



Introduction

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The initiative for this issue of *Political Perspectives* stems from the vibrant discussions and the range of exciting papers presented at the Aberystwyth-Lancaster Graduate Colloquium (ALGC), which was held at the University of Manchester on the 4th-5th June 2009. The ALGC was established by Professors Jenny Edkins and Mick Dillon as a forum in which graduate students could explore and discuss critical, feminist and post-structuralist approaches to global politics. The colloquium is a regular event that provides a relaxed environment for students to present their ideas and receive feedback from other students and scholars in the field, as well as to engage in some lively debates about the future of critical scholarship.

Other than the shared interest of panellists in critical, post-structuralist and feminist approaches to world politics today, the colloquium had no over-arching theme. As hoped, this resulted in a wide range of topics being addressed at the colloquium, showing off the diversity of the young community of critical scholars in the UK. Panel themes ranged from “Strategies of critique” to “Liberalism, tourism and empire”, and showcased many innovative and often provocative ways of addressing these themes. Contributions dealt with overarching methodological issues pertaining to the

study of global politics, with papers and panellists discussing themes like strategic essentialism, interconnections of freedom and temporality, and poetic strategies in the study of globalisation. Participants also presented fresh and innovative research on specific cases, such as the 'terrorist bombing' of KAL858. We were also fortunate enough to be given a keynote address by Dr. Louise Amoore, as well as a closing discussion by Prof. Mick Dillon. Discussions were lively and thought provoking, and as is often the case some of the best discussions were generated by the uncertainty that seems to accompany our academic endeavours.

The three papers presented in this issue interrogate very different political practices and draw on different thinkers in their analysis, yet a common ground comes to the fore in that they all in various ways try to unpack the construction of conceptual pairs or apparent binaries.

In the opening paper of this issue, Bell excavates a number of conceptual couples amongst Deleuze and Guattari's wealth of neologisms, but is particularly concerned with the need to rethink the possibilities of utopianism. Through a sophisticated reading of the interrelationship between desire and its product, he articulates the need for a new way of theorising utopia and utopianism. He offers to students of politics in general, and to the field of utopian studies in particular, a 'nomadic utopianism' as a way to open new spaces for life. His analysis suggests that "the good place" immediately begins to ossify into a bad place, which in turn he shows to restore the original etymological schizophrenia of the term utopia - 'the good place that is no place'.

The paper moreover provides an interesting, engaging and original application of concepts espoused by Deleuze and Guattari to prevalent discourses on utopianism,

creatively reading these alongside Zamyatin's short essays and his novel, *We*. In doing so, the paper makes an important contribution to a number of contemporary political discussions, including not only debates surrounding utopianism, but also regarding the role of fiction in political analysis and the broader implications of western philosophy on political thought.

In the following paper, Rossi develops the political economy side of biopolitics, thus challenging the traditional distinction between security and political economy which still remains prevalent within political science. He does this through outlining a research programme, which offers us many productive questions. What power-knowledge apparatuses have been devised to govern life economically, when life itself has been transformed by the molecular revolution? What transformations has the coupling of bioscience and finance produced, as far as the management of life is concerned? Reading Michael Foucault's notion of biopolitics together with Bazzicalupo's account of bioeconomy, Rossi offers us an outline of some of the core features of the contemporary bioeconomic *dispositif*.

The empirical site chosen for this study is also highly interesting, namely that of EU mechanisms of governance as seen in its recently-launched 'knowledge-based bio-economy' (KBBE) programme. Its governmental *dispositifs* have been transformed following the 'absorption of life into the economic grid of the market' and as such they can, Rossi shows us, provide a privileged entry point for identifying the transformations brought about by the capitalization of biotechnologies. Rossi finally leaves us with a distillation of pertinent questions concerning the relationship between the governance of the KBBE and the wider EU's bioeconomical project, guiding us to further thought and possible futures of the bioeconomic *dispositif*.

In the final paper Welland carefully unpacks the co-constitutive binaries of masculine and feminine in the military, offering a lucid contribution to debates within feminist IR on the inclusion of women in armed forces and the ways in which their agency is denied or marginalised. Welland offers us an insight into the re-articulation of militarised masculinities against the feminine following women's increasing military participation. Her paper examines the cases of Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England, both of whom are women soldiers previously discussed in the literature, and that of Faye Turney, a case less commonly analysed. Discussing these cases and their interrelations, Welland clarifies the co-constitution of masculine and feminine, arguing that the inclusion of the feminine 'other' is what both constitutes and disrupts (or should disrupt), militarised masculine identity. The paper ends with a forceful call for feminists to engage more with masculinity directly, due to the subversive potential that lies in challenging the perceived stability of militarised masculine identity. Moreover, as the author points out, 'with ongoing reports of militarised violence, including violences perpetrated by UK and US military forces, both at home and in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is more pertinent than ever to unpack the ways in which militarised masculinity is constructed and its inherent fragility'.

This issue thus presents three different papers that in one way or the other discuss the "hows" of the construction of perceived binaries and conceptual couples in the theory and practice of our politics. Moreover the impetus of their papers is that this deconstruction is indeed highly important to our possible futures and, as they all argue in their own way, to life.

This issue, and the colloquium from which it stems, show the vigour and diversity of the community of young scholars engaging with critical, feminist and poststructuralist thought in the UK today. Neither this issue nor the colloquium would have been

possible without this community, and the hard work of authors, panellists, discussants, and organisers involved. The issue was edited by myself and Andrew Slack, but special thanks go to Tom Gregory and Patrick Pinkerton who made the ALGC happen at Manchester, to our keynote speaker Louise Amoore and to Mick Dillon who led the closing discussion of the ALGC. Thanks also to Jenny Edkins, Maja Zehfuss, Christina Masters, Luis Lobo-Guerrero, Véronique Pin-Fat and Robin Redhead, whose continuous support of the community in general, and involvement in the colloquium at Manchester in particular, has been and is invaluable to its success. We received funding and much support from the Manchester Centre for International Politics (CIP), as well as from the Manchester University Politics department and its staff, with particular thanks to Noémie Rouault for her unfailing assistance in organisational matters. Members of the Manchester Poststructuralist Reading group took part in the organisation of the colloquium, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers who provided swift and constructive feedback to papers. Finally, special thanks to Katherine Allison for her patience and advice in making this issue happen.