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# INTRODUCTION

## Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies

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You will have understood that I am speaking the language of exile. This language of the exile muffles a cry, it doesn't ever shout . . . Our present age is one of exile. How can we avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex and identity? Writing is impossible without some kind of exile.

Exile is already in itself a form of *dissidence*, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country or a language. More importantly, it is an irreligious act that cuts all ties, for religion is nothing more than membership of a real or symbolic community which may or may not be transcendental, but which always constitutes a link, a homology, an understanding. The exile cuts all links, including those that bind him to the belief that the thing called life has a Meaning guaranteed by the dead father. For if meaning exists in a state of exile, it nevertheless finds no incarnation, and is ceaselessly produced and destroyed in geographical and discursive formations. Exile is a way of surviving in the face of the *dead father*, of gambling with death, which is the meaning of life, of stubbornly refusing to give in to the law of death . . .

This ruthless and irreverent dismantling of the workings of discourse, thought, and existence is . . . the work of a dissident. Such dissidence requires ceaseless analysis, vigilance and will to subversion, and therefore necessarily enters into complicity with other dissident practices in the modern Western world.

For true dissidence today is perhaps simply what it has always been: *thought*.

Julia Kristeva

"A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident"

It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think.

Michel Foucault

*The Order of Things*

*Guest Editors' Note:* We owe an enormous debt to the skills and labors of Deborah Johnston, who worked without compensation as editorial associate in the production of this special issue. Her talents—especially her insistent, theoretically informed questioning—have proven invaluable throughout all aspects of this issue. In addition, we must express our gratitude to Hayward R. Alker, Jr. and Craig Murphy who served as referees and commentators upon the articles collected here and whose painstaking, critical, and constructive comments have lent considerably to the project.

Think, if you will, of all of those familiar times and places in modern life where genres blur, narratives of knowing and doing intersect in mutually destabilizing ways, contingency threatens to displace necessity, the very identity of the subject is put in doubt, and human beings live and toil as exiles, deprived of any absolute territory of being to call home. Think, in particular, of the marginal instances of:

- the working mother who must daily pass back and forth across the mutually intruding, never stable frontiers of career-life and home-life—each with its own distinctive, historically elaborated narratives of truth and meaning and each with its own gender-marked implications for what the normal subject will naturally do and therefore effortlessly be;
- the draft-age youth whose identity is simultaneously claimed in national narratives of “national security” and the universalizing narratives of the “rights of man”;
- the unemployed laborer whose place in life is potentially crossed by both the narratives of “class struggle,” which might inscribe for her an identity in opposition to an international bourgeoisie, and the narratives of “national competition,” which might inscribe for her an identity in opposition to the workers of other nations;
- the woman whose very womb is claimed by the irresolvably contesting narratives of “church,” “paternity,” “economy,” and “liberal polity”;
- the alien worker, whose movement within a national territory is constrained by a national narrative of “law,” but who at the same time is deprived of many of the powers and protections attending a narrative of “citizenship”;
- the newspaper editor who must put himself in the place of “the reader” in order to decide what shall count as domestic news, international news, environmental news, economics, sports, fashion, or non-news, but who, upon encountering an ambiguous report, finds that he cannot come to rest with a single category because he imagines multiple readers and multiple narratives in which the report finds meaning;
- the Chinese businessman in Malaysia who must bear witness to Malay narratives in which he and other Chinese are described as “stingy” and “materialistic” even as he must encourage his children to learn “Bahasa Melayu” (officially, “Bahasa Malaysia”), the language in which the business of the state is conducted and the insults are spoken;
- the peace activist for whom a fearsome narrative of a future universal “end of time” calls into question “nationalistic” narratives of state survival, but for whom, also, the latter narratives continue powerfully to displace a narrative of “universal peace”;
- the Santiago or Los Angeles barrio-dweller who finds himself amidst the narratives of a “market” that fails to include him, the narratives of “honor” within a culture now displaced, the narratives of “education” that promise to rectify and uplift him, and the narratives of “law and order” that threaten to render him a criminal object of police cudgels should education fail;
- the participant in the environmental or cultural movement who subscribes to a narrative of the inescapable “interconnectedness” of dispersed locales but who, at the same time, would resist a narrative of “rationalization” that anticipates a necessary progress toward a universal and uniform order; and
- the contemporary Western statesman who, upon witnessing all those events connoted by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, greets this realization of his long expressed “fondest dreams” as a “nightmare” in which the West’s very identity and purpose is suddenly put in doubt and the Western state is at a loss to find any stable, already domesticated source of authority to represent.

These marginal sites are no doubt very different, but beyond noticing that they are proliferating in modern global life today, we can say that they have at least four things in common. First, these sites are intrinsically ambiguous. In none of these

instances can one refer to a time and place sharply bounded, a homogeneous territory in which categories are fixed, values are stable, and common sense meanings are sure. In none of these sites is there a unique and ultimate sovereign identity—be it the identity of the individual or the institutional structures of a social whole or community—to which one can appeal in fixing meanings and interpreting conduct. Here the words “I” and “we” have no certain referent. Here, exiled from the certain truths of every modern narrative of life, one can never confidently invoke an “everybody who knows” because one can never be sure just who this “everybody” is. As a result, one cannot speak as an economist might of rational individuals whose identities are given and who, in order to find their way and give meaning to their lives, need only deploy their available means to serve their self-generated interests under external constraints. One cannot speak as a moral philosopher might of the responsible human being who has a duty to ground his conduct in the transcendent principles of an ethical community. And one cannot speak as a sociologist might of social actors who habitually replicate an eternal yesterday, measure their practices by reference to a recognized norm, or project social values already inscribed in a coherent order.

Second, it follows that these marginal times and places are sites of struggle, where power is conspicuously at work. They are deterritorialized sites where people confront and must know how to resist a diversity of representational practices that would traverse them, claim their time, control their space and their bodies, impose limitations on what can be said and done, and decide their being. This is not to say that people here oppose some personified actor who, as external “enemy number one,” administers power over them. Since the differences between inside and outside are here uncertain, none can be clearly defined. This is also not to say that people here resist power in the name of the life and freedom of some sovereign identity, some community of truth, some absolute and identical source of meaning that is victimized and repressed by power. In these sites, again, identity is never sure, community is always uncertain, meaning is always in doubt. Instead, people here confront arbitrary cultural practices that work to discipline ambiguity and impose effects of identity and meaning by erecting exclusionary boundaries that separate the natural and necessary domicile of certain being from the contingencies and chance events that the self must know as problems, difficulties, and dangers to be exteriorized and brought under control. Here, in other words, power is not negative and repressive but positive and productive. Practices of power do not deny the autonomy of subjects already present so much as they work to impose and fix ways of knowing and doing that shall be recognized as natural and necessary to autonomous being. They work to produce effects of presence, of identity, of a territorial ground and origin of meaning. And they work by discriminantly reading and representing ambiguous circumstances to impose differences between that which may be counted as the certainty of presence and that which must be regarded as the absence beyond its bounds.

Third, these marginal sites thus resist knowing in the sense celebrated in modern culture, where to “know” is to construct a coherent representation that excludes contesting interpretations and controls meaning from the standpoint of a sovereign subject whose word is the origin of truth beyond doubt. In modern culture, it is the male-marked figure of “man”—reasoning man who is at home and at one with the public discourse of “reasonable humanity”—who is understood to be the sovereign subject of knowledge. It is the figure of “man” who is understood to be the origin of language, the condition of all knowledge, the maker of history, and the source of truth and meaning in the world. And although in modern discourse this figure of sovereign “man” is understood to exist in opposition to an ambiguous and indeterminate history that here and now limits him, escapes his mastery, and eludes the

penetration of his thought, modern discourse nonetheless invests in this figure of “man” the promise of transcendence: through reason, man may subdue history, quiet all uncertainty, clarify all ambiguity, and achieve total knowledge, total autonomy, and total power. This is the promise implicit in every claim of modern “knowledge”—a claim always uttered as if by “man” and in the name of “man.” This, too, is the promise that the disciplines of modern social science make—a promise of knowledge and power on behalf of a universal sovereign figure of “man” whose voice a discipline would speak. And this, as it happens, is the same promise that legitimates the violence of the modern state—the promise, inscribed in a compact with “man,” to secure and defend the “domesticated” time and space of reasoning “man” in opposition to the recalcitrant and dangerous forces of history that resist the sway of “man’s” reason.

Yet it is characteristic of the marginal sites just considered that they resist knowing in this sense and, in doing so, put just this promise in doubt. They resist this modern form of knowing because here, in these local times and places, the figure of “man” is anything but an indubitable presence whose voice can be simply spoken in the representation of people’s circumstances, intentions, and conduct. Any figure of “man” whose sovereign right to speak truth might here be asserted is immediately recognized as one among many arbitrary interpretations; it is seen as a knowledgeable practice of power, itself arbitrarily constructed, that is put to work to tame ambiguities, control meaning, and impose limitations on what people can do and say.

Accordingly, from the various “central” standpoints of modern culture that would speak the sovereign voice of “man,” the various marginal zones of life can be cast only negatively, as a fearsome moment of abjection. To the extent that they resist the imposition of some coherent “man-centered” narrative, these sites can be understood only to signal an entropic moment, a moment that escapes “man’s” rational control, a moment that spells the death of “man.” They can be regarded only as moments that the modern person must endlessly defer or promise to master in the name of a life, a truth, an identity in itself. Uncertainty, indeterminacy, darkness, disorder, turbulence, irrationality, ungovernability, terror, and anarchy—these are words that modern discourse uses to mark off these marginal places and times. These words demarcate marginal places and times as voids of truth and meaning that must be feared, exiled, and, if they persist, disciplined by the violent imposition of the certain voices of truth they lack.

Fourth, while these various marginal times and places defy the control of modern forms of knowledge—while they defy stable representation from the standpoint of one or another unique figuration of sovereign “man”—it must not be thought that they can be known only thus, as “voids” yet to be brought under control of “man’s” reason. When one allows that these deterritorialized zones are multiplying so that it can be said that “our present age is one of exile,” it makes sense to listen to the exiles who live and move in these contested marginal zones, respecting the dissident practices they undertake. And when one listens in this way, it becomes plain that these are proliferating times and places where exciting things of uncertain consequence are happening in global political life. To be sure, the exiles might speak in wavering timbre. After all, these are sites where the disciplining metaphysical faiths of modern culture are put in doubt, constructs of sovereign “man” cannot be made practically effective, and putatively objective boundaries of conduct authorized from sovereign perspectives are seen not only to be arbitrary but also to produce a scarcity of resources by which people might struggle to make life possible. People here are disposed to question identity as much as they are inclined to be dubious of all universal narratives and transcendental ends. If voices are here heard to flutter, hesitate, and show doubt, however, the wavering cannot be equated with an anxious

quavering. It cannot be equated with a fear of death that must be calmed by the imposition of a certain identity and a universal narrative in which an identity might secure an exclusionary territory to call home. For the questioning of “self” does not here signal a “deficiency,” a “lacuna that must be filled.” Ambiguity and uncertainty are not here regarded as sources of fear in themselves.

Ambiguity, uncertainty, and the ceaseless questioning of identity—these are resources of the exiles. They are the resources of those who would live and move in these paradoxical marginal spaces and times and who, in order to do so, must struggle to resist knowledgeable practices of power that would impose upon them a certain identity, a set of limitations on what can be done, an order of “truth.” They are resources that make possible what Julia Kristeva (1986) would call the work of “dissidence,” the politicizing work of thought. In Michel Foucault’s phrasing (1973:386), they are indicative of the opening of “a space in which it is once more possible to think.” Here, where identity is always in process and territorial boundaries of modern life are seen to be arbitrarily imposed, the limits authored from one or another sovereign standpoint can be questioned and transgressed, hitherto closed-off cultural connections can be explored, and new cultural resources can be cultivated thereby. Here it becomes possible to explore, generate, and circulate new, often distinctly joyful, but always dissident ways of thinking, doing, and being political.

We do not call attention to these proliferating marginal sites of modern politics in order to highlight lapses in contemporary global political theory, some specific domains of conduct that theorists have yet to take seriously enough. We do so in order to suggest that these deterritorialized and decentered sites of political life already have their counterparts at the margins of modern international studies. Kristeva (1986:292) has suggested that “A spectre haunts Europe: the dissident.” We want to suggest that for some years now, a “spectre” has haunted the “European continent” of international studies. It is the spectre of a widely proliferating and distinctly dissident theoretical attitude spoken in uncertain voice by women and men who, for various reasons, know themselves as exiles from the territories of theory and theorizing solemnly affirmed at the supposedly sovereign centers of a discipline. It is the spectre of a work of global political theory, a dissident work of *thought*, that happily finds its extraterritorial place—its politicized “nonplace”—at the uncertain interstices of international theory and practice.

These proliferating works of thought are not difficult to find. In the published literature, more so in the informal xero-circuits of the field, and still more so in the seminar papers of graduate students, one can detect an increasing volume and variety of work whose principal business is to interrogate limits, to explore how they are imposed, to demonstrate their arbitrariness, and to think *other-wise*, that is, in a way that makes possible the testing of limitations and the exploration of excluded possibilities. Some know their activity as reflection on ontology, on epistemology, on methodology—on what many call the unspoken presuppositions of a discipline. Some know their activity as exploration into the possibility of a post-positivist international relations discourse, a post-empiricist science of international relations, or a critical theory of global politics. Others know their activity as a kind of history, albeit one that does not aspire to remember an originary past but to expose and undo the arbitrary practices by which “counter-memories” are forgotten in the construction of a “necessary” present. Still others know their activity as attempts to set up a series of relays between international relations theory, on the one hand, and European social theory, feminist theory, and/or contemporary literary theory, on the other. And many more simply do their works of thought, not pausing to give their works a name but simply proceeding straightaway to a “ruthless and irreverent dismantling of the workings of discourse, thought, and existence” in modern global life. However they

are known and presented, moreover, these works of thought are to be heard insistently questioning the time-honored dualisms upon which modern theory and practice have long pivoted. Identity/difference, man/history, present/past, present/future, inside/outside, domestic/international, sovereignty/anarchy, community/war, male/female, realism/idealism, speech/language, agent/structure, particular/universal, cultural/material, theory/practice, center/periphery, state/society, politics/economics, revolution/reform—these and countless other dichotomies have been examined in their practical workings, turned, rethought, and exposed as arbitrary cultural constructs by which, in modern culture, modes of subjectivity, objectivity, and conduct are imposed.

As seen from the standpoints that would claim to occupy the center of a discipline, it is true, these marginal works of thought are known primarily as indications of a negativity: a crisis of confidence, a loss of faith, a degeneration of reigning paradigms, an organic crisis in which, as Gramscians would say, “the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born.” So cast, they are known to mark an interregnum, a time of delay between paradigms. So cast, also, they are subject to the discipline implicit in questions that modern theorists who long for a center, a secure source of meaning guaranteed by a “dead father,” so readily ask. Can they not prove their merits by configuring themselves as a new paradigm whose knowledge claims would bear a promise of control in the name of “man?” If they aspire to be taken seriously, can they not configure themselves as a theoretical counter-hegemony that could speak a sovereign voice, assume a name, take a position, command a space, secure a home, set down a law, and lay claim to the center of a discipline? The discipline is ready to hear affirmative answers to these questions—answers that would affirm that the study of international politics is indeed a business of making heroic promises on behalf of a universal sovereign figure. To those works of thought that answer no, the discipline turns a deaf ear when it can.

It is characteristic of these exile works of thought, though, that they will answer no. For these dissident works are like the marginal sites discussed earlier in that they resist assimilation to modern modes of knowing in the interest of the power of the modern figures of sovereign man and sovereign state. They share the three other features of these marginal sites as well. These dissident works of global political theory move in intrinsically ambiguous sites, where respect for the play of difference and the undecidability of history displaces the assertion of identity, including the assertion of one or another interpretation of a universal identity of sovereign “man.” They move in politicized sites where power is conspicuously at work and subject to meticulous examination. And they constitute exciting works of experimentation and exploration that would transgress arbitrary limits, open up hitherto closed off connections, and enable the construction and circulation of new ways of knowing and doing politics. Requiring “ceaseless analysis, vigilance and will to subversion,” these marginal works of thought “necessarily enter into complicity with other dissident practices in the modern Western world.”

The purpose of this special issue, then, is not to announce a new and powerful perspective on global politics for which a discipline must make way. The contributions to this issue do not speak a sovereign voice or proclaim a credo. They do not fabricate and ritualize a story of origins that would supply unity to these dissident works of thought. They stake out no territory to be defended, no boundaries that might separate citizens of a new discipline from those who are alien to it. They neither write nor exemplify a manual of war by which soldiers of a new mode of global political theory might be taught to seize, defend, and extend a domain. They issue no promises. They bear no flag.

Our intention in these pages, on the contrary, is to provide an opportunity for a public celebration of what these dissident works of thought already celebrate in

countless scattered locales of research labor: difference, not identity; the questioning and transgression of limits, not the assertion of boundaries and frameworks; a readiness to question how meaning and order are imposed, not the search for a source of meaning and order already in place; the unrelenting and meticulous analysis of the workings of power in modern global life, not the longing for a sovereign figure (be it man, God, nation, state, paradigm, or research program) that promises a deliverance from power; the struggle for freedom, not a religious desire to produce some territorial domicile of self-evident being that men of innocent faith can call home. Our intention, too, is to enable the further circulation of the new strategies of questioning, analysis, and resistance that these works of thought have found to be effective in one or another site and that might prove provocative and workable in other sites as well. In short, we do not want to “shout,” as if a voice raised in *International Studies Quarterly* might bespeak the arrival of a new movement that would storm and take the capitols of international studies. We want instead to make it possible to listen attentively to the “muffled cries” of dissidence that are already everywhere to be heard.

The first contribution to this special issue, “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference,” by Jim George and David Campbell, reflects a patient labor of listening to the exiled voices of dissident scholarship speaking in a variety of widely dispersed sites over the last decade. In spirit with the voices to which they listen, George and Campbell resist the temptation to find in dissident scholarship the seeds of a new orthodoxy. But they do highlight a variety of emergent questions that are repeatedly engaged by dissident scholarship, whether it be a dissidence that one might associate with Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School and Habermas or the dissidence one might be inclined to label postmodern or poststructuralist. These are questions bearing upon the Enlightenment constructs of history, rationality, objectivity, truth, human agency, and social structure; the relation between knowledge and power; the relation between language and social meaning; the role and function of the social sciences in modern social and political life; and the prospects for emancipatory politics in the late twentieth century. Also in keeping with the voices to which they listen, George and Campbell resist the temptation to memorialize a foundational prehistory of contemporary dissident scholarship. Yet they do briefly review a variety of contributions to contemporary social theoretical debates bearing on the questions just mentioned—a variety that spans from Wittgenstein, Winch, and Kuhn through the Frankfurt School, Habermas, Ricoeur, and Gadamer, to Derrida and Foucault. They do so not to gesture toward a “coherent and consensual position,” but to accentuate the lively and enlivening tensions that deprive the discipline of the presupposition of an objectively given territorial ground, on the one hand, and enable the opening up of spaces for thought, on the other. As George and Campbell show in the latter part of their essay, these tensions have been productively exploited in the variety of dissident works in international studies since the early 1980s.

The papers by James Der Derian, Bradley Klein, Michael Shapiro, William Chaloupka, and Cynthia Weber take advantage of the emergent thinking space to which George and Campbell allude. These papers range across a variety of topics that are no doubt familiar to readers of the *Quarterly*: surveillance, simulation and computer-assisted war gaming, the acceleration of weapons delivery, alliance politics, arms transfers, the local politics of ecological and anti-nuclear movements, the politics of international debt, and the production and transformation of political institutions, to name a few. Yet any attempt to introduce these papers and say what they must mean would be to do violence to them. For while these papers range across topics with familiar names, they do not approach them from the standpoint of some sovereign subject, some center of interpretation with which authors and readers are one. They do not pretend to project an originary word of truth and power beyond doubt, a



voice of “man” that promises to settle the ambiguities of life once and for all. These papers instead approach these topics in a manner that is respectful of the uncertainties of life at the margins, where meaning is in doubt, the play of power is visible, and the fixing of meaning is what practices of power visibly labor to do. They thereby sensitize us to the politics involved in asserting a sovereign presence, giving names, supplying representations, and saying what things mean—even in saying what these papers mean. More than that, they sensitize us to the paradoxes involved in any attempt to assert a sovereign voice in a world where the acceleration and agitation of social activity gives rise to a proliferation of transgressions of institutional boundaries and where, as a result, marginal zones of human labor expand relative to the supposedly homogeneous territories that institutional boundaries would demarcate and contain. Engaging the politics of such a world, these papers show that the refusal to embrace one or another sovereign standpoint and its pretenses of territorial being does not entail either a flight to a kind of idealism or a retreat to political passivity. It instead enables a disciplined, critical labor of thought that takes seriously those unfinalized power political struggles in which the question is no longer which sovereign shall win and which shall lose but how, if at all, a sovereign-centered territorialization of political life can be made to prevail.

In offering this small collection of dissident analyses in the pages of “The Official Journal of the International Studies Association,” we are of course sensitive to two problems. One problem is that this collection, being small, inevitably excludes—or at least fails to include—many, many voices of dissidence in international studies that deserve equally to be heard and celebrated. Facing up to this problem, all we can say is that we hope that the conduct of scholarship in the pages of this issue renders somewhat less effective another widely replicated and far more worrisome form of exclusion based not on physical limitations but on the supposed necessity of preserving institutional boundaries in the territorialization of political and scholarly life.

The second problem is that dissident scholarship, as Donna U. Gregory (1988:xiii) has noted, is “more often attacked than read.” For example, one especially well known line of attack, issued by Robert Keohane (1988:392), is that so-called “reflectivists,” while skilled in critical arguments, “lack . . . a clear reflective research program that could be employed by students of world politics.” As Keohane goes on to say, “Until the reflective scholars or others sympathetic to their arguments have delineated such a research program and shown in particular studies that it can illuminate important issues in world politics, they will remain on the margins of the field, largely invisible to the preponderance of empirical researchers . . .” This is a fine admonishment. It is as direct as it is succinct. It is delivered without the slightest concealment of the privilege being arbitrarily accorded to a certain interpretation of “empirical research,” of the policing function being performed, or of the punishment that will come to those who fail to heed the admonishment delivered. But it could not be offered or plausibly entertained by anyone who has actually read and taken seriously the works of the “reflectivists” admonished<sup>1</sup>, as George and Campbell and Der Derian make clear.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, for that matter, by anyone who has actually read and taken seriously Imre Lakatos’s (1970) most famous article on scientific research programmes. To read Lakatos’s article through to the end is to see that it actually develops as an elaborate sequence of deconstructions that proceeds from naive justificationist positions through a variety of other positions to finally arrive at a “position” that Popperians find disconcerting because, as Lakatos allows, it is grounded in nothing other than the arbitrary play of aesthetic practices. This last “position,” for all its potential to disconcert the male-marked Popperian figure of the sovereign scientist, is one that many dissident scholars would happily take seriously as a “starting point” for their “research programmes.” One might say, in fact, that many already do and that to this extent they are far more faithful to Lakatos’s own argument than are Keohane and many others who evoke the first few pages of Lakatos’s article and are amnesiac regarding the rest.

There are, though, other critical readings of dissident scholarship that do deserve a painstaking reply. In the essay concluding this issue, we shall consider a variety of such critical readings and offer a response to them. Our intention, as will be seen, is not to preempt or stifle criticism of dissident scholarship. Since dissident scholars labor to expand the space and resources of thought, they would be the last to gainsay any criticism of their work that would point out limitations to which they have acquiesced or which they have covertly inscribed. As evidenced by the essays collected here, in fact, dissident scholars exhibit a critical ethos, an ethics of freedom disciplining their work, that encourages and welcomes criticism such as this. Our purpose, instead, is to expose, analyze, and display the poverty of a widely replicated strategy of reading dissident scholarship that functions to *impose* limitations on the work of thought in reply to the hazards and opportunities encountered in all the intrinsically paradoxical and ambiguous sites of contemporary global life. This strategy of reading is “diversionary” in Keohane’s (1988:382) sense. It functions, in his words, to “take us away from the study of our subject matter, world politics.”

What is at stake is not just a matter of academic privilege. It is not a question of whether dissident scholars shall be given their due or, alternatively, marginalized and rendered “invisible.” What is at stake is nothing less than the *question* of sovereignty: whether or not this most paradoxical question, alive in all the widening margins of a culture, can be taken seriously in international studies today. More pointedly, the issue is whether and to what extent the discipline of international studies will be able to exercise its critical resources to engage and analyze the problem of sovereignty and resistance to sovereignty as it unfolds in all the multiplying deterritorialized zones of a culture in crisis—including that extraterritorial zone that eludes sovereign representation called international politics.

It would be a mistake, however, to accentuate our critical analysis of a strategy of reading dissident scholarship. As we argue in the concluding essay, this strategy is in complicity with all those practices that work on the world scene to read ambiguous circumstances, impose boundaries, and exclude paradoxes of space and time, thus to domesticate territories of social and political life that male-marked figures of sovereign authority can be claimed to represent. As we also argue, though, this strategy of reading is fast approaching exhaustion in international studies today, just as the cultural resources that can be called upon to effect the territorialization of social and political life are growing thin, more abstractly “philosophical,” less able to speak in reply to the unsettled circumstances in which women and men actively undertake their labors of self-making. In an important sense, the scholars contributing to this special issue presume the weakening of this strategy of reading and disciplining ambiguous happenings, both in international studies and in the world of politics studied. They, like marginalized peoples everywhere, exploit the openings made possible by this weakening.

Thus, while the contributors to this issue might occasionally cast a sideways glance at instances of this strategy of reading, they refuse to be delayed or diverted by it. They refuse to be seduced by a strategy of reading that would draw them into abstractly theoretical discussions or self-enclosing simulations of idealized realities that function only to redeem some notion of sovereign scholarly being. Instead, these scholars do what, we suspect, scholars of international studies in general are inclined to do. They get on with their work. They engage the intrinsically problematic realities of a world that affords few people today anything resembling a domestic haven of self-evident being exempt from the play of power. Like all exiles from the supposed sovereign territories of modern culture, these scholars undertake a critical task, a task of dissidence to which Foucault (1984:50) has gestured. It is a task of

working “on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty.”

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