

# Introduction: Storytelling in the Margins

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‘It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges.

It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds.

It matters what stories tell stories.’

– Donna J. Haraway (2016, 35)

‘If there are margins, is there still a philosophy, *the* philosophy?’

– Jacques Derrida (1982 [1972], xvi)

One of the most pervasive topics across the Humanities is storytelling. Whether we are seeking to understand the development of shared identities, cultural beliefs, and practices throughout history, or grappling with pressing contemporary concerns like anthropogenic climate change and accelerating globalization, the centrality of narrative(s) to much of our work on these issues—and to the issues themselves—is undeniable. As Haraway points out in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), stories matter, and thus it also matters how we tell them. The ever-increasing attention given to voices and perspectives that challenge established canons and hegemonic discourses, both within and outside of academia, is gradually destabilizing the common notion of one central, linear narrative and creating space for narratives which thrive in complexity, multiplicity, and non-linearity. At the same time, contemporary artistic practices and emerging media platforms are producing new kinds of texts, thereby giving rise to new forms of storytelling. Ultimately, what is placed in the margins need no longer be marginal, yet it often nonetheless continues to be so. The process of marginalization, one might say, is not at all a marginal phenomenon. These last two statements prompt several critical questions. Who gets to tell the story of the margins? Who decides what is marginal? How is such marginalization established and perpetuated? How does the margin assert itself in relation to the center? Can we rethink the margins as not simply surrounding, but as irreducibly part of the text? Why should we be so preoccupied with the margins to begin with?

## **THEORETICAL UNDERCURRENTS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS**

For this issue, there were four major topics that we wanted to see the submitted articles address: new media, political activism, canons and epistemic justice, and the relation these subjects have to the broader context of the Anthropocene. These topics were the result of an extensive brainstorming session with the journal's editorial board, as well as our (Dennis and Mark's) own respective expertise and interests. We will treat each of them briefly here to raise some of the more pertinent questions that either explicitly or implicitly return throughout the entire issue.

### **'New' media and storytelling**

When considering the narrative affordances of contemporary and emerging digital media technologies, one sooner or later comes to reckon with the question of the 'new' and its decidedly relative nature (cf. Bolter and Grusin 1999; Gitelman 2006). What is it about these media that sets them apart from their predecessors and warrants an investigation into their storytelling capacities? The generally techno-optimistic discourses surrounding contemporary media (both in- and outside the walls of the university) suggest various potentials for the infrastructures of the internet and other digital media to offer drastically novel forms of expression and interaction. Subsequently, it has often been claimed that these media ought to change the ways we are able to (inter)act with(in) the world. On the possibility of videogames as facilitators of radical political action, popular media theorist Douglas Rushkoff says: 'I would place my renaissance bet on the gamers' perspective: the very notion that our world is open source, and that reality itself is up for grabs. For, more than anyone else, *a real gamer knows that we are the ones creating the rules*' (2009, 183; emphasis ours). But in this case, it is unclear who this real gamer' is, and it remains to be seen whether the supposed interactivity of videogames is enough to stir the gamer into action *beyond* their virtual environments. We cannot give in to the naïveté of assuming a level playing field; the users of digital media are not addressing reality from a divine viewpoint ('they fight as gods,' writes Rushkoff). Virtual reality is still born of *reality*, and our reality is far from an ideal space free of social oppression and economic inequality. The digital divide skews heavily in favor of white Western men, to the detriment of women, people of color, and the Global South. Unquestionably, there is a host of obstacles to overcome before we can speak of any kind of egalitarian participation in this sphere. Until then, even those narratives that could be qualified as genuinely novel and 'new' in form will tend to be mostly traditionalist and ethnocentric in their content.

This is not to say that we should give up on the transformative potential of digital media in the larger social sphere. However, just as with the advent of any media technology, the steps we must

take towards creating a space in which narrative diversity and inclusion can thrive cannot exist separately from efforts to change the structures that exist before and beyond these media. It is difficult to imagine that these are to be dissolved solely with the introduction of a new way of telling stories. With regards to the emancipatory faculties of digital media—the technologies themselves as tools for fighting inequality—it is clear that these alone are not sufficient for bringing about the kind of change they are often heralded as being capable of doing. For instance, a certain optimism was visible in 2011–12 around Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, when technologies like smartphones and social media like Twitter and Facebook were crucial tools that instigated and amplified these grassroots revolutionary movements. While this sentiment seemed—and to a large extent was, in fact—well placed, we also know that this period ended with the Occupy movement fizzling out, and that for the Arab uprisings the widespread use of mobile technologies and social media was no guarantee of success. Regarding the case of Egypt, digital media philosopher Robert Hassan argues: ‘A “collective individuation” of mainly young and tech-savvy protestors managed to topple Mubarak from the Egyptian presidency. But a lack of *real collectivity*, in terms of a coherent political project, meant that sustained political action beyond the short-term was impossible, and this permitted institutional-authoritarian power to reassert itself’ (2020, 180; original emphasis). The fiction of a quick fix of digital politics obscured the failure to build a sound *political* narrative. This pattern may be nothing new (minus the digital politics), but this in itself serves precisely the point at hand: new media cannot help but be forever implicated in and exploited by old systems. There is no such thing as a complete break. Still, in this issue the articles by Karli Brittz, Zeynep Naz Inansal, Mitchell van Vuren, and Lesley Verbeek offer ways in which new media may yet serve as instruments for reflection and emancipation.

### **Activism and marginalized narratives**

Still, it is neither our intention nor our place to dismiss the value of new narratives for political activism and media representation altogether. While the previous section argues that techno-optimism is misplaced, or rather requires qualification, we should not turn a blind eye to the myriad of ways in which marginalized peoples and various political convictions are already using these platforms to tell their own (new *and* old) stories. If we look at expanding political engagement, YouTube, for instance, has in recent years become one of the central sites where the so-called ‘culture wars’ take place. Over the past decade, a widespread network of conservative, anti-feminist, white nationalist, and otherwise (extreme) right-wing content creators has taken shape on the platform, creating a pipeline for far-right radicalization that Rebecca Lewis has termed the ‘Alternative Influence Network’ (cf. Lewis 2018). A notable response from the Left

has only begun to take shape over the past three years or so, in the form of a similarly loose network of progressive, anti-capitalist, and anarchist content creators that some have referred to as ‘BreadTube’, which borrows its name from Peter Kropotkin’s classic *The Conquest of Bread* (cf. Kuznetsov and Ismangil 2020). While such a response to the far-right content on the platform is certainly necessary, on the whole this digital form of praxis is again subject to many of the same pitfalls as before. Many of the most prominent left-wing voices on YouTube, such as Oliver Thorn and Harris Brewis are still cisgender white men, although the number of trans, non-binary, and queer creators is quickly growing. Some creators who are considered part of BreadTube, such as Natalie Wynn and Peter Coffin, have rejected the label specifically because of the rigid consumer culture and market logics that underlie its functioning. Moreover, the existence of a left-wing creator on a platform whose political economy is demonstrably hostile towards anti-capitalist and LGBTQ+ perspectives is a particularly precarious one; the tendency for sex-positive and otherwise progressive creators’ videos to get demonetized is but one example of that precarity. This can be discouraging for those looking to create content that is too radical to be marketable to a broad audience. Online praxis, too, is a fraught endeavour.

An older but recently popularized movement that has been continuously in the back of our minds while crafting this issue, mainly for its strong challenges to Eurocentric and modernistic narratives of progress, is Afrofuturism. Rooted in 1950s avant-garde jazz and Afrodiasporic speculative fiction, among other fields of art and criticism, the movement ‘aims to extend [the tradition of countermemory] by reorienting the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality towards the proleptic as much as the retrospective’ (Eshun 2003, 289). In other words, Afrofuturism is the critical revision of both historical and futurological narratives of Blackness by first locating the start of modernity with the transatlantic slave trade and subsequently attempting to imagine Afrodiasporic futures that move through and beyond the fundamental alienation that followed the apocalyptic traumas of slavery and apartheid. Nowadays, Afrofuturist themes are gaining widespread recognition through the music of artists like Janelle Monáe and Beyoncé, as well as through the success of Marvel’s 2018 blockbuster *Black Panther*. This, in turn, has incited increased academic attention to the movement—although we must remember that Afrofuturism was already part of the academy through critical race theory, cultural studies, and Black studies (cf. Capers 2019). What are the consequences of the rise to prominence of politically progressive movements for the academic theories that ought to contextualize, critique, and further advance those movements? How can we make sense of this mainstreaming of politically progressive figures and ideas, and how ‘progressive’ are they? In this issue, Zeynep Naz Inansal and Lucie Maraffa engage fruitfully with such questions.

A final example that illustrates how these questions might be dealt with by the university is the various forms of queer media that, like Afrofuturism (and sometimes in tandem with Afrofuturism, as demonstrated by Janelle Monáe's 2018 album *Dirty Computer*), are receiving much attention in- and outside the academy. Queer documentaries like the famous *Paris Is Burning* (1991) simultaneously offer new narratives from marginalized perspectives as well as new modes of storytelling by using their medium in ways that challenge the limits of that medium, for instance by emphasizing the 'intimate, sensory, and tactile experience' that cinema can offer (Geiger 2019, 14). On the side of digital media, we see that the contemporary upsurge of so-called 'queer games' is being accompanied quite closely by the establishing of a field of 'queer game studies'. Videogames that deal with LGBTQ+ lived experiences, intimacy, mental health, and identity typically find themselves studied through the joint lenses of queer theory and game studies, but videogames that deliberately break through rigid design conventions or narrative structures are also of interest to queer game scholars. Often-cited examples in this field include Anna Anthropy's *DysAia* (2012) and Zoë Quinn's *Depression Quest* (2013). Moreover, there are many efforts to blur and transgress the disciplinary boundaries between videogame design, criticism, and scholarship: critics and designers contribute to academic edited volumes (e.g. Ruberg and Shaw 2017), and the 'queer games avant-garde' (cf. Ruberg 2020) is happy to have their experiences documented and theorized by scholars as well. Notably, and in accordance with the best methodologies of queer theory, most of the scholars engaging in queer game studies themselves identify as queer or otherwise LGBTQ+. This indicates that it is indeed possible to conduct scholarship *about* marginalized people, as long as it never occurs *without* them. How the marginalized end up telling their own stories can be seen in the articles by Isabella D'Angelo, Lesley Verbeek, and Ditte Madsen.

### **Canons and epistemic (in)justice**

Another area in which we can see these problems of representation, accessibility, and epistemic injustice at work in relation to marginality is in the analysis of canons and canonicity. While it is clear that we should strive towards greater representation in this area, it is again important that this representation is just, and that it does not simply assimilate and dissolve hitherto marginalized voices into an idea of 'the canon' that itself affirms the structures and values that supported the subjugation of these voices in the first place. This is obviously, and unfortunately, not a new point. Take as an example Joan Bischoff's 1975 comparison of Toni Morrison to Henry James; at first glance, this was a statement of positive intent and a challenge to the accepted idea of who should be present in the canon, as Bischoff provided a clear justification to the academic sphere as to why Morrison, still early in her career, was deserving of attention on their terms. However, it is

these terms that are precisely the problem. We can see this when Bischoff writes of Morrison, 'Though her characters' problems are conditioned by the Black milieu of which she writes, her concerns are broader, universal ones' (quoted in Ponzanesi 2012, 35). Appealing to this universalism might obscure the particularity of the experience from which Morrison is writing; Sandra Ponzanesi highlights that such persistent analogies led Morrison to state, 'I am not like James Joyce, I am not like Thomas Hardy, I am not like Faulkner'. Such an appeal also implies that it is this supposedly 'universal' feature of the work alone that determines its value.

Justifying inclusion on these grounds inadvertently buys into an idea of canonicity that we find in traditional defenses of the canon, wherein the subjective and contingent historical factors that determine its formation are masked by the claim that a work is deemed canonical only in so far as it exemplifies some universal truth or timeless values that stand above any social, political or cultural influence (e.g. Bloom 1994). In maintaining this image of canonicity, the actual grounds of its formation are obscured, which in turn covers the subjective and contingent motivations for exclusion by those in positions of epistemic authority and power and imparts a dangerous sense of universal validity onto 'Western' values and identity. Unmasking this naturalized image of canonicity as something predicated on disinterested values reveals its exclusionary logic: an 'Other' defined by an imposed antithesis to this center, which perpetuates this relation by defining and asserting itself against this constructed exteriority. That which is positioned as antithetical to this center is thus seen to not exemplify its 'universal' values, creating an implicit justification for epistemic and material domination. In the words of Bill Readings: 'The injustice of centuries perpetrated in the name of the canon has been the product of a studied forgetting of the figural nature of the canon, and an assertion of the canon as a nature or an essence' (Readings 1989, 165). Arguing for greater representation and inclusion without questioning these well-entrenched criteria ultimately validates them as the standards for canonicity, and therefore does little to challenge the discriminatory values and unjust patterns of exclusion that have led to the myth of 'the Western canon' in the first place and the all-too-real material injustices that have resulted from it.

However, it would be difficult to jettison any notion of canonicity altogether; canons are in a certain sense unavoidable, as canonicity is arguably at its core simply what people in positions of epistemic authority and power take to be important to the study of a discipline or a cultural identity. Further to this, within an academic context, how we conceive of and relate to canons and canonicity (whether implicitly or explicitly) undoubtedly plays a role in shaping pedagogy and the directions of scholarly thought within the university today. We should therefore be critically aware of canonicity as a *process* that trends towards its own naturalization, and bear the

responsibility that comes with this, i.e. that such obscuration requires a continual active resistance and uncovering (for instance through the decolonization of curricula), and to give space to plurality and multiplicity without assimilation. Discussions of the relation of marginality to center, along with the related question of the possibility of producing speech emancipated from an order of discourse that has already imposed a relation of marginality, can be found in articles from Isabella D'Angelo and Lucie Maraffa.

### **Stories in/of the Anthropocene**

How do we tell the multitude of stories that dramatically come together in the era we now commonly term 'Anthropocene'? Its defining features—global warming, ecological destruction, and a host of other predictably terrible consequences of capital's drive towards infinite accumulation—challenge the limits of both our individual and collective imaginations. Global warming specifically has proven difficult to grasp due to its status as a 'hyperobject' (cf. Morton 2013); that is, the Anthropocene creates phenomena that paradoxically exceed the boundaries of anthropocentric understanding in terms of time and space. As philosopher Timothy Morton writes:

Some days, global warming fails to heat me up. It is strangely cool or violently stormy. My intimate sensation of prickling heat at the back of my neck is only a distorted print of the hot hand of global warming. I do not feel “at home” in the biosphere. Yet it surrounds me and penetrates me. [...] The more I know about global warming, the more I realize how pervasive it is. [...] *The more I struggle to understand hyperobjects, the more I discover that I am stuck to them.* They are all over me. They are me. (Morton 2013, 28; emphasis ours)

The central problem of the Anthropocene is simultaneously omnipresent and mostly invisible except when studied from very specific angles, and many currently hegemonic frames of reference prevent even well-intentioned actors from tackling it effectively. Morton suggests a strategy of radically interconnected 'ecological thought' (cf. Morton 2010) that would, for instance, remedy the tendency in environmental activism to conceive of "Nature" as an Other that needs to be saved from a human Self. While this mode of thinking is admirably progressive and anti-capitalist in its intentions, it also reproduces certain aspects of the '(white, Western, male) historical project' (Morton 2013, 4) that it precisely seeks to move away from. In tackling a crisis like global warming, caused primarily by *Western* efforts of colonization and industrialization, it is remarkable that Morton does not turn to very many Indigenous and other anti-colonial voices for demonstrations of what his 'ecology without Nature' might look like. For example, the values

of self-determination and restorative justice as practiced by native Hawaiians (cf. Sproat 2016) could be key features in thinking of ways to break out of the Anthropocenic prison, but they hardly feature in Morton's work.

Contrast this with Donna Haraway's writing, which has always drawn heavily from Indigenous experiences, projects, and thinking. For Haraway, most popular terms for the contemporary moment are insufficient; 'Anthropocene' mistakenly frames all of humankind as the culprit, and its Marxist alternative 'Capitalocene' emphasizes the role of major capitalist industries as the primary drives of global warming without attending to other modes of being. Instead, she proposes to formulate the challenges and stories of our time as the *Chthulucene*:

Specifically, unlike either the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen—yet. We are at stake to each other. Unlike the dominant dramas of Anthropocene and Capitalocene discourse, human beings are not the only important actors in the Chthulucene, with all other beings able simply to react. The order is reknitted: human beings are with and of the earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story. (Haraway 2016, 55)

There is no undue optimism in Haraway's Chthulucene story, nor is there paralyzing misanthropy. She crafts alliances between mythologies, sciences, species, and cultures to show that the different ways of 'becoming-with' required to meet the challenge of global warming are already present in some form or another. For instance, she narrates the troubled history of the Black Mesa region, a coal-rich group of mountains located in modern-day Arizona, and the Hopi and Navajo peoples who have lived there for centuries. The traumas of genocidal settler colonialism and the government-sanctioned takeover of the local mines by the American coal industry have fueled long-term conflicts between the Hopi and Navajo, as well as high rates of poverty and unemployment among the residents—not to mention the destruction and pollution of local ecosystems and water sources.

However, in her characteristically risky style of theorizing, Haraway also sees particular forms of resistance and healing arise from these harsh conditions. After the government's near-total destruction in the 1930s of the local population of Churro sheep, which were crucial to the Navajo's herding and weaving practices, a multispecies and multiethnic alliance of weavers, herders, sheep, scientists, and ranchers has slowly but surely been instigating a rebuilding of the Churro flocks. Many different issues revolve around this 'Navajo-Churro resurgence' (Haraway

2016, 95): cultural renewal, generational reunification, and ecological restoration to name just a few. Haraway highlights the complex entanglements that mark the path to a better Chthulucene and asks her readers not to give up hope just yet. Especially with the current COVID–19 pandemic and the accompanying social and economic crises, which have arguably been exacerbated or facilitated by the most destructive tendencies of global capitalism (cf. Ieven and Overwijk 2020), it is important to significantly broaden the scope of our potential alliances—political or otherwise. The stories we tell about ourselves and others, across cultures, species, and times, will play a critical role in making such alliances thinkable. Some such stories are made available for thought by Irene Alcubilla Troughton and Karli Brittz in this issue.

### WHAT IS THE MARGIN?

To conclude this introduction, we believe that some elaboration and critical reflection is required on our use of the term ‘margins’ and on its function in the title of this issue. We speak of ‘*storytelling in the margins*’ because we wanted a broad focus on narratives of all kinds without constraining ourselves or our submissions to the limits of narratology. We speak of ‘storytelling *in the margins*’, instead of ‘from’ or ‘about’, to facilitate a multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches to the margin. Finally, ‘storytelling in *the margins*’, to our minds, invokes broadly two meanings of the term: the margin as the space against which a body of text affirms its centrality, and the margin in its figurative sense as the edge of society and/or of philosophical thought. This ambiguity was quite deliberate, as it opens up questions about Self and Other, center and periphery, without delimiting too heavily the range of domains in which those kinds of hierarchical oppositions might be addressed. The result of this can be found in the previous section, and of course in the great variety of approaches taken in this issue’s eight articles. To our minds, the fact that many of those articles employ the metaphor so successfully demonstrates the applicability and usefulness of the margin as a leitmotif to begin with.

However, it is precisely in the degree to which this metaphor works, how the structural relations of marginality in their literal sense are acutely analogous to the margin in its figurative sense, that the limits of this metaphor become apparent. In the first article of this issue, which is an excellent theoretical discussion of Gayatri Spivak’s work on subaltern and marginal figures in literature, Isabella D’Angelo states that ‘the marginal position is internal to metropolitan internal colonization’, wherein ‘the marginal subject remains internal to a hierarchical structure based on a center/margin dichotomy, that subordinates the position of “margin” to that of “center”’. That is, in taking up the task of addressing marginality and marginalization in any field, we always risk perpetuating that same oppressive framework instead of breaking through it—as we have also

seen in our above discussion of canons and epistemic justice. This does not mean that an ethico-political engagement with the margins should *ignore* the conditions upon which that marginality is built. Rather, it prescribes a continual awareness of those very conditions and our own complicity in them, so that we may confront them critically and responsibly. This entails a process D'Angelo calls 'relational subjectivation': what is required for creating a space external to capitalism, where it *is* possible for the subaltern to speak, is not just a refusal by the oppressed to be assimilated into the center, but also an acknowledgement on the part of those who narrate and read their stories that they too have a responsibility to facilitate and recognize that refusal. The inherent danger in our use of the margin as a guiding metaphor, then, is that an uncaredful engagement with the resulting subject matter in this issue's contributions may end up reinforcing its marginalization rather than making space for those subjects to be heard on their own terms.

We felt it important to clearly explicate these limits, as it is only through doing so that we can now turn back to this idea of Storytelling in the Margins with the appropriate sense of responsibility. In that same spirit, we recognize our own complicity in their creation and dissemination—as the managing editors of a graduate journal, as the white, cisgender, masculine authors of the initial call for submissions, and as willing participants in the exploitative dynamics of Western academic publishing. (Moreover, as scholars who each occupy a field dominated by people who look like them: Dennis works within media studies, Mark in philosophy.) There is a clear and ironic paradox to be found in our positioning of the margins as a central nexus around which the entire issue revolves, and it is certainly true that by drawing these perspectives into what might be called an 'academic center' we are complicit in the perpetuation of the conditions that produce marginality in the first place. However, we hope that precisely in *reversing* that order it also becomes possible to think that entire order differently.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

For this issue of *Junctions*, we are happy to present no less than eight full articles that engage with the topic from a wide variety of perspectives. The overlaps between them are numerous: for instance, multiple of them are concerned with posthumanism and the work of Haraway to some extent. We hoped for many submissions that would take 'new' forms of media as their subject matter, and indeed more than half of them do so. There is a similar fulfilled hope for engagement with Afrofuturism—this can be found in two of the present articles. Finally, we were pleasantly surprised by the two articles that revolve around dis/ability and disability studies; a topic we had omitted in the original call for papers but that clearly warrants more attention than we gave it initially.

In ‘Subaltern and Marginal Figures in Literature’, Isabella D’Angelo moves through Gayatri Spivak’s various readings of postcolonial novels in order to clarify her distinction between *subalternity* and *marginality*. D’Angelo argues that through a process she calls ‘relational subjectivation’, literature becomes a medium in which there is a possibility for the subaltern subject to speak without being assimilated into the oppressive spaces of postcolonial capitalism.

Irene Alcubilla Troughton’s article ‘Recognizing the Anthropocene’ tackles the concept of recognition as it is used in the discourse on the Anthropocene. Troughton proposes an alternative understanding of non-human recognition, arguing that it is marked by a failed interpellation and is thus better understood through Jose Esteban Muñoz’s queer notion of ‘disidentification’, from which more vital and less anthropocentric ways of thinking non-human relations can emerge.

‘Dog Stories in the Digital Age’ by Karli Britz looks at so-called ‘dogstagram’, Instagram accounts that mainly or exclusively feature pictures of dogs, and argues that these are digital narratives of Harawayian ‘companion species relations’. Britz offers an extensive typology of the different kinds of companion stories being told by these accounts and argues that they do not only reflect but also actively participate in the shaping of contemporary human-dog relationships.

In ‘Re-figuring the Future Through 3D Printing Jinn’, Zeynep Naz Inansal explores the concept of ‘re-figuring’ as it is used by the Iranian multimedia artist Morehshin Allahyari in her project *She Who Sees the Unknown*. Inansal explores Allahyari’s aims and process regarding the application of this notion of re-figuration to these female figures from Middle Eastern folklore (i.e. jinn), using concepts from Donna Haraway, Afrofuturism and Counter-futurism in order to further elucidate how this refiguring becomes a tool of resistance for the artist.

In ‘Into the Arms of the Alien’, Lucie Maraffa juxtaposes the work of Valentin Mudimbe and Sun Ra, showing how these divergent approaches to thinking marginality are central to their respective ideas on the possibility of emancipated discourse from an imposed marginality. After showing how, for Mudimbe, liberation discourses are inescapably inscribed in the order from which they aim to come undone, Maraffa argues that Sun Ra finds emancipatory potential in this alterity, using senselessness as a discursive strategy from which his marginality becomes a means to subvert and desacralize the Western order of discourse.

‘Lucid Dreaming in Film Theatre’ by Mitchell van Vuren takes a trans-spatial approach to Ban Gi’s film *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, exploring the ways in which new technologies in film can be used to facilitate the creation of immersive transcultural spaces. Drawing together theories from Zhang Yingjin and Thomas Elsaesser, Van Vuren shows how the concept of trans-spatiality

offers an alternative way of theorizing film that sees the viewer as actively engaged in the filmic space, rather than as passively receiving.

In ‘Making the Invisible Visible’, Lesley Verbeek combines a theoretical repudiation of the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere, through Nancy Fraser’s notion of ‘subaltern counterpublics’, with a content analysis of three short films found on the independent platform Sproutflix. Verbeek shows that Sproutflix, an organization that works with people with intellectual development disabilities, challenges the ableism inherent to typical conceptions of the public sphere by bridging gaps between the experiences of disabled and non-disabled people.

Lastly, Ditte Madsen’s ‘A Voice in the Emptiness’ takes the reader through a variety of narrative strategies used to represent the often-inexpressible experiences of mental illness and neuroatypicality across different media forms. Madsen supplements the article’s primary case study, the play *4:48 Psychosis*, with a comic book and a popular Netflix series to elucidate how the former uses fragmented and repetitive speech to narrate the experience of severe depression.

In addition to these articles, we also present a book review of Tisa Wenger’s *Religious Freedom* by Wouter Kock. According to Kock, the book persuasively argues that freedom of religion in the US context has mainly served as a tool for legitimizing imperial, racial and coercive policies. However, he sharply observes that this valuable argument is built on relatively static categorizations of various ethnic and religious groups, and that it foregoes the role of religious conversion in the emancipation of some of those marginalized groups.

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