanding rather than a masterful knowing. Through a similar strategy of figuration, *Wild Side*'s presentation of images as fragments is seen to generate "an ethics of discretion and respect." The three main characters' ostensible peripherality – in terms of geographical location, nationality, sexuality and language – is undone as fixed identity by the way these fragments are set into relation, forming a dynamic process in which new relationalities constantly emerge. Significantly, Dasgupta insists that this does not constitute an aestheticization of peripheralization or a denial of its violence, but rather a way of rendering peripheralized subjects present on terms other than those of the center without forcing them into full exposure.

The final chapter in this section, by Doro Wiese, also finds value in the periphery holding something back. Developing the notion of untranslatability to include narrative forms and tropes, Wiese explores the work of American Indian author Leslie Marmon Silko to suggest that the relation between center and periphery is transformed rather than merely reversed when what was once peripheralized begins to circulate in the center without rendering itself fully legible. Silko's narratives remain in part opaque for those readers not intimately acquainted with the indigenous culture they derive from. By making this opacity perceptible as significant, yet untranslatable meaning rather than as absence or lack, these texts pre-empt dismissive or exoticizing responses and demonstrate that the periphery produces its own unique, valuable forms of being and knowing. This, Wiese argues, constitutes a democratic project that creates room for "alternative worldscapes." The condition of imposed receptivity Pratt ascribes to the periphery in the colonial situation, as discussed above, is here creatively transformed not just by having the center also receive from the periphery, but by rendering a full, uncomplicated reception impossible and thus forcing readers from the center to experience some of the frustrations peripheralized subjects are routinely faced with.

Although visions from the periphery are as fractional and diverse as those from the center, they allow us to learn about how peripherality is experienced and imagined within particular locales. Of course, such perspectives do not exist in isolation from the center, if only because the lived realities in peripheralized spaces are inherently entwined with the forces of globalization. Still, drawing attention not just to what is projected onto but also to what emerges from within particular peripheralized spaces helps to challenge traditional (often distorted) representations and allows for new visions to arise. The three chapters in the second section do exactly that: by zooming in on particular larger and smaller peripheral spaces (the Sahara Desert, housing quarters in Mumbai and the South African backyard), they give room to the particular practices, values and knowledges that surface from within them.

Luca Raineri turns to the Sahara Desert, which is traditionally qualified as an empty and irrelevant space, romanticized as an empty stretch of sandy dunes or perceived primarily as a border separating sub-Saharan from North Africa. He deconstructs such representations and discusses how military uses of the desert that put the Sahara at the center of global security concerns challenge its supposed peripheral status. These uses, Raineri demonstrates, continue to rely on the idea of an exclusive border (emphasizing national sovereignty and private property) and take into account neither the actual geography of the Sahara space nor the way in which nomadic actors inhabit and use it. Invoking the perspective of such local actors, Raineri reveals alternative patterns of

mobility and connectivity, offering a different interpretation of the Saharan space and of its place in the contemporary globalizing world.

Like Raineri, Durgesh Solanki sheds light on how global processes affect a particular, local place. Through an ethnographic study of conservancy workers' quarters in Mumbai, he investigates the ways in which urban spatial planning, marked by processes of neo-liberalization and globalization, keeps the traditional Hindu caste system in place. Housing and occupation emerge as tools that segregate and peripheralize Dalits (formally referred to as "untouchables") not only spatially but also socially, economically and politically. Familiar with the area and belonging to the same caste group as the people whose experiences he examines, Solanki uses self-ethnography to try to understand what it means to live in a state of inherited peripherality. This chapter, then, is also about the specific position of the analyst in relation to what he or she is analyzing, and about the insights that this might generate.

Ena Jansen zooms in even further in terms of locality, namely on the South African backyard, or *agterplaas* in Afrikaans, the outdoor space of a house where black domestic workers and the white families they work for meet. Jansen considers this a "very local peripheral space" that continues to occupy a central place in South Africa's racial divide, in many ways functioning as a microcosmos of the power relations at work in South African society at large. Looking at a selection of (semi-)autobiographical texts by both black and white authors (Ezekiel Mphahlele, Rian Malan, Griselda Pollock, Mark Gevisser, Elsa Joubert and Antjie Krog), Jansen demonstrates that the backyard is a space of complex negotiations between domestic workers and their employers, which involves domination, but also ambivalent relations of care and affection. While, to some extent, the South African backyard functions as a "contact zone" (Pratt) between white and black, urban and rural, and rich and poor, Jansen draws on the historical and literary archive to demonstrate that it is more appropriate to view it as a frontier or border zone instead – a space marked by intricate power relations, where violence and degradation continue to govern.

Jansen describes the paradoxical situation of black domestic workers who, when they go to work, physically move out of the periphery of the city, but nonetheless carry their social peripherality with them. In fact, their bodily presence within the center even reinforces their peripheral position in relation to that center. Mobility, then, is by no means a guarantee for escaping from spatial or social peripheries, as cases of racial, class or gender discrimination demonstrate. At the same time, one's peripheral position or status need not per definition hinder one's (upward) mobility, and may in fact be used strategically, for example in the fight for minority rights or in the quest for cultural

belonging. Clearly, then, a more complex understanding of how periphery and mobility might relate needs to be developed. The three chapters in the third section each shed light on this relation, as well as on how the peripheral, usually thought of as a static notion, can become mobile and mobilized itself.

Magdalena Ślusarczyk and Paula Pustułka demonstrate that, while the conceptual distinction between center and periphery is important to migrant identities (since it determines how different groups of migrants are framed as welcome or not), in practice it plays out in very different ways. Investigating a wide range of individual biographies and trajectories of Polish migrants in the United Kingdom, Germany and Norway, they reveal peripherality as a conceptual frame that can, indeed, signify marginalization, but may also be strategically employed to lead to empowerment. As the variegated experiences of the migrants show, moving out of Europe's periphery does not automatically mean leaving peripherality behind; while those migrants occupying a geographically and economically central position in Poland are often able to move to globally recognized central locations, those from Polish peripheries tend to end up in the peripheries of these centers. Even such moves from periphery to periphery may, however, give migrants significantly better lives. This highlights how, in the current age of globalization, not all peripheries (or centers) are equal, and how mobility occurs in complex patterns that cannot be captured in a simple assumption that everyone will be able to or wants to move to global centers.

Forces of peripheralization and centralization may also conflict with each other, as is clear in the two European cultural projects Astrid Van Weyenberg analyzes: the House of European History, planned to open in Brussels in 2016, and the Via Regia, promoted by the European Institute for Cultural Routes. While the House of European History acknowledges the ongoing dynamic between shifting centers and peripheries, even announcing "centre and periphery" as the permanent exhibition's leitmotiv, it builds on a problematically static center-periphery model in order to keep the unifying European story on display intact. The Via Regia cultural route also seems designed to overcome the division of Europe into centers and peripheries: promoting cross-European mobility, it draws a line from Santiago de Compostela to Kiev to connect Western and Eastern Europe in a singular trajectory. As Van Weyenberg demonstrates, however, the continuity and homogeneity propagated by this Europeanizing narrative that seeks to place everything at the center, is undermined by the way locations fulfill different, sometimes conflicting narrative functions within regional, national and supranational frames. Both cultural projects show that the story of Europe is one of shifting multiplicities and cannot be immobilized into a singular history or route that glosses over the

differences and inequalities that inhere between (past and present) centers and peripheries.

That the periphery can be mobilized strategically is most explicit in the final chapter in this section. Geli Mademli connects the different uses of the term "periphery" within the contemporary context of the "Greek crisis" to the history of Greece's positioning within Europe, highlighting how the country has conceived of itself as peripheral in relation to shifting centers. As a telling example, Mademli recalls how the first Greek political parties took on the names of the centers of power in modern Europe with which they allied themselves: the Russian Party, the British Party, the French Party. In contemporary Greece, too, a peripheral position is not just imposed from the outside, by other European countries and the so-called troika, but also claimed from within. Mademli's investigation of Greek media coverage of the European debt crisis and, specifically, the Greek bailout referendum of 5 July 2015, shows that the priority in Greek public discourse was not to adhere to a static center-periphery binary, but to articulate Greece's peripheral position in relation to an abstract European center in a way that allowed for the articulation of a shared cultural identity and an active questioning of the "center" and its deficiencies. Peripherality, then, can be employed strategically, not just by the center, but also by the periphery itself. Here, the periphery emerges not only as a mobile and multiple notion (attaching itself to various centers at different times), but also as a mobilizable tool.

The fourth and final section revolves around questions of aesthetics and form in the uses, effects and significations of peripherality. Even though cultural expressions are not directly reflective of or causally related to their historical and material conditions, their performative and constructive potential influences how the topics, themes, people and politics they foreground are framed and regarded in everyday life. The three chapters investigate the ways in which particular peripheralized histories, subjects and spaces are represented in artistic forms that work against the grammar of peripheralization imposed from the center. More specifically, they convey how detailed attention to form and aesthetics can help to better understand peripheral visions as perspectives from the periphery that enable a thinking "otherwise." In all three chapters, this thinking "otherwise" – which is deeply political – takes the shape of a complex relation to a troubled past that, rather than closing it off, seeks to recognize it and to mobilize it for the present and the future.

In Paula Blair's chapter, different layers of peripheral aesthetics come to the fore. Analyzing Willie Doherty's video-installation *Ancient Ground* and Patricio Guzmán's documentary *Nostalgia for the Light*, Blair shows how these works

are peripheral in both form and content: they lack commerciality, are not generally accessible and engage with issues "involving minor groups that are often met with denial and exclusion." Revolving around the disappeared of Northern Ireland's Troubles and of Pinochet's regime in Chile respectively, they use their content, media platform and particular aesthetic strategies to counter the "official forgetting" that characterizes these events up to the present day. Focusing particularly on the portrayal of landscape, Blair discusses how Doherty actively confounds and counters the idyllic marketing of the County of Donegal by evoking the disappeared in its depths. Similarly, Guzmán's images of women scouring the Atacama Desert for the physical remains of their loved ones are juxtaposed with the "sky searching" conducted at the space observation center also located there. According to Blair, these works politically contest the center's attempts to bury past troubles by creating a peripheral aesthetics that allows such troubles to be brought to light, albeit, at least at first, only to the limited audiences afforded by the peripheral status of their genres.

In her chapter on post-Soviet narratives, Ksenia Robbe, too, focuses on the ethics and politics of relegating certain histories, socialities and spaces to the periphery. She discusses how, after the demise of the Soviet Union, memories and stories of everyday life were pushed to the peripheries of public discussion and collective memory too quickly and too unambiguously. In careful readings of Ksenia Buksha's *The Freedom Factory* and Igor Saveljev's *Tereshkova is Flying to Mars*, Robbe traces how these novels portray an alternative position in relation to the Soviet past, where the relation is no longer one of outright refusal or dissection, but features instead a productively nostalgic belief in the possibility of commonality. The peripheralized past is considered as "an assemblage of imaginary and material forces" and read through Svetlana Boym's notion of the "common place" as a complex layering of the myths that organized Soviet life, the sites of ordinary life that often evolved counter to these commonplace myths and the creation and enactment of an ideal or utopian horizon. Relying on Serguei Oushakine's notion of post-Soviet aphasia, defined as a reusing of old symbolic forms in the absence of new ones, Robbe examines how, in the two novels, peripheralized locations and discourses from the past are salvaged from their essentialized forms and turned into positive attempts at developing a language comprising past, present and future.

Matthieu Foucher, in his analysis of the French queer magazine *La Revue Monstre*'s controversial call to return to the closet and Michael James O'Brien's photo series *Interiors* depicting Parisian backrooms, is also interested in how the past continues to manifest in the present. Crucially, rather than seeking to sever the long-standing association of the queer spaces of the closet and the backroom with danger and deadly desire, *Monstre* and *Interiors* are seen

to evoke this association, aesthetically and politically, as potentially enabling. In line with Dasgupta's and Wiese's contentions that a withholding of full exposure can signify a certain empowerment of the peripheral, Foucher argues that, even if the negative connotations of the closet and the backroom, and their dominant representation from the perspective of the center, cannot be denied, the fact that these peripheral spaces are to a certain extent closed off from the outside world can also make them "expansive space[s] of possibility" for queer communities. This makes it possible to conceive of returning to the closet not as a giving in to the center, but as a radical alternative to the politics of visibility adopted by mainstream queer activism, with the peripheral acting up to reserve the right to remain in the dark on its own terms.

Together, the four sections signal the importance of keeping the peripheral alive as a category while adopting a differentiated stance towards it. This volume is, in the end, not about the emancipation of the periphery into the center – about turning it into something that can be more easily understood in terms mostly dictated by this center – but about looking for ways to regard the periphery as able to negotiate its inevitable relation with the center on a variety of terms that belie its construction as statically "other."

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