Imagination and the Public Sphere

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Edited by

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To the members of the Southern Humanities Council, where the best of these conversations begin and continue in a spirit of serious engagement and whimsical play, and with deep commitment to being community.

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PREFACE

The process of preparing a book, particularly a collection with multiple contributors, inevitably stretches over a period of time, during which the world continues to move on. The essays collected here on the topic(s) of "Imagination and the Public Sphere" will be of interest far into the future, but US (if not global?) political events that have occurred just in the period of bringing this collection together already show how these essays are also very timely. These events give reason for anger, and they give reason for hope, and they give reason for careful analysis and work for change. All of these—anger, hope, and a commitment to analysis as one of the tools of change—are the same motivators and attendant acts that brought this collection to print in the first place. In this preface, I will mention only a few of our essays as I seek to demonstrate this collection's timeliness, though every chapter offers insights both enduring and of immediate relevance.

Carrie Baker's essay, "Women's Bodies and Sexuality in the Public Sphere," originally written in 2008, now appears quite prescient in laying bare the rhetorics at play, and the silences imposed, as women's sexuality and reproductive choice become an increasingly contested ground for public policy and electioneering. In early 2012, even a casual glance at the news seems bound to turn up the phrase "War on Women." Story after story has told of rolling increases in states acting to curtail access not only to legal abortion but to many other reproductive and preventative health services. A now infamous US House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convened a "panel of experts" in February on women's access to affordable contraception that *included no women*. It might have been tempting to succumb to the idea that these attacks were "swift and sudden," but while some lawmakers, such as Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) point to the 2010 midterm election that brought Republicans a House majority as the moment from which to date this "War" (Miller), Baker's essay clearly identifies an earlier tipping point in the framing of arguments against women's reproductive freedoms and women's sexuality, lodged securely in the years of the G.W. Bush presidency (2000-2008). As Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, former President of Chicago Theological Seminary, pointed out in 2012, masking attacks on women's health, sexual and reproductive concerns with a language of

"freedom of religion and conscience" suggests that women do not themselves have conscience, and should not be allowed freedom of religion to the same degree as men, if at all. Looking back at the push to limit access to contraceptive Plan B, Baker shows us the groundwork being laid for both the "religious freedom" arguments of the 2012 all-male House panel and the attempts to (re)vilify women's sexuality which seem to have culminated in right-wing radio commentator Rush Limbaugh's personal attacks on a law student testifying on alternative medical uses of drugs more commonly seen as for contraception.[1] Baker's look back to the framing language of "religious liberty" or "freedom of conscience" established during the last Bush presidency when discussing contraception underscores that ideas introduced in the public sphere in seemingly small ways, if not carefully analyzed, addressed and reframed, take root in our understanding and can radically alter the possibility of open access to discourse, and thus to power and freedom.

Debora Halbert's chapter on Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs) and radical public spheres as alternatives to consumerist culture finds contemporary illustration and relevance in the Wisconsin labor protests and Occupy Movements of 2011. Three of Halbert's points are particularly salient:

1. that while the privately owned and regulated commercial "town squares" of contemporary shopping plazas do not meet our ideas of true public space—openness and accessibility, public ownership, ties to democratic life—our city streets and public buildings often fail just as completely;
2. that the masses (or "unorganized publics" (Rose)) do not have the same standing as "the people" (or "organized publics") as defined by a state authority structure which assumes the role of people's representative and agent;
3. that Temporary Autonomous Zones are important examples of public spheres of the multitude (or masses, or unorganized public), and not because they address political issues directly—although they can—but because they provide a temporary space in which to live out an anti-capitalist or anti-consumerist alternative.

As Halbert points out, shopping malls and public areas are *both* regulated and under surveillance; even though the theory of our social contract suggests that there can be public input into the rules governing state or common public spaces, the type of public ("organized" i.e. favored and represented by the State, or emerging from the masses) is of the essence.

In Wisconsin, for example, where the State Constitution, representing the social contract, protects both the right to enter the Capitol and the right to assemble and petition (Article I, §4), the Department of Administration coincidentally announced new "building rules" governing physical entrance just at the time in February of 2011 when a huge mass of people arose and assembled to protest the legislative budget session in which Governor Scott Walker proposed a significant curtailment of collective bargaining rights. Changes included which entrances could be used and by whom, the suggestion that entrants ought to have pre-arranged appointments with particular legislators in order to be allowed in, the prohibition of many personal items including sleeping bags or blankets (clearly a response to the protesters' plans to occupy the building on a longer term basis), and the "[adjustment of crowd size] to accommodate cleaning crews." In addition, police delayed or denied access outright, ignoring the State Constitution, those recently issued rules (which did still suggest there would be *some* access), and their own representatives' promise to protesters asked to leave for the night that they would be readmitted at 8 the next morning (Dayen, Smathers). While it may be difficult to sort out who, exactly, was involved in the blockage decisions—the Department of Administration? The Police? Governor Walker, [flexing] "political muscle"? ("Workers' Uprising")—what was clear was exactly what Halbert, citing Edmund S. Morgan, pointed out: that "mere people" were not "*the* people" of the supposed social contract.

The Wisconsin story, as I have told it here, may seem a pessimistic one, as could that of Occupy. I see them, however, as signs of hope. While there were also many well-documented crack-downs, for example, on the Occupy movements that took root around the country in the fall of 2011, and those along with winter temperatures and other factors combined to eventually curtail and disperse these gatherings, I'd like to look at some perspectives on the earliest days of Occupy as a time of possibility, a moment, an eruption of the imaginative that, though necessarily temporary, gave space to think and live differently.

In one of the most beautiful, poignant and hopeful writings documenting the early OWS movement, written in only the second week of the original New York city occupation, Manissa McCleave Maharawal makes clear the relevance of both Halbert's vision of the Temporary Autonomous Zone and Mark Ledbetter's understanding of the power and necessity of the imagination, however evanescent, to help us see differently, in service of movement toward a better, more just world.[2] A young woman of color, Maharawal had initially "intuited that [Occupy Wall Street] was mostly a young white male thing." What she found when she arrived at the OWS

site on September 25th, 2011, was instead something she could invest in: an unorganized public she could not simply join, but make a contribution to. She discovered, to use Keith Hamon's phrase from this book's last chapter, that she could, and wanted, to "add value."

Upon her arrival, Maharawal was first surprised at the diversity and harmony of the gathered crowd. What she found was not organization, exactly, but cooperation, "a genuine feeling of solidarity."

> There weren't only young white kids. ... There were older people, there were mothers with kids, and there were a lot more people of color than I expected, something that made me relieved. ... Less disorganization than I expected and everyone was very very friendly. ... The whole thing was bizarre yes, the confused tourists not knowing what was going on, the police officers lining the perimeter, the mixture of young white kids with dreadlocks, anarchist punks, mainstream looking college kids, but also the awesome black woman who was organizing the food station, the older man who walked around with his peace sign stopping to talk to everyone, and a young black man named Chris from New Jersey who told me that he had been there all week and was tired but had come not knowing anyone and made friends and now he didn't want to leave.

Maharawal found, too, both a gift economy and a shared expectation of contribution, of work and knowledge exchange. There was donated food available, there was full consensus reached among 300 persons gathered as a General Assembly to use donated money as bail for those arrested, there was a library and there was the work of envisioning and articulating, the sharing of experience and knowledge and perspective and the willingness to listen and be open to difference. "There is a lot of learning going on down there," Maharawal reported, and "there is a lot of teaching to be done." This might have been an alternative to hegemonic culture, but it was not a holiday; the work of making change still takes deliberate and sustained effort. Having to explain privilege and institutional bias and demand changes of unintentionally racist language is hard work, for example, as we see when Maharawal tells of her participation in a challenge to such language appearing in a key working document, the "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City." She describes how hard she and her friends had to fight not to have their concerns deferred, but how invested they felt in this new community, how they found they didn't want to see it dismissed for its mistake, and were willing to fight to educate. "[Such work] hurts. It makes you tired. Sometimes it makes you want to cry. Sometimes it is exhilarating. ... There in that circle, ... It was hard. It was real. It hurt. ... But people listened. ... [It] felt worth it."

In relating her experience and her perspective on OWS, Maharawal over and over uses the word "space," emphasizing physically located co-presence along with/as an opening up of the possible, an interruption in the flow of the status quo. Look at these four pieces from her text:

> It felt like a space of possibility, a space of radical imagination.
>
> [It] was energizing to feel like such a space existed.
>
> And so I started telling my friends to go down there and check it out. I started telling people that it was a pretty awesome thing, that just having space to have these conversations mattered.
>
> I think this is what Occupy Wall Street is right now: less of a movement and more of a space. It is a space in which people who feel similar frustration with the world as it is and as it has been, are coming together and thinking about ways to recreate this world.

What these lines make clear to the reader is that, contrary even perhaps to Maharawal's own description, the participants in the first weeks of Occupy Wall Street were not simply *thinking about* ways to recreate the world. They were *recreating* it. The performance preceded the ability to articulate. They were doing it, and in doing it, it was (becoming) possible. They were performing the difference they had begun to imagine, imagining a difference they had begun to perform.

Two weeks later, Maharawal added to her sense of space a sense of temporality:

> I still think OWS is more of a space than a movement, a space of radical possibility, but I also think it is becoming something else. It is a space, but it is also a moment: a moment in which radical critique of our political and economic systems and the harm they have caused, a critique that many of us have had for a while, feels possible to have on a larger scale. It is a moment in which people who never thought they would be out on the streets protesting are protesting. And this is revolutionary in itself. ("Not an Ending")

All of this took place in the tripartite shadow of capitalism's hub, cut-rate consumerism, and touristic voyeurism. Maharawal recalls that to arrive at the protest site was to head towards Wall Street, passing close by both the Century 21 discount department store and the tourists visiting the remains and rebuilding of the World Trade Center: a complicated and multivalent symbolic surrounding to be sure, but one which seemed to fade into the

distant background as the real work of radical community was being performed.

There is a reason Halbert writes in this volume of *temporary* autonomous zones. It is not a question of duration; as Ledbetter explains in our opening chapter, the true moment of imagination does not and cannot last, but in the moment it breaks through, the very moment which begins its ending, lies the possibility, and the promise of the next, new moment.

This is how Maharawal ends her Occupy piece, which I hope you will go read in its entirety.

> Later that night, I biked home over the Brooklyn Bridge and I somehow felt like the world was, just maybe, at least in that moment, mine, as well as everyone dear to me and everyone who needed and wanted more from the world. I somehow felt like maybe the world could be all of ours.
>
> Love, Marissa.

In the end, what can there be other than struggle and love? And so this book, never designed to address specific political moments in any conclusive way, offers, I trust, some ways to practice the expectation of and participation in imagination's moments of love and struggle.

—Susan G. Cumings
Albany, New York
June, 2012

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Notes

[1] In March 2012, Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke testified before Congress concerning the importance of affordable access to birth control, even at religious institutions like Georgetown itself. Her testimony included the fact that medicines commonly prescribed as birth control have other medical uses outside the sexual realm, and told the story of a friend who had lost an ovary because she couldn't afford the medicine—a hormonal regulator also commonly prescribed for birth control—needed to manage her ovarian cysts. Conservative and influential radio host Rush Limbaugh, whose show drew at the time the largest radio audience in the United States, dismissed Fluke's assertion that women might be prescribed the pill for other medical reasons, and accused her of merely advocating for promiscuity, calling her both "slut" and a "prostitute" on national radio, and going on to extend his insults to her family as well. (As can be heard in recordings of the show in question, Limbaugh did not, in his tirade, even bother to get Ms. Fluke's name right, referring to her repeatedly as "Susan Fluke.") This was perhaps the most blatant public display of vilification of women's sexuality of the year, demonstrating the attitude that any woman seeking affordable access to birth control for ANY reason should be subject to public insult and shaming. See coverage, for example, in the New York Daily news, at <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/rush-limbaugh-calls-law-student-a-slut-wanting-contraception-covered-health-insurance-religious-institutions-article-1.1031283>

[2] Maharawal's piece, "So Real it Hurts: Notes on Occupy Wall Street," reposted on myriad sites and later adapted and re-titled by the author for Occupy Wall Street Media, was originally posted as a facebook note, and is still, as of this writing, available in its original form on facebook, as well as on this CUNY website: <http://opencuny.org/socalledmarginalia/current-writings/>. (Maharawal is a cultural anthropology student at the CUNY graduate center.) Except as noted, all quotations for the remainder of this preface are from Maharawal's original note.

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The editor of a collection such as this inevitably owes thanks to many. First, to our contributors: your ideas and imagination are what make this collection work. From the time of the book's conception, you have shared your gifts and worked tirelessly, and I have appreciated more than you know your responsiveness to my editorial suggestions, your dedication to making this a collection of value, and your patience with the process. To Danielle Wyckoff, too, who created the cover illustration for this volume, my gratitude for your artistic talents and for your spirit of collaborative imagining. I also need to recognize the work of Greg Salyer in the early stages of the volume, particularly his recruitment of a number of superb scholars as contributors, and the work of Mikayla Consalvo on the reformatting of citations as we brought together scholars accustomed to a variety of different disciplinary standards. I also am grateful to the staff of our publisher, Cambridge Scholars, for seeing a conversation worth sharing and offering the original contract, and for patience through the delays life sometimes brings. Carol Koulikourdi in particular has been both patient and forthright, and I am pleased to at last hand the book over to her. Amanda Millar at CSP has also done superb work on the technical end, and was always quick to respond to any formatting and layout questions that arose during the final manuscript preparations. My family also deserves great thanks: Mark Ledbetter, my partner and my inspiration, for his contributions on the scholarly side and his personal support in the balancing of home and work, and our daughter, Annie Grace Cumings Ledbetter, for enduring "missing Mummy" when I needed to work late or into what would otherwise have been family time. Annie Grace, I hope someday you'll read this book and see why I thought this was important. Finally, I want to thank the members of the Southern Humanities Council, my intellectual home. You remind me every year when we gather and every day as we stay in touch that worthwhile conversation involves thought, exploration, puzzlement, laughter, disagreement, and discovery, and is always about connection and community. It is to you that this volume is dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

SUSAN G. CUMINGS

I don't believe in the godliness of steeples,
but I believe in the stained glass
and every key on every organ that is desperate for light
'cause we are desperate for life –
for the sight of a captivated audience refusing to be held captive
in the thought that they can only listen and watch
—Andrea Gibson

In the opening pages of this volume, Mark Ledbetter suggests that having ideas proves not an individual, solitary, Cartesian existence, but rather ideas "prove that I exist among the many others who exist around and within me." That is the spirit of this collection, *Imagination and the Public Sphere*, an interdisciplinary book which explores the politics of identities and the equally challenging politics of social space, which asks, in an era that sees identities increasingly pre-packaged and lives thoroughly mediatized and multiply surveyed, what it means to have collectivity, collective life, what it means to imagine new possibilities, and what it means to perform them into being. It asks that we take part in addressing these questions together.

The use of the word *public* generally connotes something shared, a commonality, at its best perhaps a sense of openness to one another; one thinks perhaps of public spaces, or public parks, or the idea of something being held as a public trust. A running tension in the notion of the public, though, involves the question of organization and just behind that, of ownership. Whose public? What are its parameters? How do we know what is desired, what is best, and how do we make it happen? How do we ensure "fairness" and involvement, assuming (and it is only an assumption) that those are values upon which we can agree? How do we frame the issues in order to best address them, especially where there are divergent views and divergent experiences among those seeking resolution? Frames, linguist George Lakoff points out, are a normal part of language-based communication; they are structures of thought, and convey

moral systems. Simply put, “framing is about ideas, about how we see the world, which determines how we act” (“Frame Yourself”).

Finding usable, shared (sharable) frames, however, as philosopher-scholar Judith Butler points out, often entails a processes of negotiation in which one finds oneself pressed (not by persons, necessarily, but by the circumstance and the limitations of language/discourse for communication) to accept terms of debate that one doesn't buy into, that is, to accept and make use of interpretive frames and discursive ways of constructing and parsing the world that we sometimes find at best misleading, at worst destructive in the force of their power to control or exclude (“Competing Universalities” 159). Quite simply, as linguist George Lakoff is also fond of pointing out, whoever frames the values owns the debate, and acceding to a common language may mean allowing another’s frame. This generates new problems, for, as Stacey Young (among countless others) explains, that which *we* consider “neutral” or “universal” most often simply reflects our own subject positions in matrices of power and oppression (201). This renders clear how elusive is the inclusively universal, though still not undesired as an ideal; what this book seeks, in its stead, is an engagement through multiple lenses of dynamics of expression and regulation that shape possibilities of common life. By examining various practical situations, we begin to understand the complexities and complex varieties of productive answers to the tensions between conceptions of individuality, individual freedom and (the?) common good.

The title of this volume reveals, however, not only a concern for our ability to usefully define or inhabit a “public sphere” but the purposes of imagination in defining, inhabiting, *and transcending the limitations of* whatever that public sphere may be as it exists at present or shall come to be. Thus, in the chapters included herein, we explore a variety of concrete “test cases,” involving such intersecting and at times competing elements of lived experience and cultural practice as art and politics, gender and religion, religion and science, religion and technology, technology and teaching, in search of not necessarily *new* but perhaps at least *unanticipated* ways of living, ways of living that transcend the expected or the prescribed or the delimited, and that assert human value and—could the word be?—delight. Rather than be mired in the dystopic, or enamored of the never-never utopic, our authors examine practical loci for understanding what possibilities may exist for us in what is certainly, for all intents and purposes, a thoroughly mediatized, surveillance-saturated, post-metanarrative world. Perhaps we look for the localized narratives, as (in a perhaps unconscious Lyotardian echo) Greg Gross suggests in a later

chapter—the ones that provide personal inspiration toward a balance of the individual with the communal while firmly within reach of the (ever more elusive) real. Perhaps we look for the moments when even a realm as seemingly frivolous (and pervasive) as celebrity culture erupts in something other, a form of public good brought to light through its customarily closed-system machinations, as Kathleen Feeley's historical study in Chapter Seven suggests. Perhaps inspiration lies in heeding a warning concerning the far greater implications of issues that seem forgettably localized, as we see in Carrie Baker's story of a supermarket pharmacy in the small-town south.

The first two essays in the book frame for us in a broad sense the terms of discussion. Mark Ledbetter leads us in to the volume, asking, What is imagination? What is the role of image in the practice, or the translation, of imagination? What is imagination that we should hold it special, desire it as a practice, a mode of being? How can we use it as a term of value and distinguish it from a word often used (erroneously, Ledbetter demonstrates) as its synonym: creativity—which itself too often falls back to a creative re-arrangement of the known? How can imagination perform, and in performing, transform, in service of community, in service of justice?

Debora Halbert, in our second chapter, then turns to the other of our two title terms, and explores what is at stake in our understandings of the word *public*. She addresses this in two ways, asking what distinguishes "public" spaces, but also what makes a "public"? She follows Habermas's argument that the public sphere as a genuine space of encounter and debate has been replaced, gradually but successfully, with a "pseudopublic" relying not on debate but on consumption (themes echoed in later essays in this volume, particularly Gregory Gross's). Halbert presents as evidence the shopping center designed in imitation of a city square but with none of the citizens' rights we might expect in the latter. She reminds us, however, that in formulating a response that draws on the idea of a public, a gathered mass of people, we must distinguish (following legal theorist Carol Rose) *organized publics* (like the state, which speaks for "the people" or "the electorate") from *unorganized publics*, which are not regulated by the state and may have interests at odds with the state, thus making them, in the view of some, threatening political forces, and in the view of others, voices of non-conformity and liberation. It is the latter Halbert turns to in hope, discussing the eruption of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs) as alternative or radical public spheres. Such Zones disrupt the hegemony, which Judith Butler once defined as "a dominance so entrenched that we take it for granted and even appear to consent to it—a power that's strengthened by its invisibility" ("Bad

Writing"). Halbert's point is that a TAZ radicalizes the public sphere because, at least for that moment, it "sees through" (Ledbetter's phrase), makes this invisible dominance visible; it disrupts, as Gross would say, and by doing so awakens and refreshes. An annual event in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada known as "Burning Man" is an example she deals with in some detail. Drawing on Virno's *Grammar of the Multitude*, Halbert conceptualizes the Burning Man festival/event as an example of a "public sphere of the multitude"—a gathering of persons that does not become, or come under the state, or even coalesce sufficiently to be characterized as a "people" or a public—even an unorganized one. The concept of the multitude rests upon, according to Virno, the sense of "not being at home" and thus provides a constant impetus for engaging in the new. Temporary Autonomous Zones such as Burning Man are spaces where art is communally, not individually, produced, uncommodified (a gift, not for sale), and participatory, open the possibility of Ledbetter's true, and evanescent, leaps of imagination.

Greg Gross picks up many of Halbert's concerns about the psychic and social tolls of consumerist/consumption culture in our third chapter, focusing first on the ways in which we are at once over-saturated and undernourished by surface-rhetoric. At the edges of this unanchored, liquid life (a term he borrows from Bauman), is the individual's ever-increasing anxiety of not having sufficient appeal in this appearance-driven show-me-the-money culture, and consequently of being designated as waste. Rather than looking for disruptions in the "public," however, as in Halbert's chapter, Gross seeks a reinvestment in the private through a re-invention of the nineteenth century rugged individual as a model for identity consciously forged in (in-person) community. His style of writing might be seen to contain its own form of TAZs, though, as his critiques of the postmodern condition are interrupted periodically with the words of those he takes for models of this self-in-relation, disrupting the flow of those narratives of narcissism and disconnection. While he exhibits the insecurities of heightened mobility and liquidity, Gross can be persuaded, too, that there is amid the liquidity the possibility for the new to be positive, and so in the end he returns to the notion of the public through the invocation of a perfectible democracy-to-come.

Because religious faith acts for many as a shaper of worldviews and a motivator for action, as an exercise of soul (and not only a force of repression, as one might be led to suspect from later chapters in this volume by Warburton and Baker), Lane Davis's essay in our fourth chapter seeks a better understanding of the conditions and limits under which one might share and explore faith in a technotelemediatic world. He

brings the present into focus through comparisons of the shaping of contemporary religious communities online with the role of technologies (such as John Wesley's publishing industry) in the American evangelical past. Technologies, he finds in both periods, facilitate the carrying of evangelical and social messages into the public sphere, but also become conduits of commodification, which in turn brings the impetus toward standardization/regulation. A private faith may be always also called into political and social engagement in the public sphere, which both print and internet mechanisms of dissemination facilitate. Technologies, though, also played—and play today—a role in establishing and maintaining hierarchies, so that the public sphere could (and can) never act entirely as the "free market of ideas" the internet might appear to promise.

While Davis explores very specific contexts, in a general sense his phrase "dynamics of expression and regulation" characterizes perfectly the tensions explored by our next three authors as well. Carrie Baker takes on the question of gender-specific allowances and restrictions on sexual expression and sexual freedom in our fifth chapter, examining material engagements and rhetorical moves in the period following FDA assignment of over-the-counter status to products such as Plan B (or "emergency contraception"). The arena of contemporary culture in which this is being played out is one, she observes, which gives us at once the oversexualized objectification of women's and girls' bodies in pop culture images and the characterization in public policy discourses of women's bodies as irresponsible and dangerous. In this discourse economy, Baker shows, women's existence and agency as active sexual beings is always already either obscured or demonized. By placing debates about birth control[1] into a comparative gender framework, she re-posits the question of access to emergency contraception (and contraception in general) as one of sexual freedom. Sexual freedom is not a popular banner under which to march these days, as perhaps it once was in the 1960s and 1970s, at least not for women, who using such words are branded as sluts and whores with surprising alacrity and alarming speed in the public media and general discourse. However, as Baker points out, the idea of sexual freedom as a right and a life enhancing practice *for men* is alive and well in the understandings of a full and fulfilling life promoted by the manufacturers of drugs to remedy male erectile dysfunction.[2] Her goal is the reframing of the issues as ones of gender equality, in service of seeing a broader picture, which also involves the elimination of gender-based and -motivated forms of sexual abuse.

Dominated by names such as Einstein, Darwin, Galileo and God, Roger Warburton's Chapter Six brings us historical examples of the state-

sponsored Church as a regulator and controller of information struggling to hold back the imaginations of scientists. Acting in those earlier times as the "State," or with what Habermas might term a "manorial authority" (5), the Church, with its panoptic gaze and will to power, expected its organized public to remain so, and to allow it to set the parameters for creativity. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church at the dawn of the seventeenth century, the will to correct was backed with the full authority to carry out that will, as witnessed in the execution of "heretic" scientists like Giordano Bruno, whose case Warburton discusses. While such establishments as the Vatican or the Church of England (or the American "Religious Right," for that matter) may still possesses that will, they can no longer impose it as brutally as they once did; Warburton chronicles the passing of that era, crediting in part the role of technologies in shifting the locus of power and knowledge, and thus freeing the scientific imagination. Where we often focus solely on the printing press as the great game-changer of public knowledge-dissemination, Warburton argues convincingly that modern science, grounded in the principle of experiments and observations that can be reproduced by anyone, anywhere, owes an equal debt to the cheap telescope, for allowing the people to observe for themselves proof that the heliocentric theory presented by Galileo, and Copernicus before him, was not mere "mathematical supposition" (the most the church would allow) but blatant, unquestionable, observable and verifiable-by-anyone fact. This empowerment of the people to "see through" for themselves not only likely saved Galileo's life, but changed the role of the Church as arbiter of the scientific forever.

In our seventh chapter, Kathleen Feeley looks at commercial interests as regulators, and how one can be pitted against another in service of a greater expressive freedom, as was the (albeit unintended) case in the controversy that threatened to bury Orson Welles's now classic film *Citizen Kane*. Feeley characterizes the story she tells as one in which "art (eventually) triumphed over commerce, dissent over consensus" in of all unlikely places, the Hollywood gossip mill. She admits that it was columnist Hedda Hopper's self-interest—an interest in establishing her own career and eclipsing that of her rival, and not a burning desire for authentic debate and dissent—that pushed unlikely heroine Hopper outside the practices of staged display and into a more direct critical examination of media control. Still, this process of revelation lined up happily (but, to repeat, coincidentally) with the interests of the public in freedom of information.[3] Feeley appears to be in agreement with Halbert when she states that "oppositional and artistic visions can survive and even thrive in a mass-mediated public sphere," but Hopper's self-serving motives are a

far cry from the broader, more deliberately counter-hegemonic motivations that prompt the formation of TAZs, as described in Halbert's chapter, which one might argue arise from "purer" desire for public (or multitudinous), not personal, benefit. Nonetheless, whether accidental or purposeful, it is in both cases the ruptures that expose the pattern, and informed people have at least a greater chance of making freer choices.

The contributors to this volume are educators by profession, and so it is fitting that our closing essay should take us into the classroom as a knowledge and learning community. Recognizing that we are in a time of unprecedented and pervasive technologies, Keith Hamon is far from Gross's resignation or Halbert's desire for eruptions of critical escape. He proposes instead that we see in our mediatic world opportunities to think differently and connect with each other differently, to let our imaginations expand and explore, to conceive of the parameters of classrooms and communities differently, to take responsibility for adding value to those communities, and to see ever-expanding possibilities for close, productive, enhancing connections.[4] As hierarchical structures become outmoded, "we are assuming management of our own affairs," he writes, quoting Mark Pesce and exhibiting not the despair for what we've lost nor the decrying of a narcissistic population but the growth of a new public sphere, of emerging possibilities for a common life in this elastic and permeable communicative space. Is it without problems? Of course not. Hamon himself addresses, for example, the most obvious class critiques of this system's accessibility by calling attention to the widening global availability and significant and continuing decreases in price of net-compatible devices in recent years. To the question of how to make and enhance mediatized communities while retaining individual identity, Hamon's advice is to "add value." Add value, he tells his students; if you do, your network connections (i.e., your communities) expand. If you don't, the network will ignore you. Hamon does not press all the implications of this dictum, and certainly further questions should be asked concerning who and what is privileged in such an economy. What of those who are not seen to be adding value? Do they, now "ignored," become the "waste" of Greg Gross's fears? Or is this a problem not of invention but of perception? There is no possibility of the process, as it stands today, being impartial. But if we are tempted to shoot back with challenges regarding, for example, what a person with cognitive impairment can add in an info-tech driven economy, Hamon might well challenge in return that if we cannot ourselves adapt the system to address such matters, it is we who are failing to add value, and Ledbetter might surely observe that it is we who are lacking in imagination. Which brings

us back around to Ledbetter's challenge that we not merely arrange the pieces we have, but do something, as the Pythons used to say, "completely different:" recognize and celebrate the collaborative, imaginative spaces of play that are happening around us, be they TAZs in a market-and-consume world or learning in a rhizomatic public sphere, leveraging, as Hamon suggests, "the resources of billions to tackle the issues of work and play, war and peace, education, family, and worship."

Political theorist Stacey Young, in pondering the question of how genuine, fundamental social change comes about, argues that material reality is shaped by the conditions and limits of the imagination. Of course, it is true that options for change are "strongly influenced by economic, legal, policy and other material considerations ... [but policy change], even when far reaching, does not guarantee much of anything without an attendant shift in perspective" (208). The issue is an imaginative, but also a discursive one: that is, it has to do with framing, with the ability to articulate a vision in terms that render it intelligible, and (one hopes) desirable. But how do we get to the framing? This is where, again, our performative imagination, the ability to "see through" to something entirely new outside the terms of current debate, is so crucial. Imagination is, as Ledbetter argues, the *sine qua non* of authentic being in community, or, as Young puts it, "people can become free only to the extent that they are able to imagine ways of living that facilitate that freedom" (207). The words at the heart of imagination, Mark Ledbetter teaches us, are words like justice, compassion, and love.

How we understand our connections to each other, be they personal, or through membership in an organized public such as a church or state or professional gathering, or an unorganized public like an art collective or spontaneous street performance troupe, and how we render those connections not simply functional or expedient but meaningful, require a dialogue between private acts of imagination and its image in the public sphere. This book looks back, looks inward—to the Beach Boys, or Whitman, Orson Welles or John Wesley, Copernicus or Burning Man—and it looks forward, and outward, inviting you to make your own, new maps, to bring us into territory that is entirely new—to imagine. So dive in, and begin.

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Notes

[1] The debate includes, or course, abortion, though as Baker goes to lengths to explain, emergency contraceptives such as Plan B are not abortifacients. Nonetheless the two questions—family planning and the ability to have an pregnancy terminated safely and legally—are linked in much of public discourse, especially through the conservative media.

[2] In fact, in Viagra ads running in early 2012 (with such image themes as sailing and saddling horses), men's sexual activity is not just a right but a responsibility, "what needs to be done" by post-adolescent men to show that they are capable and virile, at the age (as the ad says) "of taking action." The message of the ads is clear: if a man has E.D. and is not taking Viagra and having sex, he's "backing down from a challenge" (another masculinist no-no as voiced in Viagra's 2012 "Stuck" ad); he's not doing his job as a man. See the 2012 commercial series,

"Sail," "Stuck," Gas Station," and "Anthem" (or others set to replace them) at <http://www.viagra.com/viagra-tv-commercial.aspx>

[3] That is, if it is indeed in the interests of the public not to be controlled or sheltered from "sensitive" information, but to have autonomy—a point of political debate among strategists, if one not often raised in front of the electorate.

[4] As Aas, Gundhus & Lomell point out in their 2009 book *Technologies of (In)Security*, Foucault conceived of technologies in four ways, not all of which were panoptic or sinister. Instead, together these forms show that the term *technology* "applies to a broad social matrix of action which enables humans to modulate their environments" (4). Even technologies of surveillance, because they also demand self-surveillance, become interactive, participatory in ways that also open space for "social interaction, communication and play, challenging and transcending traditional dichotomies between the controllers and the controlled, between the watchers and the watched" (5).