Gijs van Oenen

Globalizing Power and Testimonial Politics

The state of the political, in our networked, globalizing world, is a state of concern. In particular, it seems increasingly difficult to articulate political counter-voices, against dominant views that are associated with the control over “globalizing” economic and cultural institutions or networks. In their recent and much-discussed book Empire, the philosophers Michael Hardt and Toni Negri conclude that our post-imperialist world (i.e., the United States and its political culture) no longer has any “outside,” and that therefore critical voices, arising from external perspectives, are irredeemably doomed; they are either overruled or assimilated into the system. I contest this assertion through an analysis of the political resilience of hybrid voices, that is to say, voices and speakers that “double cross” the border between inside and outside, moving both within and without the dominant political and cultural system. I consider the Latin American genre of the testimonio as a prime example of such hybrid resilience. I conclude that finding political counter-voices implies finding new forms and practices of testimonio.

Tuesday, April 1, 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in EESAT 110

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