From Paradox to *Partage*: On Citizenship and Tele-technologies[1]

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Abstract

This essay argues that the transformations posed by communication and information technologies to sovereign states and geopolitical borders not only suggest a (re)politicizing of citizenship within a global context but also necessitate rethinking the concept of the political as such. Taking up an interview between Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, this essay suggests that the preoccupation with paradox in much of the contemporary literature on citizenship obscures a more decisive question of political relation, a question in which contemporary tele-technologies are not merely related at a thematic level but structurally inscribed.

KEYWORDS: Jacques Derrida, citizenship, technology, politics, globalization

1.

Devoted to the concept of citizenship as it annual theme, the opening protocol to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences 2005 Congress offers a representative overview of the challenges confronting citizenship at the beginning of the twenty-first century, notably as the concept is affected by the various transformations and tendencies defining contemporary globalization. Opening with the claim that citizenship is itself a "paradoxical concept," the protocol then outlines the terms in which citizenship can be thought today:

> Underlying [citizenship's] apparent meaning of belonging are the conflicting notions we attach to it—rights versus duties, freedom versus responsibility, local allegiance versus global affiliation—and the tensions that arise from these notions. Not constrained by political or geographical boundaries, the concept of citizenship extends to communities of interest, sexual orientation, disability,

> gender, ethnicity, and a host of variously defined identities. The paradox of citizenship is further reflected in the differences in citizenship over time—from the historical experience of citizenship as something bestowed upon individuals and reflective of imperialism and colonialism to present perceptions of citizenship as self-defined, self-appointed and democratic.
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> The way we define citizenship, and our sense of belonging (or exclusion) are influenced by the social, economical, cultural and physical environments we inhabit, while artistic and literary creation often serves to express, examine or resolve the inherent paradoxes we perceive. The multiplicity of definitions is a reality that lends itself to exploration from a multi-disciplinary angle.
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> The sub-themes [proposed for the Congress]—Environments, Exclusions and Equity—provide further points of reference for academic investigation. As a collective citizenry, we share the responsibility for our natural and social environments. Environmental sustainability has become an increasingly pressing concern for governments at all levels, and individual citizens of all countries. What constitutes the paradox of citizenship is that it is at once inclusive and exclusive—intentional, explicit, covert or unintended, individual and groups' exclusion from the citizenry carries clear implications for the society at large. Finally, questions of equity remain at the centre of most debates surrounding social issues. ("Paradoxes of Citizenship")

The protocol's general proposal reproduces the increasingly widespread argument that citizenship should be expanded as a concept to include a more flexible array of rights and socio-political issues, embracing at once "communities of interest, sexual orientation, disability, gender, ethnicity," as well as a "host of variously defined identities." In light of this diversity of political referents, the concept of citizenship now refracts into a "multiplicity of definitions" and a related survey of "multi-disciplinary" angles and "sub-themes," in which the concept can be now approached not just thematically but from different disciplinary perspectives, even including artistic and literary creation. Given the loss of established "political

or geographical boundaries," and notably their displacement through the global proliferation of communication and information technologies, the multiplicity of definitions further corresponds to the ways in which citizenship is not determined in any univocal or linear manner but influenced by a constellation or confluence of different factors, including the "social, economical, cultural and physical environments we inhabit."

Taken to be representative of recent debates concerning citizenship within the contexts of contemporary globalization, the protocol's general claims prompt three related questions, questions that begin to reframe and rearticulate the relation between technology and citizenship animating the present issue of *TEXT Technology*.

First, if the expansiveness of the concept of citizenship tends toward a larger survey of socio-political identities and a multiplicity of potential definitions and disciplinary perspectives, in what sense does this transition and its supporting argument amount not just to a potential (re)politicizing of citizenship beyond its traditional limits or categories but to a concept of citizenship that at once presupposes and simultaneously effaces the very question of the political, or the political *as such*? In other words, in what sense does the rethinking of citizenship proposed in the protocol touch not just on the play of interests and forces characterizing contemporary politics and social existence on a global scale but the very concept of the political in its most classical, philosophical sense—*ta politika*? A measure of the difficulty in which to approach this initial question stems in part from the protocol's presupposition that citizenship is synonymous with, or reducible to, "social issues," "society at large," and "variously defined identities," as if the concept of citizenship only finds its contemporary, political significance in terms of its social relevance and the social constitution of these various identities. No doubt one of the intended benefits of transforming the concept into social issues and various social identities is to enable a wider display of citizenship's social effects (in the wake of Thurgood Marshall's seminal distinction between civic, political, and social rights), as well as a wider determination of its potential social implications, including how citizenship actually touches the day-to-day experiences of individuals and groups existing either within a given polity (now translated into "society at large") or excluded from it. But the question still remains whether it is precisely in this transition to more social, if not sociological definitions of citizenship that the question of the political is effaced, and effaced precisely at the point at which the politics of citizenship is reconfigured according to the tendencies informing globaliza-

tion, the displacement of political and geographical boundaries, and the proliferation of communication and information technologies. A further measure in which to assess the displacement of the political into the social is inscribed in the protocol's continual oscillation in ascribing citizenship to individuals, identities, groups, society-at-large, and collective citizenry, as well as in its more expansive survey of related concepts (belonging, allegiance, affiliation, equity, and democracy), as if the concept of citizenship were open and pluralist enough to merely presuppose the relative inclusivity of each of these terms within its newly discovered purview.

Secondly, the opening protocol organizes the more expansive concept of citizenship under the term "paradoxes," a logic that presumably serves to capture many of the difficulties and tensions confronting the concept of citizenship today. These difficulties include a renewed, genealogical awareness of citizenship's long and conflictual history to the present, its complex relation to the multiple tendencies defining globalization, and its relation to transformations in the sovereignty of nation-states. The difficulty of circumscribing the concept of citizenship with any clarity is further related to the difficulty of establishing what constitutes belonging, identity, and affiliation within multi-cultural societies, or what constitutes rights and norms within new geo-political arenas and the cosmopolitanism of trans- or post-national institutions, organizations, and exchanges. But in what ways do the myriad difficulties outlined here specifically evolve—or devolve—into paradoxes? And in what ways do the difficulties posed by citizenship in these different contexts open the more vexing question as to the continued viability of citizenship as a concept for rethinking the future of democracy, as if the paradox in question becomes the dialectical, historicist, or teleological means through which citizenship finally exhausts its significance and political signification? The question thus posed here is whether the protocol's appeal to paradox (for which the term "global citizenship" constitutes an initial emblem) not only foregrounds, but also simultaneously *effaces* the aporias informing both the genealogies and the global contexts for rethinking citizenship today? Or does there exist another logic informing citizenship—another syntax or grammar of the political relation—that remains irreducible to paradox?

Lastly, it is a conspicuous feature of recent debates concerning citizenship that the question of technology plays a relatively marginal and subordinate role, even if the same technology, notably telecommunications and information technology, figures prominently in any discussion of globalization and its principle tendencies. The question at stake here

turns on the ways in which contemporary communication technologies not only touch on but also transform the very concept of citizenship itself. Indeed, the question at stake turns on the ways in which these same communication and information technologies provoke a further displacement between the potential (re)politicizing of citizenship within the contexts of globalization and the necessity of rethinking the political relation *as such*, *ta politika*?

2.

As the opening protocol intimates in its very structure, the narrative in which rethinking the discourse of citizenship is proposed continually fragments or displaces itself from any linear unfolding, as if the discourse of citizenship folds back within itself a division or discrepancy between the absolute *contingency* of citizenship in a global context and the purported (and yet historically or culturally contingent) *universality* of human rights, a tension from which the discourse of citizenship nevertheless finds much of its conceptual force and contemporary, political pertinence.[2] The narrative also opens itself toward a measure of radical uncertainty not just as to the ends to which citizenship is traditionally oriented—the evolving progression in Marshall's analysis in which civil and political rights culminate with an affirmation of social rights, the possibilities of closing the "citizenship gap," the creation of fully inclusive, participatory democracies, and so on—but also as to the critical relevance and very future of the concept in the twenty-first century, notably under conditions informed by globalization, the plight of refugees and non-citizens, the global migration of labor, and the proliferation of communication and information technologies. Echoing the protocol's opening claim that citizenship is itself a paradoxical concept, Derek Heater concludes a recent history of citizenship by asserting that a "paradox strikes at the very heart" of the concept—"interest in the subject and status is now greater than it has been for some two hundred years or more; yet at the same time, it might appear to be disintegrating as a coherent concept for the twenty-first century" (143). Responding to the same question of citizenship's uncertain future as a concept, Herman van Gunsteren proposes instead to displace an understanding of citizenship in terms of "destiny" to one that embraces "communities of fate." And in one of the most decisive test-cases for proposing post- or trans-national concepts of citizenship—the European Union and its constitution—Étienne Balibar concludes a recent essay with the phrase: "Europe impossible: Europe possible" (10).[3]

And yet, as these different references begin to suggest, the paradoxes underlying these narratives can also be rewritten, for the fragmentation, displacement, and potential disintegration of those linear narratives in which citizenship is historically shaped can also be read as the enabling condition in which to rearticulate the concept and its potentially multiple genealogies. This is notably the case when the discourse of citizenship refuses to devolve into mere fragmentation and eventual dispersion, nor assumes a linear, narrative exposition toward a clear destiny, but embraces a multi-perspectival analysis and a "pluralist ethos."[4] The refusal of a narrative in which citizenship unfolds as a coherent or linearly evolving discourse now coincides with the appeal to a "multiplicity of definitions" and "multi-disciplinary angles" proposed in the opening protocol and widely discussed in the recent debates concerning citizenship's continued viability as a concept. This multiplicity and pluralization of the concept not only finds its critical and rational justification in relation to the multiple tendencies defining globalization. It equally responds to forms of multi-culturalism characteristic of numerous contemporary societies; to the differentiated, flexible, and hybrid constitution of different groups, political identities, and subject positions (positions both marked and continually displaced by the intersection of gender, sex, class, ethnicity, race); and to the extension of rights to cultural differences that remain irreducible to the traditional categories of civil, political, and social rights (i.e. prison rights, disability rights, sexual rights, children's rights, animal rights, environmental rights, and so on). In Aihwa Ong's succinct terms, "demands for cultural acceptance, along with affirmative action mechanisms to increase demographic diversity in major institutions and areas of public life, has shifted discussions of citizenship from a focus on political practice based on shared civic rights and responsibilities to an insistence on the protection of cultural difference" (53). In the context of the opening protocol, this protection and affirmation of cultural difference further extends to citizenship as "self-defined" and "self-appointed," a claim that participates within a more expansive set of discourses concerning identity politics, calls for cultural diversity, feminist interventions in citizenship debates, a politics of recognition, as well as the "right to be different" (itself a simultaneous extension and displacement of the former "right to have rights"). Similarly, the expansiveness of citizenship as a concept corresponds to the pressures and demands imposed since the late 1940s by the increasing number of excluded and marginalized peoples (indigenous peoples, undocumented migrant labor, guest workers, refugees), to those

living within and between existing sovereign states and their juridical systems. In this more recent context, the future of citizenship as a constitutively plural and multi-disciplinary concept is then secured through its own rearticulation with a number of other concepts, including theories of cosmopolitan democracy, global citizenship, global civil society, embodied and performative citizenship, nomadic citizenship, denizens, flexible citizenship, multicultural citizenship, radical democracy, universal personhood, cybercitizens, networked citizens—to cite a number of recently proposed terms. The question thus remains whether this rearticulation of the concept marks a rupture with the discourse of citizenship, its dialectical *Aufhebung* into new political concepts and frameworks, or some other modality in which to define citizenship's future transformations or conceptual displacements.

Faced with these transformations and displacements in a global context, a new and potentially more decisive paradox then begins to emerge. For if the constitutive plurality and multi-disciplinary perspectives informing the identity of the citizen open to a more flexible array of rights claims, and if the proposal and demand for rights continues to burgeon, then, as Heater also argues, "citizenship, which claims a cohering function, must either shrink to a weaker, because competing, form of allegiance among others, or expand to embrace them all and lose its coherence" (143). For many, it is precisely this paradox and potential evacuating of the concept that is already inherent in such terms as cosmopolitanism, radical democracy, or global citizenship, as if mirroring the related question whether appeals to multi-culturism and identity politics prolong a discourse of citizenship in the very act of dismantling or destroying it. For others, notably Michael Walzer, citizenship participates within a larger concept of "critical associationalism," opening alongside a parallel set of allegiances and commitments, even as citizenship remains capable of mediating between them in the constitution of a "civil society." For others again, these different paradoxes and the potential incoherence or effacement of citizenship as a pertinent political concept all come into permanent yet equally productive tension with the potential repoliticizing of citizenship and its expansion through multiple forms of allegiance and membership. The question thus remains whether it is the state, civil society, or a more global institution or organization that becomes the primary site for identification and allegiance.[5] In light of these various proposals, the rearticulation of the concept of citizenship further includes the potential to rethink the ambivalent role of citizenship within the revolutionary

tradition, where the bestowal of citizenship is not just the distinguishing mark of "the people" and their national allegiance, nor just reflective of imperialism and colonialism as the protocol suggests, but perceived (and by many, still perceived) as the enabling measure of "freedom" and "liberty." The same demand to rethink citizenship also raises the potential to reconfigure the very identity of the social and political subject in its (irreducible) relation to the sovereign State, to reconfigure the relation between conditions of belonging and exclusion in a world informed by capitalism and globalization, and to offer citizenship as a potent political concept for rethinking the future of democracy beyond the post-Westphalian state, cold-war geopolitics, the collapse of the communist bloc, and the virtual disintegration of the welfare state. In short, working through these genealogical as well as contemporary problematics points not to citizenship's lack of coherence but the structural necessity of its flexibility, suppleness, and (re)creation as a constitutively paradoxical concept.

Given the numerous ways in which citizenship might be rearticulated today, the choice, then, is not between the coherence and incoherence of citizenship as a concept. Nor is it simply a question of the continued viability of the concept in the face of empirical evidence, including the quantitative changes in global displacement (over twenty-five million refugees in the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century, tens of millions of undocumented migrant workers, including an estimated 100 million people as unregistered domestic migrant workers in China alone).[6] The question is now threefold, reconfiguring the seemingly paradoxical status of citizenship in new ways.

First, if one of the most pressing problems posed today is "permanent *access to*" rather than simply "*entitlement to*" citizenship, as Balibar argues, then this distinction points to an "active and collective civil *process*" rather than a simple legal status (132, emphasis in original).[7] Or as Balibar further argues, it suggests a "collective political practice" that is always "in the making." In this sense, citizenship becomes a continual site of conflict rather than merely paradoxical, in which the desire for permanent access to citizenship is continually exposed to the necessity of engaging in a civil "process" that precludes permanence and juridical legitimation.

Secondly, and arguably more radical in its implications, the question remains whether the assumed nexus between human being and citizen is now broken, and so whether other figures come into existence that replace the concept of the citizen altogether and point to different forms

of allegiance or community? As Giorgio Agamben proposes (to cite one influential example from many who take up Hannah Arendt's earlier writings on the subject):

> Given the by now unstoppable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional political-juridical categories, the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today—at least until the process of the dissolution of the nation-state and its sovereignty has achieved full completion—the forms and limits of a coming political community. It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so on) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee (16).[8]

In other words, what remains of the paradoxes animating contemporary discussions of citizenship within this "coming political community"?

Thirdly, the question remains whether concepts such as "global citizenship" are capable of transforming the empirical realities facing non-citizens today into the thought of a global democracy and the praxis of collective governance, a project that perhaps remains irreducible both to the figuration to which Agamben appeals, but also to the present existence of our so-called liberal democracies (those democracies and nation states, as Agamben wryly notes, where the non-citizen is more commonly handed over to humanitarian organizations and the police)? Again, what place might the emphasis on paradox hold in this project?

Traversing these three questions, the decisive problematic becomes whether citizenship might expose itself to its own conceptual displacements, and thus to its own permanent if paradoxical reinvention, or whether citizenship should be replaced by other figures, other subjects of the political, other collective practices, other tasks—in short, another way of rethinking the political.

3.

If it remains a conspicuous feature of recent debates concerning citizenship that the question of technology appears to play a relatively marginal and subordinate role, in spite of the dominant role of communication and information technology within the principle tendencies defining globalization, the question becomes not only how to reconfigure the place of technology within the discourse of citizenship. Nor again is it merely a question of analyzing the various "technologies of citizenship" that make up its genealogy.[9] For the central question now is how communication and information technology both informs any attempt to write a genealogy of citizenship while simultaneously transforming and displacing the concept itself. More tendentiously, it is not a question here of situating such technology in relation to other multidisciplinary approaches and perspectives on citizenship, as if technology takes its relative place alongside other prominent themes and issues pertaining to citizenship today. Nor is it simply a question of mapping out the role of technologies in the creation of such concepts as netizens, cybercitizens, or virtual communities, or of assessing the decisive impact of information technologies on the politics of communication, including the Internet (the "network of networks"), the digital divide, or the transformative possibilities of cyberculture and cyberpolitics in globalized economies, all of which have also had decisive implications for citizens, non-citizens, and collective allegiances. For the question here is at once more structural and essential, and concerns the ways in which the question of technology comes to impose and transform not only the concept of the political *as such* but any proposal seeking to rearticulate the concept or grammar of citizenship today.

In *Echographies of Television*, the transcript of an improvised film interview between Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, the discussion turns at one point to the ways in which concepts of democracy, politics, and citizenship are all transformed by contemporary tele-technologies (including television, telephones, and other tele-communication systems), in which the modifying prefix implies a transmission across a spatial distance.[10] As Derrida and Stiegler both argue, if the concept of democracy itself has been "governed, controlled, and limited" by spatial boundaries and the borders (physical and conceptual) of the nation-state, and so by acts of "territorialization," and if political discourse is inseparable from citizenship ("acquired or 'natural,' by blood or by soil")—a concept equally defined by "inscription in a place, within a territory or within a

nation whose body is rooted in a privileged territory" (76/64-65)—then it is precisely in relation to contemporary tele-technologies that these geo-political boundaries and territorial markers are subject to possibilities of displacement and permanent dislocation. Indeed, whether demands are made to establish or protect national borders and state sovereignty ("given, lost, or promised," as Derrida nuances), or whether claims are advanced for citizenship and democratic rights, these demands and claims all find a measure of their historical, juridical, and discursive formation inscribed in, and simultaneously delimited by, geo-political markers and topographical or spatial boundaries. "What the accelerated development of tele-technologies, of cyberspace, of the new topology of 'the virtual' is producing," Derrida argues, is thus a "practical *deconstruction* of the traditional and dominant concepts of the state and citizen (and thus of 'the political') as they are linked to the actuality of a territory" (45/36).

To be sure, there is nothing speculative or merely abstract about Derrida and Stiegler's argument concerning the "decomposition" or "disqualification" of the state as a sovereignty tied to the control of a territory. For "concretely, urgently, everyday," these geo-political limits and the juridical frameworks they presuppose are continually put in play by the most mundane and increasingly pervasive use of telecommunications, even as we witness a massive resurgence of physical and symbolic barriers and walls defining our present geopolitics. As Derrida notes, when and wherever a television is switched on, when and wherever a phone-call is made, when and wherever an Internet connection is established, the question of "critical culture, of democracy, of the political, of deterritorialization erupts" (77/65), whether this situation implies the relatively simple procedures of using a mobile phone, going on-line, or analyzing how the techno-artistic production of film and television now possesses the ability (unprecedented in the history of humanity) to find itself almost immediately plugged into a global market. The "tele-" that informs contemporary communications technology thus not only implies transmission across a spatial distance; it "*displaces places*." The opposite of an archive, stock, or deposit of images or information that one might presuppose in terms of its "localization" in a given place—"the sedentariness of a gross ensemble that would be collected in a single site" (79/68)—tele-technologies disclose a more ambivalent situation in which the "border is no longer a border" and images continually by-pass customs. It is this ambivalence that provokes an eruption or dislocation of space while transforming the specific delimitation of spaces and places into a more general problem-

atic of “spacing.” In this sense, rather than a transmission across a space that implies the relatively homogenous extension and circumscription of that space, a set of coordinates that can be plotted and mapped, tele-technologies presuppose the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time, a spacing traced out as a play of gaps and intervals, of continuities and discontinuities (or “plateaus” and “smooth and striated space” in Deleuze and Guattari’s seminal terms). It is then in light of these gaps and intervals that the uneven and heterogeneous spacing of the global is played out as a differential field of conflicts and inequalities. If the global effects of technology are deeply implicated within this context, what remains decisive in this spacing is the way in which the concepts of democracy, politics, and citizenship are continually reconfigured according to a quite different rhythm and recomposition.

Following Derrida and Stiegler’s interview, the question posed here is whether the tele-technologies that displace territorial borders are merely one aspect of a larger display of issues defining our geopolitical present—in which case, to recall the opening protocol, citizenship will be discussed from a multiplicity of potential angles and disciplinary perspectives—or whether this political present (including the juridical concept of the state’s sovereignty) has a relation—an “essential relation” as Derrida insists—to the media, telepowers, and teleknowledges that constitute our contemporary, global tele-technologies. As Derrida and Stiegler both argue, when delimited by territorial and spatial boundaries, democracy and the politics informing citizenship do not simply stand in a “relation of exteriority” to the tele-technologies one might want to be able to critique in their name. The concepts of democracy, politics and citizenship do not constitute a “secure ground” from which one might designate this technology apart and assess its (political) implications, for these concepts are themselves subject to the very process of critique and deconstruction imposed by this technology in the first place. Indeed, if the very concept of the political is determined spatially or territorially, then tele-technologies suggest how the very “link” that binds the political and the local—what Derrida calls the “topolitical”—is not just displaced in spatial terms but itself necessarily subject to incessant rearticulation and dislocation. Phrased in these terms, it is thus important to acknowledge from the outset that it is not then solely a question of politicizing technology, of putting technology in a political, social, or global context, and then determining its political, social, or global effects. Nor is it a question of writing another history of technology and so rewriting its political implications according

to a different genealogy. For it is this same technology that transforms the very concept of the political by means of those acts of territorialization and deterritorialization through which the political, democracy, and citizenship constitute and de-constitute themselves in the first place.

Two consequences ensue from this argument. On the one hand, rearticulating the relation between technology and the political points to a corresponding reinvention or reconceptualization of citizenship, coinciding with renewed attention given to the relation between citizenship, language, and telecommunications. Given the intimate rapport between technology and citizenship in the constitution of the civil process and "civilization," and given the increasingly pervasive presence of tele-technologies in the contemporary world, such a reconceptualization of the terms in which citizenship is articulated should also coincide with extensive programs in education, literacy, and training in technology, a subject which Derrida and Stiegler propose at some length in the interview.[11] On the other hand, as Derrida also warns, the lack of education, the relative "incompetence," and together their incommensurable increase in understanding the implications of this same technology should be situated in light of the transformations affecting all forms of state sovereignty. Indeed, it is precisely in this critical conjunction between technology and the transformations defining the sovereign nation-state that Derrida locates one of the keys to most of the "unprecedented phenomena that people are trying to assimilate to old monsters in order to conjure them away" (68/57), including the return of the religious fundamentalisms, nationalist archaisms, and the "phantasms of soil and blood, racisms, xenophobias, ethnic wars and ethnic cleansings" (91/79).[12] In light of the geopolitical configurations defining our contemporary world, Derrida concludes that the effects produced by tele-technologies thus offer at once a threat and a chance, demanding both critique and deconstruction. More provocatively, Derrida argues that the development of tele-technologies moves us beyond critique by delimiting an obscure "categorical imperative"—not just of rethinking democracy "beyond these 'borders' of the political" but of thinking "the political beyond the political" or "the democratic beyond democracy" (76/65). In short, such tele-technologies cannot be detached from the wider thought of a "democracy to come."

4.

If the critique of tele-technologies and their effects is necessary, as Derrida argues, it is equally necessary to go beyond critique. And if the deconstruction of the conditions and assumptions informing tele-technologies is always a "practical deconstruction," involving such everyday procedures as making a phone call, the terms in which to rethink these conditions and the political implications of tele-technologies cannot de detached from rethinking the concept of the political *as such*. In other words, the necessary "politicization" of technology and a corresponding "sensitivity to the necessary democratization of all these phenomena" cannot be separated out from a larger task to "revive what is generally occulted ('depoliticized') about the political" (76/64). In this sense, if the concept of the political is itself delimited by territorial boundaries and the borders of the nation-state, then the forms of politicized critique leveled at contemporary tele-technologies and their "political" effects must respond in turn to the deconstruction—or "deterritorialization"—of the political itself. Indeed, if the concept of the political cannot be detached from a topology (as Carl Schmitt also insists in The Concept of the Political, and as Derrida rethinks in *Politics of Friendship*), then "perhaps," Derrida argues, "the political must be deterritorialized; no doubt it is deterritorializing itself" ["*peut-être le politique doit-il se déterritorialiser, sans doute le fait-il aussi*"] (76/65).

Comparing the original French and English translation is instructive here, not least because the English folds back across the original in order to rewrite and displace its "grammar" (as if this performative dimension of translation also folds across and deterritorializes all state borders and territorial limits that define themselves in terms of national languages, mother tongues, and monolingualism). First, Derrida employs the French word "*le politique*," a term that points to the concept of the political as such, to the political as the site where being-in-common remains in question, as opposed to "*la politique*," which implies politics in the context of everyday conflicts over political issues and politicized representations of social existence. Derrida's phrase also captures the sense of imperative and obligation that technology imposes on the political "to deterritorialize itself." But the potential force of the political to deterritorialize itself is not, in the end, sufficient, for Derrida adds immediately that "no doubt that is what it does" ["*sans doute le fait-il aussi*"], as if the political must deterritorialize itself among other things. The English translation rewrites

this clause by suggesting not only that "the political must be deterritorialized"; it continues by suggesting that "no doubt it is deterritorializing itself." According to this translation, the transitions between the active and passive in the French and English versions further aggravate the difficulty of determining and establishing the exact rapport between technology and the political. For if the English translation responds to the French proposal that "the political must deterritorialize itself" (in the reflexive) by arguing that the political must "*be* deterritorialized," then the process of deterritorialization stems in the English from a force *exterior* to the political, a force that is outside or beyond the borders of the political that then intervenes within those borders. In other words, tele-technologies come to deterritorialize the political, implying an exteriority that is effaced in the original French through the use of the reflexive verb, where the political "deterritorializes itself" [*se déterritorialiser*] (even if this exterior force is implied or presupposed in the reflexive verb form). When the English suggests that "the political must be deterritorialized; no doubt it is deterritorializing itself," the relatively marginal clause in the French, which merely suggests that the political deterritorializes itself among other things, is thereby transformed in such a way that the translation captures at once the ability of technology to deterritorialise politics from the outside and simultaneously for the political to constitute an act of deterritorializing (itself). A moment of political self-reflexivity is not just inseparable from an external agency or motive but opens onto a radical undecidability regarding the active and passive conditions for thinking the rapport between technology and the political. In other words, the reading of the translation across the original French phrase suggests how tele-technologies and the political open into a supplementary relation to one another, a relation in which the "essence" of technology and the "essence" of the political become co-essential in their reciprocal contamination. But it is only in and as the grammar of this supplementary dislocation and displacement of the political from its own conceptual borders that rethinking the political always implies a "beyond" or "outside" of the political, or always implies that democracy is never present to itself as a self-contained and fully formed concept but "to come." It is in this coming that tele-technologies are not simply implicated but radically inscribed.

If the political and the technological open onto supplementary relation, the displacement and dislocation of the political posed by tele-technologies also comes to rearticulate Derrida's claim that such technologies pose at once a threat and a chance. Certainly the threat posed

by such technologies to democracy, politics, and citizenship is extensive, especially given the marked turn toward various forms of religious fundamentalisms, discourses of nationalism, and any number of phantasms of collective identity. These threats and their technological implications are widely debated across numerous local, national, and global arenas, giving rise to numerously diverse diagnoses, prognostications, and remedies. The chance presented by this same technology, however, is considerably more difficult to elaborate. For the chance to which Derrida appeals not only remains irreducible to a simple dialectical counterpart to the threat posed by the same tele-technologies. The reference to chance here is not to some form of competition either, "in the strictly economic sense of commercial exploitation," as Derrida insists (85/73).[13] Nor is the affirmation of chance to which Derrida appeals fully synonymous with the widespread proposals to rethink the role of technologies in the creation of potentially new forms of identity, community, or social and political representation, even as Derrida acknowledges that tele-technologies open a certain "permeability" that might give rise to debate and diversity, or "a veritable stimulation" and permanent renegotiation that includes a "struggle of exigencies" (85/73). Rather, Derrida's numerous references to chance in *Echographies* aim at rethinking the permeable displacement and deterritorialization of borders as the opening or exposure to a radical *alterity*. It is precisely this exposure to an alterity that is both presupposed and effaced in any appeal to national identities and the terms (birthplace, language, culture, and so on) in which such identities are defined, the very identity on which the discourse of citizenship is traditionally tied. An initial measure of the difficulty in thinking this question of alterity is evident in Derrida's reference to the link that traditionally binds the political to territorial boundaries. For once the link between the political and the local—the "topolitical"—is dislocated or displaced, then the identity of the political subject or citizen defined by sovereign territories is itself subject not just to dislocation and displacement but the opening to an alterity, an exposure to the other that always appears at or beyond the border of the political. Or rather, as Derrida also argues, any schema of identity, subject, or community presupposed by democracy, politics, or citizenship is itself inscribed, through the very tele-technologies in use, to "disidentification, singularity, rupture with the solidity of identity, de-liaison" (78/67).

The chance to which Derrida continually refers in *Echographies* now becomes the enabling and constitutive condition in which to rethink the *dé-liaison/dé-placement* of any political identity or citizen-subject.

Rearticulating these terms, we could suggest that the "liaison" and "placement" that binds individuals to one another in a (political) community or as citizens within a given territory is offered up to a throw of the "dice" [*dé*] in their radical "*dé-liaison*" and "*dé-placement*" from any secure ground or native soil. This gamble—the crapshoot of the political—suggests that there exists no foundation or guiding political principle form which to measure or legitimate the constitution of a political subject, citizen, or tie that forms a community or polity, no founding reason or orientation that establishes a sense of belonging once and for all. The "*aléa*" or chance presupposed here does not imply (a return to) chaos, some vague, romanticized appeal to anarchy, a nihilistic posturing, a complacent acceptance of total social disintegration and fragmentation, or an indeterminacy that lacks all possibilities for decision and responsibility. Instead, the chance that inaugurates the *dé-liaison/dé-placement* of any political identity or citizen-subject creates the precondition in which to think the absolute and always singular opening to an alterity, to what we might now term the promise and affirmation of the chance encounter. In short, it is this chance encounter that constitutes the very opening in which the political is always, in its essence, "beyond the political," at least insofar as it is the chance encounter that also becomes the measure (itself immeasurable) in which to think the very dislocation and deterritorialization of spatial limits and topological boundaries provoked by the tele-technologies in use.

5.

The opening toward an alterity evoked by Derrida throughout the interview with Stiegler is worked through more rigorously in other texts, notably as the affirmation of alterity throughout Derrida's writings relates to a larger rethinking of foundational political categories and concepts. Tied to the same concerns that pertain to citizenship, this question of alterity thus relates more specifically to Derrida's more extensive reading of the politics of friendship and fraternity, a renewed attention to the concepts of cosmopolitanism and hospitality, a reading of Marx, and a book that centers on transformations in the concept of sovereignty, all of which participate within Derrida's proposal in his later writings to think a "democracy to come."[14] If these writings are now well known and widely discussed, relatively inconspicuous within this broader rethinking of foundational political concepts is Derrida's affirmation of networks. Rather than situate the interview with Stiegler alongside Derrida's other writings, the ques-

tion then becomes how this appeal to networks relates to the common assumption that networks enact a dislocation and deterritorialization of all established national boundaries and territorial limits. At the same time, the question also remains how networks might also contribute to this thought of the "political beyond the political" or a "democracy to come."

In the interview with Stiegler in *Echographies*, Derrida proposes to rearticulate the dislocation provoked by tele-technologies precisely in terms of networks. Responding to Stiegler's proposal that this dislocation would itself create a "political community"—"something like the thinking of a community of networks, or a technological community" (77/65)—Derrida first pries apart the relation between networks and the concepts of community to which networks are repeatedly attached. For if the concept of community invariably presupposes a "unity of languages, of cultural, ethnic, or religious horizons," then this concept of community (Agamben's "coming political community" of refugees notwithstanding) tends to reinforce and reproduce the various schemas of identity and belonging intrinsic to the political constitution of a nation or the territorial boundaries of a sovereign state. Even when networks are said to enact the deterritorialization of the boundaries of the nation-state, the concept of "networked communities" still presupposes a concept of the political that reinscribes the spatial and topological preconditions of a sovereign territory, and thus the spatial assumptions underlying the concept of the political. On the other hand, so long as networks are posited "without unity or homogeneity, without coherence," then Derrida proposes that they create and make possible a "new distribution" or "*partage*," including a *partage* of images and information no longer governed by a "territorially delimited, national or regional community" (77-78/65-66). Networks, in short, displace the very concept of the "horizon" and the points of spatial (and thus subject) orientation they set in place (whether linguistic, cultural, ethnic or religious) by opening up this *partage*.

Drawn from the writings of Jean-Luc Nancy, as Derrida acknowledges, the *partage* he evokes in French translates at one and the same time as both "sharing" *and* "division," and thus a "sharing (out)."[15] In this sense, a *partage* in relation to networks takes into account what it is possible to have "in common," what is shared, "the fact that several people or groups can, in places, cities or non-cities . . . have access to the same programs" (77/66). But Derrida also takes into account a *partage* as division, arguing that networks imply "dissociations, singularities, diffractions." If networks create what is "common," that commonality is

also constitutively inscribed by the possibilities of dissociation, de-liaison, distance, and detachment. There is no thought of association implied by networked telecommunications without dissociation, no liaison without de-liaison, no proximity without distance, no attachment without detachment, and it is precisely this deconstructive logic for Derrida that is effaced in appeals to "community." Detached from any proposal to reconfigure the role of tele-technologies in the creation of "networked communities," the "logic" of the *partage* created by networks is thus the permanently displaced site of "disidentification, singularity, rupture with the solidity of identity, de-liaison" (78/67)—in short, the enabling condition for reaffirming the opening and exposure to an alterity, to the other's singularity, to the chance encounter. At the same time, it is precisely in and through this same *partage* in networked tele-communications that the openness and exposure to alterity becomes a constitutive and decisive condition in which to think the "political beyond the political" and a democracy that is always "to come." For the *partage* inscribed in networked telecommunications is not reducible to the networks of information technology and telecommunication systems, even if Derrida's interventions in the interview often suggest only that. The network is not essentially technological either, nor only a "system" of telecommunications. For networks become the enabling condition for thinking the limits of the political *as such*, in the sense of an originary "sociation," a "being-with" that exists prior to all organized *socius*, "society-at large," or *politeia*. In short, networks constitute the conditions for creating a possible relation to and with the other—the chance encounter—a relation that pre-exists the bonds (natal, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious) that define citizenship within a sovereign territory or community.[16]

In light of Derrida's argument, three questions come into further relief, three questions that must be posed if we are to begin to think through the future viability of citizenship as a concept when faced with the deterritorializing effects of tele-technologies. First, if the *partage* implied by networked tele-technologies displaces the spatial presuppositions informing the concepts of democracy, the political, and citizenship, and so opens toward what Derrida terms a spacing or "coinscription of space" that no longer corresponds to these same political models inscribed by territorial boundaries and clearly defined spatial limits, how might this coinscription of space relate not only to the global tendencies animating the world today but to identifiable, geopolitical conflicts?[17] Secondly, in what ways has the association between networks, telecommunications, and reconfigured

concepts of community (widely accepted in the literature on "virtual communities" for example) lent itself to a political *figuration* or *myth*, rather than to the necessity of parsing out the grammar in which to rethink the ties, webs of relations, and social bonds that articulate our exposure to an alterity, including the "chance encounters" that take place both at and beyond the borders of the nation-state? In other words, if we are to accept that the relation between technology and citizenship remains political, or needs (re) politicizing, in what sense does this relation also demand that we rethink the political relation as such, beyond or prior to the phantasms of identity, nationalistic and religious fundamentalisms, and political autism characterizing much of the world today? Lastly, and indissociably, is there a concept of citizenship that answers to the specific logic of the *partage* presented by Derrida and Nancy in their writings? Or in what sense does this *partage* begin to mark a displacement from the discourse of paradox animating so many contemporary discussions of citizenship to rethinking the political as such, to rethinking the space or spacing that we share (out) from—and with—one another. It is from these initial questions that the concept of the networked citizen appears and simultaneously withdraws from view.

Notes

[1] The following essay extends an argument first explored in "Rethinking the Political: Derrida and Nancy on Networks, Citizenship, and Teletechnologies," available on-line in *Computing in the Humanities Working Papers* (http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/chwp/CHC2005/Armstrong/Armstrong.htm). A longer version of both essays is forthcoming in *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). The paper was first read as part of a panel on "The Politics of Networked Citizenship" at the annual meeting of the Consortium for Computers in the Humanities / Consortium pour Ordinateurs en Sciences Humaines (COCH-COSH), held as part of the 2005 Congress of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Ontario. My thanks in particular to Patrick Finn and Alan Galey for hosting the discussions, and to the participants for their questions and comments.
[2] Seyla Benhabib's recent book on citizenship situates itself decisively around this same post-Kantian tension. See Benhabib.
[3] The writings of Étienne Balibar have arguably offered the most incisive rethinking of citizenship and its genealogies in recent years. I'm also grateful to my colleague Gene Holland, whose forthcoming book on nomadic citizenship has offered a compelling counterpoint to the argument that follows.
[4] The term constitutes the basis of Isin and Wood's genealogical investigations into citizenship. See Isin and Wood, Isin, and the essays collected in Mouffe.

[5] No doubt the assumption remains on much of the "left" that citizenship and the discourse of rights prolongs its originary association with progressive politics and emancipatory, revolutionary discourses. This reception of the concept should be situated in light of the increasing "appropriation" of the discourse of citizenship for highly reactionary, conservative, anti-global, anti-immigrant, protectionist, nationalist, and fundamentalist political positions. At the same time, the coincidence of citizenship and consumerism is increasingly dominant (evident in numerous government reports), and capitalism has been forced into an unusually defensive position in its increasingly widespread appeal to "corporate citizenship" in their newsletters and publicity-relations rhetoric. The degree to which such an appropriation of the revolutionary and emancipatory discourses of citizenship is already inscribed in liberal, communitarian, and republican traditions clearly remains open to question.

[6] A number of statistical references and empirical data can be found in the essays collected in Brysk and Shafir. The volume offers a useful overview of the primary debates concerning citizenship in the contexts of contemporary globalization.

[7] The argument is proposed in light of van Gusteren's transformation of citizenship in terms of "communities of fate."

[8] Agamben is referring to Arendt's early writings on refugees, notably the closing chapter in the section on Imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. See Arendt.

[9] Extending Michel Foucault's analysis of "technologies of the self" to the concept of citizenship, the phrase is central to the more general argument proposed in Isin.

[10] The text is a transcription of the interview, filmed in 1993 by Jean-Christophe Rosé under the auspices of the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) in France. Page references are to the French and English versions respectively.

[11] In this sense, the rapport between tele-technologies and the concept of the political is not reducible to contemporary technology, including computers or information technology. As Derrida and Stiegler discuss at length, the technology implied by writing and the alphabet were also the enabling conditions for the constitution of citizenship in classical Greece. In other words, any history or genealogy of citizenship cannot be dissociated from the technologies that inform it. What remains in question, however, is whether the exponential growth in contemporary tele-technologies constitutes not just a quantitative change but a qualitative change in the rapport between technology, politics, and citizenship. On this question, Derrida and Stiegler appear to part company in the interview. For a fuller account and critical engagement with this aspect of *Echographies*, see Beardsworth.

[12] Derrida explores this question further in "Faith and Knowledge."

[13] The reference to "*chance*" in French implies a wider set of semantic possibilities than suggested in English. Later in *Echographies*, and prolonging the reference to Marx throughout the interview, Derrida refers to the necessity of rethinking the relation between use and exchange value in Marx's writings as a way of thinking

what "constitutes the market's *chance*—in the best sense of the word" (83). Jennifer Bajorek offers a useful gloss on Derrida's reference to "chance" in the English translation: "The French *chance* is much richer than its English counterpart. To say that something constitutes the market's 'chance' may be to say that it constitutes its chance and hope in the sense of its condition of possibility. In this sense, it is indissociable both from the risk and from promise. It may also be to say that it constitutes the happy or fortunate thing *of the market* (double genitive)—either that this thing is what is happy or fortunate *about the market*, or that the market is *itself* an opportunity, and thus a happy or fortunate thing" (169-70). The chance and hope opened by tele-technologies offers an analogous situation.

[14] A conference was organized in 2002 around Derrida's thinking of a "democracy to come." See Mallet.

[15] Nancy's frequent use of the French verb *partager* and its derivatives in his writings is usually translated as "to share," with the proviso that the French also implies a division and separation, and so a "sharing out." As Nancy notes in *La comparution*, synonyms also include "partition, repartition, part, participation, separation, communication, discord, split, devolution, destination." See Bailly and Nancy 54-55 and Nancy 374.

[16] Derrida explores the implications of this analysis in his "Fidélité à plus d'un." The text includes both references to networks as well as several gestures toward Nancy's own rethinking of the logic of the *partage* in terms of "being singular plural" or "being-with." For an incisive rethinking of both Derrida and Nancy's writings in relation to the concept of citizenship, see Cadava and Levy.

[17] Agamben's essay on refugees also begins to outline a response to this task, notably though the concept of "reciprocal extraterritoriality."

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