



AV

Komparatistik

Jahrbuch
der Deutschen Gesellschaft
für Allgemeine und Vergleichende
Literaturwissenschaft

2017

Aus dem Inhalt: Joachim Harst, Christian Moser, Linda Simonis: Languages of Theory. Introduction • Maria Boletsi: Towards a Visual Middle Voice. Crisis, Dispossession, and Spectrality in Spain's Hologram Protest • Peter Brandes: Poetics of the Bed. Narrated Everydayness as Language of Theory • Annette Simonis: Stephen Greenblatt and the Making of a New Philology of Culture • Dagmar Reichardt: Creating Notions of Transculturality. The Work of Fernando Ortiz and his Impact on Europe • Michael Eggers: Topics of Theory and the Rhetoric of Bruno Latour • Nicolas Pethes: Philological Paperwork. The Question of Theory within a Praxeological Perspective on Literary Scholarship • Achim Geisenhanslüke: Philological Understanding in the Era After Theory • Joachim Harst: Borges: Philology as Poetry • Regine Strätling: The ›Love of words‹ and the Anti-Philological Stance in Roland Barthes' »S/Z« • Markus Winkler: Genealogy and Philology • Christian Moser: Language and Liability in Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Origin of Culture and Society (Goguet, Smith, Rousseau) • Linda Simonis: The Language of Commitment. The Oath and its Implications for Literary Theory • Kathrin Schödel: Political Speech Acts? Jacques Rancière's Theories and a Political Philology of Current Discourses of Migration • Helmut Pillau: »Ein großer weltlicher Staatsmann wider alle Wahrscheinlichkeiten.« Gertrud Kolmar und Jean-Clément Martin über Robespierre • Pauline Preisler: Die abstrakte Illustration. Paul Klees »Hoffmanneske Märchenszene« und E. T. A. Hoffmanns »Der Goldene Topf« • Nachruf, Rezensionen.

Komparatistik 2017



AISTHESIS VERLAG



ISBN 978-3-8498-1292-8
ISSN 1432-5306

AV

Komparatistik

Jahrbuch
der Deutschen Gesellschaft
für Allgemeine und Vergleichende
Literaturwissenschaft

2017

Herausgegeben im Auftrag des Vorstands
der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Allgemeine
und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft
von Joachim Harst, Christian Moser und Linda Simonis

AISTHESIS VERLAG

Bielefeld 2018



ICLA2016

VIENNA

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation
in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische
Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Redaktion: Joachim Harst

© Aisthesis Verlag Bielefeld 2018
Postfach 10 04 27, D-33504 Bielefeld
Satz: Germano Wallmann, www.geisterwort.de
Druck: docupoint GmbH, Magdeburg
Alle Rechte vorbehalten

ISBN 978-3-8498-1292-8
ISSN 1432-5306
www.aisthesis.de

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Joachim Harst / Christian Moser / Linda Simonis Vorwort	9
NACHRUF	
Sandro Moraldo Komparatist mit Leidenschaft – Nachruf auf Remo Ceserani	11
THEMENSCHWERPUNKT: THE LANGUAGES OF THEORY	
Joachim Harst, Christian Moser, Linda Simonis Languages of Theory. Introduction	15
Maria Boletsi Towards a Visual Middle Voice. Crisis, Dispossession, and Spectrality in Spain's Hologram Protest	19
Peter Brandes Poetics of the Bed. Narrated Everydayness as Language of Theory	37
Annette Simonis Stephen Greenblatt and the Making of a New Philology of Culture	53
Dagmar Reichardt Creating Notions of Transculturality. The Work of Fernando Ortiz and his Impact on Europe	67
Michael Eggers Topics of Theory and the Rhetoric of Bruno Latour	83
Nicolas Pethes Philological Paperwork. The Question of Theory within a Praxeological Perspective on Literary Scholarship	99
Achim Geisenhanslüke Philological Understanding in the Era After Theory	113

Joachim Harst	
Borges: Philology as Poetry	123
Regine Strätling	
The ‘Love of words’ and the Anti-Philological Stance in Roland Barthes’ <i>S/Z</i>	139
Markus Winkler	
Genealogy and Philology	153
Christian Moser	
Language and Liability in Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Origin of Culture and Society (Goguet, Smith, Rousseau)	163
Linda Simonis	
The Language of Commitment. The Oath and its Implications for Literary Theory	185
Kathrin Schödel	
Political Speech Acts? Jacques Rancière’s Theories and a Political Philology of Current Discourses of Migration	201

WEITERE BEITRÄGE

Helmut Pillau	
„Ein großer weltlicher Staatsmann wider alle Wahrscheinlichkeiten.“ Gertrud Kolmar und Jean-Clément Martin über Robespierre	221
Pauline Preisler	
Die abstrakte Illustration. Paul Klees <i>Hoffmanneske Märchenscene</i> und E. T. A. Hoffmanns <i>Der Goldene Topf</i>	245

REZENSIONEN

Markus Schleich, Jonas Nesselhauf. <i>Fernsehserien. Geschichte, Theorie, Narration</i> (Kathrin Ackermann-Pojtinger)	263
<i>Primitivismus intermedial.</i> (von Björn Bertrams)	266
Julia Bohnengel. <i>Das gegessene Herz. Eine europäische Kulturgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert: Herzmärs – Le cœur mangé – Il cuore mangiato – The eaten heart</i> (von Albert Gier)	270

<i>Funktionen der Fantastik. Neue Formen des Weltbezugs von Literatur und Film nach 1945</i> (von Eva Gillhuber)	276
Solvejg Nitzke. <i>Die Produktion der Katastrophe. Das Tunguska-Ereignis und die Programme der Moderne</i> (von Stephanie Heimgartner)	280
Claudia Lillge. <i>Arbeit. Eine Literatur- und Mediengeschichte Großbritanniens</i> (von Julia Hoydis)	282
Paul Strohmaier. <i>Diesseits der Sprache. Immanenz als Paradigma in der Lyrik der Moderne (Valéry, Montale, Pessoa)</i> (von Milan Herold)	285
<i>Neue Realismen in der Gegenwartsliteratur</i> (von Michael Navratil)	288
Steffen Röhrs. <i>Körper als Geschichte(n). Geschichtsreflexionen und Körperdarstellungen in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur (1981-2012)</i> (von Jonas Nesselhauf)	294
<i>Theorie erzählen. Raconter la théorie. Narrating Theory. Fiktionalisierte Literaturtheorie im Roman</i> (von Beatrice Nickel)	296
<i>Extreme Erfahrungen. Grenzen des Erlebens und der Darstellung</i> (von Solvejg Nitzke)	299
<i>Spielräume und Raumspiele in der Literatur</i> (von Eckhard Lobsien)	302
Melanie Rohner. <i>Farbbekennnisse. Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Max Frischs Stiller und Homo faber</i> (von Iulia-Karin Patrut)	306
Christian Moser/Regine Strätling (Hg.). <i>Sich selbst aufs Spiel setzen. Spiel als Technik und Medium von Subjektivierung</i> (von Laetitia Rimpau)	311
<i>Die Renaissancen des Kitsch</i> (von Franziska Thiel)	318
Reinhard M. Möller. <i>Situationen des Fremden. Ästhetik und Reiseliteratur im späten 18. Jahrhundert</i> (von Sandra Vlasta)	323
Michael Eggers. <i>Vergleichendes Erkennen. Zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Epistemologie des Vergleichs und zur Genealogie der Komparatistik</i> (von Carsten Zelle)	327
<i>Nach Szondi. Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965-2015</i> (von Carsten Zelle)	333
<i>The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Berlin</i> (von Gianna Zocco)	336

BUCHVORSTELLUNG

Sabine Mainberger/Esther Ramharter (Hg.): <i>Linienwissen und Liniendenken</i>	343
Beiträgerinnen und Beiträger der Ausgabe 2017	346

Maria Boletsi

Towards a Visual Middle Voice

Crisis, Dispossession, and Spectrality in Spain's Hologram Protest

There is perhaps no other word that dominates newspaper headlines, newscasts, and political rhetoric in contemporary Europe more than “crisis.” The omnipresence of ‘crisis’ is not a novel phenomenon. According to Reinhart Koselleck, the idea of crisis, especially since the second half of the eighteenth century, becomes the “structural signature” of modernity.¹ Yet, since the start of the new millennium, the feeling of living in crisis has been amplified: the fear of others in the West since the attacks on September 11, 2001, the fear of terrorism that has been exacerbated in Europe in light of recent attacks, the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, the Eurozone crisis and the ongoing refugee crisis since 2015, have forged a ubiquitous climate of crisis. This sense of crisis has been instrumentalized to legitimize states of emergency and repressive politics, anti-immigration policies, practices of biopolitical control, restrictions to citizens’ rights, and austerity politics. “The concept ‘crisis,’” Giorgio Agamben said in an interview, is now “a motto of modern politics, and for a long time it has been part of normality in any segment of social life.”²

For the ancient Greeks, the term ‘crisis’ (κρίσις/*krísis*) functioned in the domains of law, medicine, and theology, where it designated “choices between stark alternatives—right or wrong, salvation or damnation, life or death.”³ In the classical Greek context, crisis signified both an “objective crisis” (a decisive point “that would tip the scales,” particularly in politics) and “subjective critique” (a judgment in the sense of “criticism” but also in the juridical sense of “trial” or “legal decision”). *Crisis* as judgment assumes a theological dimension in the Greek translation of the Bible: as God becomes the judge of his people, the term is invested with the “promise of salvation” but also with “apocalyptic expectations” in the “Final Judgment” (Τελική Κρίσις/*Teliké Krísis*).⁴ In the term’s medical meaning, crisis denoted both a medical condition (the illness) as well as the judgment about the illness (the diagnosis).⁵

1 Reinhart Koselleck. “Crisis.” Trans. Michaela W. Richter. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.2 (2006), pp. 357–400, p. 372.

2 Giorgio Agamben. “The Endless Crisis As an Instrument of Power: In Conversation with Giorgio Agamben.” *Verso Blog* (June 4, 2013). n.pag. <<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1318-the-endless-crisis-as-an-instrument-of-power-in-conversation-with-georgio-agamben>> (accessed June 16, 2016). The original interview was published in German with the title “Die endlose Krise ist ein Machtinstrument” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (May 24, 2013).

3 Koselleck. “Crisis” (note 1), p. 358. This applies to classical Greece, the Hellenistic era, early Christian and Roman contexts.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 358–360.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 360.

These early meanings of crisis resonate in the term's present uses. Nevertheless, our common understanding of crisis today deviates from the word's original meaning in a decisive way. While crisis signified judgment and decision, "the present understanding of crisis," Agamben says, "refers to an enduring state," "extended into the future, indefinitely," but "divorced from the idea of resolution."⁶ "Today crisis," Agamben continues, "has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision."⁷ Like coffee without caffeine, this understanding of crisis is deprived of its defining feature—choice and decision.

This withholding of choice is demonstrated by uses of the crisis rhetoric to promote "a *politics without an alternative, a politique unique*"⁸, exemplified by the so-called "TINA doctrine" (acronym for "There Is No Alternative")—a slogan first used in the early 1990s by Thatcher and other politicians to indicate the lack of an alternative model to neoliberalism. As political philosopher Athena Athanasiou puts it,

Through the doctrine of TINA ("There Is No Alternative"), neoliberalism is established as the only rational and viable mode of governance. Predicated upon this doctrine, discourses of crisis become a way to governmentally produce and manage (rather than deter) the crisis. "Crisis" becomes a perennial state of exception that turns into a rule and common sense and thus renders critical thinking and acting redundant, irrational, and ultimately unpatriotic.⁹

A contemporary implementation of this doctrine is palpable, for example, in the context of the Eurozone crisis, during which austerity politics in Greece, Spain, and other crisis-stricken countries were defended in dominant rhetoric as a 'one-way street' without alternative.¹⁰

As a legitimizing mechanism for a doctrine of 'no alternatives,' crisis rhetoric tends to rely on distinctions between 'right' and 'wrong' that often turn political decisions into pseudo-choices between a legitimate and an illegitimate (even catastrophic) alternative. This binary logic also pervades the ways subjects are cast in this rhetoric as either active or passive, guilty or innocent, masters or victims. In a previous article, I showed how this logic takes shape in constructions of the Greek subject in moralizing narratives on the Greek debt crisis: as either guilty and responsible for their country's plight due to 'bad conduct' or

6 Agamben. "The Endless Crisis As an Instrument of Power" (note 2), n.pag.

7 Ibid.

8 Alain Badiou. *The Century*. Cambridge, UK/Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007, p. 4.

9 Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou. *Dispossession: The Political in the Performative*. Cambridge, UK/Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, p. 149.

10 For the meanings and climate of crisis, as delineated in the first three paragraphs of this article, see Maria Boletsi. "The Unbearable Lightness of Crisis: (Anti-)Utopia and Middle Voice in Sotiris Dimitriou's *Close to the Belly*." *Greece in Crisis: The Cultural Politics of Austerity*. Ed. Dimitris Tziouvas. London/New York: I. B. Tauris 2017, pp. 259-261.

as passive, impotent victims of a corrupt political system and of structural forces beyond their control.¹¹ The rhetorical reliance on the oppositions of passive/active or victims/perpetrators extends to several contexts of ‘crisis’ in Europe today, as I will show. Against the backdrop of the crisis rhetoric and the monologic narratives and dualistic distinctions it produces, the need for alternative forms of expression is amplified. In this article, I make a case for the *middle voice* as an expressive modality that can introduce alternative ‘grammars’ of subjectivity and agency to those on which dominant crisis rhetoric hinges.

As a distinct grammatical category in which the subject remains inside the action and is affected by it, the middle voice has vanished in modern languages. However, since the 1970s, poststructuralist thinkers have renewed interest in the middle voice by theorizing it as a *discursive mode* that unsettles dualisms and carries crucial implications for subject constitution. Building on a previous article, in which I explored mobilizations of the middle voice in wall-writings in Greece since the onset of the Greek crisis, here I explore the possibility of a *visual middle voice* as a critical response to crisis rhetoric.¹²

To that end, I center on a peculiar public protest in front of the Spanish Parliament in Madrid in April 2015, opposing a (then) newly introduced Spanish law—the “Law of Citizen Security”—which significantly restricted the citizens’ freedom of assembly and expression in the name of security and crisis-management. Unlike any other protest, this one was not carried out by actual people, but by holographic projections of protesters. This ‘hologram protest’ put forward a form of dispossession, whereby bodies asserted presence in public space through their absence. Unsettling the boundaries between fiction and reality, materiality and immateriality, power and impotence, past and present, the protest fostered a spectral space that functioned as a visual analogue of the middle voice. The spectral subjectivity that this ‘ghost march’ enacted, both underscored and challenged politically induced conditions of dispossession and precarity, through and against these conditions. As a result, the protest recast *crisis* as a critical threshold from which alternative narratives of the present and the future can emerge.

1. Crisis Rhetoric and Subjectivity

The politics of ‘no alternative’ was a product of the political climate following the end of the Cold War. As Western neoliberal capitalism, led by the U.S., established its global hegemony, several liberal thinkers welcomed this professed post-political era in which there would be no need for alternatives, as the best possible model, it seemed, had acquired license to rule globally. In the West today,

11 See Maria Boletsi. “From the Subject of the Crisis to the Subject in Crisis: Middle Voice on Greek Walls.” *The Journal of Greek Media & Culture* 2.1 (2016), pp. 3-28, esp. pp. 8-11.

12 The present article draws from, and extends, the theoretical framework developed in Boletsi. “From the Subject of the Crisis to the Subject in Crisis” (note 11), pp. 3-28.

after two collapsed towers, major riots, terrorist attacks, financial crises, and the ongoing refugee crisis, this liberal optimism would not stand ground. Yet, to a large extent, dominant political rhetoric in Europe seeks to sustain the TINA-doctrine. The neoliberal model may not carry the optimism it did in the early 1990s, but crisis rhetoric tends to cast any alternative as a catastrophic option, thereby deterring contestations of the current model. As Chantal Mouffe argues, this mode of thinking also affects many people on the left, who

are beginning to doubt the possibility of an alternative to the neoliberal model which has been the driving force in the construction of the EU. The EU is increasingly perceived as being an intrinsically neoliberal project that cannot be reformed. Because it appears futile to try to transform its institutions, the only solution that remains is to exit. Such a pessimistic view is, no doubt, the result of the way in which all attempts to challenge the prevalent neoliberal rules are presented as anti-European attacks on the very existence of the Union.¹³

Criticizing the monologic discourse of neoliberalism or proposing alternatives is usually equaled to Euroscepticism or anti-Europeanism, Mouffe observes. Many critiques of the current political model in the EU are indeed integrated in Euroscepticist and nationalistic restorative projects, with the Brexit campaign in the UK as a striking example. Mouffe therefore pleads for creating conditions that would allow democratic contestations of the neoliberal hegemony within the EU without abandoning the project of the European Union.¹⁴

Crisis rhetoric may facilitate the minimization of political dissent and *choice* in contemporary politics, yet it certainly does not deter *judgment*—another meaning of “crisis” in Greek. On the contrary, to use a telling example, popular rhetoric on the Greek debt crisis in Greece and Western Europe largely revolves around the passing of judgment through finger-pointing.¹⁵ Debates about the causes of this crisis in the international and Greek media regularly took the form of a “blame-game”—a catchphrase widely employed by politicians and journalists in this context. Popular narratives of the crisis in Greece and the Eurozone may disagree on the identity of the guilty. But despite their differing *crisis* (judgment), they usually cast the Greeks either as responsible for their country’s dire state due to their faulty, unreliable character and habits or, to a lesser extent, as passive victims of either the shortcomings of the Greek state or the Eurozone, or of the violent forces of neoliberal capitalism. Narratives of this crisis were often divided between these two accounts of the subject as either the origin and cause of its own suffering due to bad conduct or the disempowered victim of external forces. These accounts drew from conventional accounts of subjectivity: the former was premised on the notion of the sovereign, autonomous, self-defining

13 Chantal Mouffe. “An Agonistic Approach to the Future of Europe.” *New Literary History* 43.4 (2012), pp. 629-640, p. 637.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 638.

15 For this practice of finger-pointing and literary responses to it, see Boletsi. “The Unbearable Lightness of Crisis” (note 10), pp. 261-263.

liberal subject and the latter on a notion of the subject as determined and conditioned by social or historical forces.¹⁶

Popular rhetoric on the Eurozone crisis favored clear-cut distinctions between perpetrators and victims, guilty and innocent, or—echoing the medical meaning of crisis—doctors and sick patients (the latter being the crisis-stricken Southern European countries, or so-called “PIGS”).¹⁷ Such polarizing hierarchical pairs worked to widen the rift between the European North and South. However, the reliance of crisis rhetoric on monolithic notions of subjectivity along the lines of active/passive extends well beyond the context of the Greek or the Eurozone crisis the discursive framing of several recent phenomena that are cast as ‘crises.’ Another case in point is the European rhetoric on migrants and refugees, especially since the ‘refugee crisis’ broke out in 2015, with millions of people from Syria, but also Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sub-Saharan Africa having to flee their countries and trying to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean. Refugees are constructed either as active agents or as passive victims, leaving little room for more complex subject positions. When projected as active agents, the implication is that they are potentially dangerous to European societies. When framed as helpless victims, they appear in need of saving and devoid of agency.

The recent rekindling of the figure of the *barbarian invasions* in references to refugees storming the ‘gates’ of Europe exemplifies their framing as active—and threatening—agents. Comparisons between the fall of the Roman Empire and the current refugee influx do not only figure regularly in the press, but are also issued by prominent European politicians. In September 2015, President of the French National Front (FN) party Marine Le Pen likened the refugee crisis to a threatening “migrant invasion” like those of the fourth century¹⁸ and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte called in November 2015 for protecting Europe’s borders in order to avoid a downfall similar to Rome’s.¹⁹ In both statements, Syrian refugees fleeing a devastating civil war were constructed as potentially destructive agents through a comparison with Rome’s invaders.²⁰

16 Cf. Boletsi. “From the Subject of the Crisis to the Subject in Crisis” (note 11), pp. 8-11.

17 The acronym PIGS stands for Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain.

18 Le Pen qtd. in Marc de Boni. “Marine Le Pen compare la crise des migrants à la chute de l’empire romain.” *Le Figaro* (Sept 15, 2015), n.pag. <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/citations/2015/09/15/25002-20150915ARTFIG00111-marine-le-pen-compare-la-crise-des-migrants-a-la-chute-de-l-empire-romain.php>> (accessed Aug 30, 2016).

19 Pieter Spiegel. “Refugee Influx Threatens Fall of EU, Warns Dutch PM.” *Financial Times* (Nov 26, 2015), n.pag. <<https://www.ft.com/content/659694fe-9440-11e5-b190-291e94b77c8f>> (accessed Aug 20, 2016).

20 For a discussion of these statements and the rekindling of the *barbarian invasions* narrative in the West, see Maria Boletsi. “Crisis, Terrorism, and Post-Truth: Processes of Othering and Self-Definition in the Culturalization of Politics.” *Subjects Barbarian, Monstrous, and Wild: Encounters in the Arts and Contemporary Politics*. Ed. Maria Boletsi and Tyler Sage. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018, pp. 17-50, p. 18.

Such comparisons exacerbate the sense of living in crisis and under the threat of imminent attacks.

Attempts to counter such stereotypical portrayals of refugees have certainly also claimed a place in public debates. Yet such attempts often replace the vocabulary of the active (and potentially dangerous) subject with a conception of subjectivity *in the passive voice*, which, by removing the threatening dimension, invalidates the agency of these others. In a July 2015 issue, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* used a series of six different covers, each figuring a portrait of a refugee, in an attempt to foreground the issue of Germany's reception of refugees. By giving refugees a face, these covers aimed to counter the fear of others and the negative bias against refugees in Germany in light of the increase in the number of refugees seeking asylum in the country. The problem the magazine addressed was xenophobia, as we read in the cover's subtitle: "Fremdenhass vergiftet Deutschland" (Hate for foreigners poisons Germany). The six refugee portraits on the cover were framed by titles that contrasted *stereotypes* (explicitly questioned through the use of a question mark) with the (suggested) *truth* behind those stereotypes: "Habgierig? Hungrig" (Greedy? Hungry); "Ungebildet? Unterdrückt" (Uneducated? Oppressed); "Bedrohlich? Bedroht" (Threatening? Threatened); "Kriminell? Verfolgt" (Criminal? Hunted); "Gefährlich? Gepeinigt" (Dangerous? Tormented); "Raffgierig? Arm" (Greedy? Poor).²¹

In nearly all these contrasts that were framed as 'misconception versus truth,' the first terms are indicative of active, autonomous subjects that should either be feared ("threatening," "criminal," "dangerous") or morally despised ("greedy"). Without exception, the second terms sketch passive subjects in need: most of these terms are past participles that imply a passive voice construction (oppressed, threatened, hunted, tormented). The grammar and semantic content of these terms dictates that these are passive subjects, not responsible for their plight, but also not able to act autonomously in order to change their fate. They thus need to be helped and saved. In this binary scheme of subjectivity that follows the grammar of the active versus passive voice, alternative frameworks of understanding through different grammars of subjectivity are precluded. Therefore, even attempts to overturn negative stereotypes, commendable as they may be, are often restricted by the distinctions of the dominant crisis rhetoric.

By discussing differentiated contexts and challenges in contemporary Europe under the rubric of "crisis rhetoric," my intent is not to collapse the particularities of these contexts by reducing them to interchangeable illustrations of the same phenomenon. However, insofar as the concept 'crisis' forms an overarching framework that envelops different aspects of our political and social realities today, juxtaposing the mobilizations of 'crisis' in the above-discussed contexts may help untangle the overlapping discursive premises in diverse manifestations of crisis rhetoric. European crisis rhetoric may take different shapes, but my hypothesis is that it largely assigns subject positions following the modality of either the active or the passive voice. In the following, I explore alternative conceptualizations of the subject inspired by the mode of the middle

21 From the covers of *Der Spiegel* 31 (July 25, 2015). My translation from the German.

voice, which confounds distinctions between passive and active or mastery and victimhood.

2. Middle Voice: From a Grammatical Category to a Mode of Discourse²²

In his study of the middle voice in 1950, Émile Benveniste argued that the triple division in ancient Greek between passive/middle/active was premised on an earlier distinction between active and middle, with the passive voice being just a modality of the middle voice. The basis for this distinction was the relation between the subject and the process designated by the verb: in the active, the process is accomplished outside the subject, while in the middle, the subject is inside the process and affected by it.²³ Although the middle voice as a grammatical category has disappeared in most modern languages, theorists such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Hayden White, and Dominick LaCapra conceptualized a discursive analogue of the middle voice, exploring its theoretical potential in relation to active and passive constructions.

In the writings of Barthes, Derrida, and White, the middle voice denotes an area of undecidability that resists binary oppositions, such as those between transitive and intransitive or active and passive.²⁴ In Derrida, the middle voice is inextricable from his notion of *différance*: it is the operation repressed by the opposition of the active and the passive voice, and, by extension, the in-between that any conceptual binary represses:

in the usage of our language the ending *-ance* remains undecided *between* the active and the passive. And we will see why that which lets itself be designated *différance* is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like, the middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these terms. For the middle voice, a certain non-transitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outset, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by means of this repression.²⁵

22 The exposition of the middle voice in this section is drawn from Boletsi. "From the Subject of Crisis to the Subject in Crisis" (note 11), pp. 11-13 (here slightly modified and abridged).

23 Émile Benveniste. "Active and Middle Voice in the Verb." *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971, p. 148; and Vincent Pecora. "Ethics, Politics, and the Middle Voice." *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991), pp. 203-230, p. 210.

24 Dominick LaCapra. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 20.

25 Jacques Derrida. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 9.

If Western metaphysics has repressed the grammar of the middle voice by redistributing it into active and passive constructions, thinkers like Derrida rekindled it as a theoretical and political concept. As LaCapra writes, “[t]he middle voice would thus be the ‘in-between’ voice of undecidability and the unavailability or radical ambivalence of clear-cut oppositions.”²⁶ The “zone of indetermination” that the middle voice fosters pertains to the distinction between passive and active, but also, as Agamben shows, to the relation “between subject and object,” since “the agent is in some way also object and place of action.”²⁷ This raises the question of agency: if the middle voice hinders a clear-cut assignation of passive or active positions and even obscures the subject-object distinction, where does agency in speech lie, and how can we assign responsibility for words or actions?

In Benveniste’s account of the middle voice, Vincent Pecora observes, “the crucial grammatical issue is *where* agency is located with reference to process.”²⁸ In the middle voice, Benveniste writes, “the subject is the center as well as the agent of the process, he achieves something which is being achieved in him.”²⁹ Not all linguists, however, endorse this emphasis on the subject as agent in the middle voice. The primary meaning of the Indo-European middle voice, Jan Gonda claims, was to render an “event which occurs with respect to, rather than because of, the entity encoded as subject”; an event, that is, that usually does not result “from the subject’s volitional effort” and involves “a non-agent subject.”³⁰ The subject, in other words, participates in, and is affected by the event, but is not necessarily the agent causing it.

In his critical response to Barthes’ account of the middle voice, Jean-Pierre Vernant relates the disappearance of the middle voice in the West with the evolution in Western thinking of “the idea of the human subject as agent, the source of actions, creating them, assuming them, carrying responsibility for them;” this “category of the will” and the “idea of the agent being the *source* of his action” is missing from thought in Greek and ancient Indo-European languages that use the middle voice.³¹ Thus, if many linguists see middle voice constructions as *effacing* agency, this may be because they subscribe to a Western conception of agency as the intentional action of a willing subject. The middle voice, however, may enable other forms of agency, which challenge the idea of the sovereign subject as the origin and cause of its actions.

26 LaCapra. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (note 24), p. 20.

27 Giorgio Agamben. *The Use of Bodies*. Trans. Adam Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015, p. 28.

28 Vincent Pecora. “Ethics, Politics, and the Middle Voice” (note 23), p. 211.

29 Benveniste. “Active and Middle Voice in the Verb” (note 23), p. 149; also qtd. in Pecora. “Ethics, Politics, and the Middle Voice” (note 23), p. 211.

30 Gonda presented in Linda J. Manney. *Middle Voice in Modern Greek: Meaning and Function of an Inflectional Category*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000, p. 23.

31 Vernant’s response to Barthes, included in Roland Barthes. “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?” *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*. Ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972, pp. 134-156, p. 152.

3. Ghost March

On April 10, 2015, a demonstration took place in front of the Spanish Parliament in Madrid. Instead of people, the protest was held by holographic projections of protesters, constituting the first virtual protest in history. This ‘ghost march’ was organized by “No Somos Delito” (We Are Not Crime), a platform comprising over one hundred associations, including lawyers, migrant rights groups, environmental and human rights organizations, and several groups associated with the 15-M movement in Spain. The 15-M, also known as the *Indignados Movement*, emerged in 2011 from the social discontent following the financial crisis in Spain. The movement opposed the government’s anti-austerity policies through large-scale protests and occupations of public spaces as well as through digital platforms and social media.³² In March 2015, the ruling People’s party in Spain passed the so-called “Law of Citizen Security” in an attempt to limit public protest and consolidate control of public space. The hologram protest was directed against this law, which restricted the people’s rights of freedom of assembly and expression. The law imposed exorbitant fines for disseminating images or videos of law enforcement officers during protests, for unauthorized protests near key infrastructure, and for convening near government buildings, making it illegal to assemble or demonstrate in front of such buildings without permission from authorities.³³ The law was pejoratively dubbed “Ley Mordaza” (Gag Law) by its critics and was widely condemned within Spain and internationally.

“No Somos Delito” (NSD) carried out the hologram demonstration with the support of a media professionals, which saw the new law as part of the government’s attempt to limit democratic freedoms, criminalize protest, and control the movement of bodies in public space. For months before the protest, NSD run the website “Holograms for Freedom” (hologramasporlalibertad.org), where people could upload written comments, voice-messages, or images of their faces, many of which were later incorporated in the protest that was filmed and projected. About 18.000 people left a hologram image or message on the website.³⁴ The protest was filmed in a small town close to Madrid, and on April 10, 2015, the protesters were projected as holograms in front of the Parliament. Members of the press taking interviews from NSD activists also appeared in real time as holograms on another screen.³⁵

32 See Almudena Escobar López. “Invisible Participation: The Hologram Protest in Spain.” *Afterimage* 43.4 (2016), pp. 8-11, p. 8.

33 For an outline of the sanctions this law involved, see Ashifa Kassam. “Spain Puts ‘Gag’ on Freedom of Expression As Senate Approves Security Law.” *The Guardian* (March 12, 2015), n.pag. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/12/spain-security-law-protesters-freedom-expression>> (accessed June 10, 2017).

34 López. “Invisible Participation” (note 32), pp. 9-10; Cristina Flesher Fominaya and Andrea Teti. “Spain’s Hologram Protests.” *Open Democracy* (April 22, 2015), n.pag. <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cristina-flesher-fominaya-andrea-teti/spain's-hologram-protests>> (accessed June 10, 2017).

35 López. “Invisible Participation” (note 32), p. 10.

The “Gag Law” exemplifies the instrumentalization of ‘crisis’ as a means of minimizing critique. The governmentality of ‘crisis,’ which legitimizes authoritarian measures and securitarian power, enabled such a law to pass under the name “Law of Citizen Security.” If “the discourse of ‘crisis’ is already a way to ‘manage’ the crisis,”³⁶ this law was a sovereign gesture aimed at foreclosing dissent by (quite literally) closing the space in which dissent could take place. Outsmarting this attempt, the hologram protest used a new hybrid discourse in mixed media (image, language, sound) to introduce a spectral subjectivity, in-between the real and the fictional, presence and absence, which turned *dispossession*—given that holographic subjects are dispossessed of their bodies—into a form of political agency.

4. Between Fiction and Reality

The authorities only allowed this protest to take place because it was announced as a film-shoot by NSD, not as a public demonstration; hence, a *representation* of a protest, framed as film, art, fiction. As Cristina Fleisher Fominaya, spokesperson for NSD, stated, “[w]e were only able to do it because we got a film shoot permit. Protesting in front of parliament is forbidden [...] so a protest permit would not have worked.”³⁷ The protest could only be realized under the guise of fiction.

In J. L. Austin’s speech act theory, which explores the ability of language to perform acts through words, speech acts in fictional settings are considered non-serious and therefore not worth taking into account as instances of linguistic performativity. Austin famously excludes fiction from his theory:

A performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy. [...] Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use [...].³⁸

Extending this rationale to the visual realm, the representation of a protest in film would not be perceived as a serious act—i. e., an *actual* protest—just as an actor’s promise on stage, in Austin’s view, would not be a serious speech act. Austin’s use of the words “hollow” and “void” to describe fictional, non-serious acts finds ironic resonance in the holographic figures.

The non-seriousness of literature and art as fictional modes of expression purportedly hollows out their political potential, making them less threatening to hegemonic power. The organizers of the protest capitalized on this preconception in order to ironize state discourse and circumvent its restrictions. If ‘serious’ activities (such as protests or assemblies) are prohibited, fiction (be it in

36 Butler in Butler and Athanasiou. *Dispossession* (note 9), p. 150.

37 Fleisher and Teti. “Spain’s Hologram Protests” (note 34), n.pag.

38 J. L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 22.

literature, film or other art forms) retains its freedom—the freedom, to use Derrida’s phrasing, to “say everything” (“tout dire”) “in every way” or, in this case, to show everything.³⁹ For Derrida, literature’s freedom gives it the power to “defy or lift the law” and thus allows “one to think the essence of the law.”⁴⁰ Using this freedom to defy the state’s new legislation, the protest addressed the ways this law curtailed democratic freedoms.

Derrida acknowledges that literature’s freedom is double-edged: a “powerful political weapon but one which might immediately let itself be neutralized as a fiction. This revolutionary power can become very conservative.”⁴¹ The ability of literature and art to intervene in political and social realities can be mitigated due to their fictional status—their non-seriousness. The hologram protest’s differing reception by local and international media reflects this double-edged political potential of fiction. In the Spanish media the event did not attract much attention; when it was covered, the media reduced its significance “by transforming it into a minor entertainment anecdote.”⁴² Without addressing its critical or political content, they focused on its technical innovation and its entertainment value as a spectacle.⁴³ However, international media covered it extensively as a political intervention: “It was on the front page of *Le Monde* as ‘The Story of the Day,’ in the *Independent* and the *New Yorker*, and on CNN” and the event’s coverage sparked international criticism of Spain’s new law: “On April 16, the *Boston Globe* published an editorial claiming ‘Virtual speech trumps Spain’s gag law,’ and the *New York Times*, on April 22, condemned ‘Spain’s Ominous Gag Law.’”⁴⁴

Dissenting bodies pushed out of public space found a mode of resistance in fictionalizing themselves. Fiction, the abjected other of Austin’s theory, comes back with a vengeance to haunt ‘serious’ political rhetoric. The function of this fictionalization and spectralization of citizens’ bodies was distinct from that of the *simulacrum* in the meaning it has taken since Jean Baudrillard turned it into a hallmark of the postmodern era. Following Baudrillard’s famous thesis in *Simulacres et Simulation* (1981; *Simulacra and Simulation*), in the era of late capitalism simulacra stand on their own without reference to an original or any relationship to reality, thus invalidating the distinction between representation and reality.⁴⁵ By contrast, the holograms did not pose as signs without original; in fact, they drew attention to the bodies that were banned from participation. Instead of obliterating the line between the real and fictional or the object and its representation, they confounded it, but only to illuminate its exclusionary

39 Jacques Derrida. “This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida.” Jacques Derrida. *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York and London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 33-75, p. 36.

40 Ibid., p. 36.

41 Ibid., p. 38.

42 López. “Invisible Participation” (note 32), p. 10.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 See Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacres et Simulation*. Paris: Galilée, 1981.

workings. By blurring this line without erasing it, they re-politicized the fictional by emphasizing its *difference* from the real.

5. Dispossession and Spectrality

Using fiction's exclusion from the state's restrictions, the hologram demonstration fostered a thirdspace of possible impossibilities, which emerged from a radical form of *dispossession*. In her theoretical delineation of *dispossession*, Judith Butler lays out this concept's double meaning as an "existential category" and "a condition of induced inequality and destitution."⁴⁶ Dispossession captures an existential condition of not 'owning' oneself, because the self is formed, as well as undone, by others. As such, it "marks the limits of self-sufficiency" and "establishes us as relational and interdependent beings."⁴⁷ But dispossession is also a condition of "enforced deprivation of rights, land, livelihood, desire or modes of belonging."⁴⁸ In the framework of neoliberal capitalism and "economic precarity," dispossession pertains to "the wearing out of laboring and non-laboring bodies" through unemployment, "temporary, low-paying, and insecure jobs" or "cuts to welfare provision."⁴⁹ Dispossessed individuals are deprived of their rights, jobs, dignity; they are impoverished, marginalized, disenfranchised people or supernumerary bodies not recognized as citizens, such as illegal migrants leading spectral lives. Enforced dispossession entails a form of "non-being:"⁵⁰ it makes people disposable, valueless, indebted, exploited, vulnerable to injury, illegal.

Even though enforced dispossession is disempowering, Butler puts forward the notion of the "dispossessed subject" as a challenge to the sovereign subject, exploring its potential in forms of resistance to today's governmentality of crisis. In their dialogical study *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), Butler and Athanasiou focus on acts of bodily resistance to enforced dispossession. When faced with "pervasive forms of socially assigned disposability" and with the impossibility of being constituted as a legitimate subject within a political and social order, "the only resistance," Butler writes, is "a practice of de-instituting the subject itself."⁵¹ Bodily dispossession as a mode of resistance can take extreme forms, as in cases of public self-immolation, suicides or hunger strikes. "Dispossessing oneself"—in extreme cases, culminating in actual death—becomes "a way to dispossess coercive powers" and to expose the inhumanity of the machinery that imposes conditions of precarity.⁵²

46 Butler in Butler and Athanasiou. *Dispossession* (note 9), p. 20. Butler uses these descriptions to convey the double sense of the notion of *precarity*, but they also apply to the way she casts the ambivalent meaning of *dispossession*.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

48 Athanasiou in *ibid.* p. 5.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

52 Athanasiou in *ibid.*, p. 146.

In the hologram protest both understandings of dispossession are at work. On the one hand, Spanish citizens protested as disembodied ghost-like images of themselves, underlining processes of enforced dispossession resulting from economic precarity and incursion into citizens' freedoms. On the other hand, the hologram projected dispossession—as the expropriation of one's body—as a means of resistance to these processes. Fostering a spectral subjectivity in response to enforced dispossession, the protest countered the expulsion of dissenting bodies from public space.

The mobilization of spectrality as a form of dispossession differs from most cases that Butler and Athanasiou consider exemplary of the “subversive potentiality of dispossessed subjectivities” in resisting the “governmentality of crisis.”⁵³ Whereas Butler and Athanasiou draw attention to the use of *bodies* as a “resource for political power,”⁵⁴ the hologram protest unravels a reverse process: the body is not there as an instrument of resistance, yet it asserts a forceful indexical presence.

The body's spectral presence in the protest propels a rethinking of presence and agency by delinking both concepts from the metaphysics of presence. In Western capitalist modernity, presence, Athanasiou writes, seems inextricable from “the metaphysical conceits of self-identity, self-sufficiency, and self-transparency.”⁵⁵ In this context, “being and having are [...] ontologically imbricated with each other” and cannot be thought apart.⁵⁶ However, one can foster ways of “being present to one another” “in ways not assimilated or submitted to the ontological presuppositions of normative authoritarian self-presence.”⁵⁷ Overriding *having* as a condition of *being*, the protesting holograms asserted a spectral subjectivity through the expropriation of one's body. They turned dispossession into a mode of being-as-specter, dissociated from having and self-presence.

In the protest, the presence/absence of citizens' bodies questioned a conventional understanding of presence as a prerequisite for intelligibility and agency in the political sphere. Drawing attention to the limits of the authoritative order of presence (according to which the state's blocking of citizens' physical presence would effect their disempowerment) these spectral bodies redefined what matters as ‘presence’ in public space. They introduced a liminal logic—the logic of the middle voice—that questioned the either/or logic of state law.

A specter is able to say “here I am” and “here I am *not*” at the same time: its ‘and/and’ rather than ‘either/or’ logic brings this figure close to the modality of the middle voice. This partial self-negation allows for questioning the law, because it frees one from the imperative to affirm their subjectivity by submitting to the terms of hegemonic power. The spectralization of citizens' bodies challenges the process of interpellation, which according to Louis Althusser functions as a restoration of self-identity through the linguistic consolidation

53 Ibid., p. 140.

54 Ibid., p. 145.

55 Ibid., p. 14.

56 Ibid., p. 13.

57 Ibid., p. 18.

“here I am.” In Althusser’s well-known example of interpellation, the policeman hails a passerby, who then has to turn around and affirm his presence (“here I am”), purchasing his subjectivity through guilt and submission to ideology.⁵⁸ The dispossessed subjectivity the holograms projected was a subversive literalization of practices of forced dispossession but also an enactment of subjectivity as dissociated from an affirmation of self-identity: if “I am not” can also be a way to be, then new possibilities arise for dispossessed subjects to reclaim agency in the political. The holograms pointed to a mode of being between presence and absence, identity and non-identity, which can be seen as a visual manifestation of a discourse in the middle voice. If in the middle voice the subject is both agent and patient, the holographic protesters drew attention to this double potentiality of dispossessed subjects.

The figure of the specter, mainly owing to the publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Spectres de Marx* (1993), has emerged since the 1990s as a powerful conceptual metaphor. The specter’s “liminal position between visibility and invisibility, life and death, materiality and immateriality” has been employed in the humanities to address questions concerning liminal identities, social change, and our relation to history and the past.⁵⁹ I propose here a theoretical contiguity of the spectral and the middle voice, which may be worth exploring further. The hologram protest experimented with a spectral subjectivity that accommodates the kind of “competing epistemological [...] positions”⁶⁰ that the middle voice enables: passive and active, present and absent, placed and displaced, real and fictional, serious and non-serious, projecting the subject’s power and impotence in the political sphere.

6. Beyond the Body-Spirit Divide

Considering the role of corporeality in the hologram protest is crucial for untangling its critical operations. The protest did not negate the body or render it irrelevant as an instrument of resistance. The spectral subjectivity this event effected was not an affirmation of the Cartesian subject as spirit without a body. Rather, the holograms asserted a form of bodily presence *as* and *through* absence.

Bringing the notion of the specter to bear on the holograms does not diminish the involvement of the corporeal in their performance. Derrida distinguishes the specter from the spirit by posing that the former does not eschew corporeality:

For there is no ghost, there is never any becoming specter of the spirit without at least the appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility like the disappearing

58 Louis Althusser. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation).” *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso, 1984, pp. 48-49.

59 Cf. *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*. Ed. Maria Del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 2.

60 Colin Davis. “État Présent, Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms.” *French Studies* 59.3 (2005), pp. 373-379, p. 379.

of an apparition. For the ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever. The spectrogenic process corresponds therefore to a paradoxical incorporation [...].⁶¹

The specter for Derrida constitutes a form of embodiment: “a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit.”⁶² “[F]lesh and phenomenality,” he writes, “give the spirit its spectral apparition” even though they “disappear right away in the apparition.”⁶³ A liminal figure, the specter resists definition through existing vocabularies of being: it is “neither soul nor body, and both the one and the other.”⁶⁴ As specters, the protesting holograms explored the conditions for spectral bodies to assert presence and agency in public space. The bodies that were filmed elsewhere and then projected outside the Spanish Parliament *were* present at a previous time and place. Their spectral projection marked their allochronic and heterotopic presence, stubbornly inscribing it in the here and now of the Spanish Parliament on April 10, 2015. Their ‘being there’ carried within it a ‘being elsewhere’ and at another time, dirempting the continuity of time and space.

7. Spectral Temporality

In this disruption of linear temporality that the holograms occasioned, the convergence of spectrality with the middle voice becomes even more pronounced. The specter, Fredric Jameson argues, makes us aware of the fact that a self-sufficient notion of the present cannot exist.⁶⁵ The present is never fully present or identical to itself, but always non-contemporaneous with itself. Through their unpredictable appearance and disappearance, specters show how the identity of the present to itself is disjoined and how the past and future already inhabit the present. Specters from the past and the future occupy and produce the present, just as they are shaped by it. The specter yields a precarious present, but one that is also open to alternative futures, which cannot be predicted in advance.

The spectral temporality of the hologram protest disrupted the narrative of the future as a one-way street—so dominant in the crisis rhetoric—by triggering an incalculable interplay of past, present, and future. Divergent times and places converged in the protest’s ‘here and now.’ The traces of people that participated

61 Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 126.

62 Ibid., p. 6. As Athanasiou also notes, following Derrida, “the specter involves a return to some sort of bodily presence, be it displaced.” See Butler and Athanasiou. *Dispossession* (note 9), p. 16.

63 Derrida. *Specters of Marx* (note 59), p. 6.

64 Ibid., p. 6.

65 Fredric Jameson. “Marx’s Purloined Letter.” *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*. Ed. Michael Sprinker. London/New York: Verso, 2008, pp. 26-67, p. 39.

in the recording of the protest some days before in another town encountered the traces of people who left their images or shouts on the website of NSD. These spectral presences also conjured up specters of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, a repressive police state marked by severe restrictions of public space. Indeed, the restriction of citizens' freedoms and of public space in Spain since the crisis in 2008 has been seen as "symptomatic" of "the traces left by Franco's dictatorship."⁶⁶ The holograms also dragged the future into the present by projecting a dystopian scenario that contemporary political conditions could give rise to: a future in which citizens are replaced by holograms. These specters from the past and the future, superimposed on one another, yielded a present in *crisis*, more polyphonic than the monologism of crisis rhetoric.

The middle voice produces a precarious present in which subjectivity is constituted in the 'now.' While in the active and passive voices the verb denotes a relation of temporal separation between the beginning and completion of the action, in the middle voice, as White argues following Barthes, "actions and their effects are conceived to be simultaneous; past and present are integrated rather than dirempted, and the subject and object of the action are in some way conflated."⁶⁷ Barthes traces this subject/object conflation in modernist writing, in which the writing subject is not "anterior to the process of writing" but "immediately contemporary with the writing."⁶⁸ In the discourse of the middle voice, the subject does not pre-exist the verb's act but is constituted through it. As a visual manifestation of the middle voice, the protest became an act of subject-constitution that triggered a crisis in the notions of subjectivity favored by the rhetoric of crisis. The holograms, albeit fictional, haunted and exposed the fiction of the autonomous, predetermined, self-sufficient subject by projecting a spectral subjectivity, volatile but potent, coming into being temporarily, co-shaped by other past and future 'presents.'

8. Recasting Crisis through the Middle Voice

The potential of the middle voice for articulating alternative subjectivities and languages of critique beyond binary positions may clash with current uses of 'crisis,' but it need not be at odds with the semantics of crisis as a concept. In both its ancient and modern history, crisis, Koselleck argues, creates the pressure of a decision between two mutually exclusive and "harsh dualistic alternatives."⁶⁹ Yet, despite the concept's mobilization within an either/or logic, the semantic content of crisis

66 López. "Invisible Participation" (note 32), p. 10. López argues that the economic crisis of 2008 "reawakened the *old phantoms* of Francisco Franco's dictatorship" (emphasis added) which were latent in Spanish public life (ibid.).

67 Hayden White. "Writing in the Middle Voice." *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory 1957–2007*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 260.

68 Barthes presented in White. "Writing in the Middle Voice" (note 65), p. 262.

69 Koselleck. "Crisis" (note 1), p. 370. Translation modified.

always admits alternatives pointing not just to diametrically opposed possibilities, but also to those cutting across such opposites. It is precisely through the multiplicity of mutually exclusive alternatives that the various uses of the term may point to the existence of a real 'crisis,' even though it is not yet fully captured in any of the interpretations offered at that moment.⁷⁰

Crisis can potentially subvert the oppositional logic it serves, yielding multiple alternatives. It is this potential in the crisis-concept that the spectral as a visual analogue of the middle voice could bring to the fore. As the hologram protests suggest, the middle voice does not eliminate crisis as decision, but may reinvigorate the possibility of actual decision and critique, disrupting our understanding of crisis as a chronic impasse, one-way-street or pseudo-decision between the existing state and a catastrophic alternative.

The middle voice enables more complex subject positions than those dictated by the binaries between passive/active, victims/perpetrators, real/fictional. As a visual manifestation of the middle voice, the holograms gave shape to an expressive mode that allowed the articulation of subjectivities not fully intelligible within the vocabularies of the crisis rhetoric, triggering the imagination of alternative narratives for the future.

70 Ibid. With "that moment" Koselleck refers to the second half of the eighteenth century.