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The Political Uses of Narrative

"The Poetic Nature of Political Disclosure. Hannah Arendt's Storytelling"

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Sincerely,

The Poetic Nature of Political Disclosure
Hannah Arendt's Storytelling

I. Introduction

Hannah Arendt is known for challenging conventional categories and labels. She has chosen to emphasize what could be considered her negative identity (she was neither a philosopher, nor a feminist, nor a Zionist, nor a liberal, nor a positivist, nor a pragmatist[1]...) rather than explain or define herself. Her purpose, as she formulated it to Gershom Scholem, was to be "independent"[2], and she assumed it to be a "trouble".[3] Her independence or marginality appeared at three interrelated levels: she wanted to make "distinctions" that historical and political sciences were unable to make; she tried to think from a position that would be distinct from the traditional philosophical vantage point; and she attempted to write political theory through storytelling. This last practice, her "old-fashioned storytelling",[4] has given rise to many hypotheses and commentaries, from Ernest Vollrath's early and still most pertinent article[5] to Lisa Disch's acute understanding of Arendt's thought in her book *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy.*[6] According to Vollrath, stories gave Arendt the sense of belonging which is missing in objective theory and which allowed her to better apprehend political phenomena. David Luban analyzed Arendt's storytelling as an anti-positivist methodology permitting her to understand the period she called "dark times" and which includes totalitarianism.[7] Both Vollrath and Luban argued that in dark times, when political action and understanding are in danger of being annihilated, only storytelling may provide the political thinker with an access to the political. As for Seyla Benhabib, she showed that stories are for Arendt a "redemptive narrative" allowing the thinker to fill the gap between past and present which is caused by the breaking down of tradition: "When tradition has ceased to orient our sense of the past... the theorist as storyteller is like the pearl diver, who converts the memory of the dead into something 'rich and strange'".[8]

More recently Lisa Disch proposed a sensitive and different reading of Arendt's work. She characterized Arendt's thinking position as a critical one, which she named "situated impartiality", or "visiting", supposed to avoid the Archimedean vantage point as well as concrete political involvement. "Situated impartiality" means "a critical decision that is not justified with reference to

an abstract standard of right but by visiting a plurality of diverging public standpoints". In this context, "the process of visiting might be conceived as telling oneself the story of a situation from the plurality of its constituent perspectives".[9] Accordingly, Disch argued that storytelling is Arendt's way of renewing the definition and the task of the political thinker, to move away from mainstreams of political thought, and to express her own critical understanding of public life.

My argument in this essay is that the meanings of Arendt's narrative method have first to be sought out in her specific conception of the political. I intend to show that this conception led her to a particular kind of writing, namely the telling of stories. I am of course aware that all commentators have noted the close relationship between Arendt's concept of politics and her storytelling, for Arendt herself wrote that action "'produces' stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things".[10] If, according to what seems to be Arendt's theory of politics in *The Human Condition,* politics means free plural actions and speeches in the public space, and if actions produce stories, it follows that "the web of stories *is* the fabric of history".[11] The problem with this usual interpretation of Arendt's thought is that it leads to two well-known discussions that are, in my mind, irrelevant. The first deals with the nature of political actions and tries in vain to determine if, in Arendt's view, the public space is a realm of competition or of association and communication. The second, related to the first, attempts to figure out whether or not Arendt was anti-modern, and nostalgic for ancient Athens and its unjust treatment of women, slaves and strangers.

My reading of Arendt's work will, I hope, allow a different spectrum of interpretations, for I wish to show that storytelling as political writing corresponds to an idea of the political that differs from what is usually understood as Arendt's basic "political theory". I argue that, according to Arendt, the political means an expanding web of relationships between various *fields* of public life, which includes, much beyond our usual restrictive concept of politics, poetry, literature, perhaps religion, etc., and in which people get the opportunity to play a role, participate, and be responsible. Moreover, Arendt assumes that what characterizes political life is the constant *passage from field to field* - from action in common to art enjoyment, from art enjoyment to

thought, from thought to poetry, from poetry to action, etc. - where the "passing-citizen" appears each time playing his or her own role. Only these active *revealing* passages through these communicating domains offer the individual the opportunity to meet others, be related and share the world with them, in plurality. Accordingly, I argue that Arendt's conception of politics is that of an active web of *correspondances* in Baudelaire's poetic sense, where the citizen goes through realms that "respond" to each other, and in doing so "responds" to his or her fellow-citizens.

Arendt's first concern was to understand dark times. She acknowledged that she had focused on politics because of the "darkness" of modern times,[12] and that her theory had to be perceived as a reaction against their dangers. As Paul Ricoeur wrote: "The relation between *The Human Condition* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* results from the inversion of the question posed by totalitarianism; if the hypothesis: everything is possible, leads to total destruction, which barriers and which expedients does the human condition oppose to this terrorist hypothesis?"[13] Arendt herself explains, in the Prologue to *The Human Condition*, that "What I propose in the following is a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears"[14]. Clearly her understanding of the political originates in her analysis of dark times. Accordingly, I will first show that not only does the idea of *correspondances* underlie this analysis, but that there is an affinity (a *correspondance*) between Arendt's concept of the political in dark times and Baudelaire's description of "nature".

If the political is individual responsible disclosure between fields of public life, storytelling will prove to be the only writing able to recount it, because it is itself a part of the web of political *correspondances* and a kind of political disclosure. I will show that it is a political writing, not a writing about politics, and that as such it attempts to *illuminate* dark times, and not, as it has been argued, to commemorate or remember people and glorious actions of the past. Hence stories will be the only appropriate way to write political theory from a position distinct from the traditional vantage point.

However, using storytelling as a new kind of political writing Arendt surprisingly neglected to define the political role and responsibility of the storyteller. I will claim in the end of this essay

that this omission proves she has not been wholly consistent with her own conception of storytelling as political disclosure. I will give an example of this inconsistency in analyzing her silence about the stories of the victims and witnesses in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

II. Baudelaire's *Correspondances* and Arendt's Conception of Politics

Dark Times and The Technical Use of Poetic Thinking

On October 28, 1964, Hannah Arendt explained journalist Gunter Gaus that she was not a philosopher and wished "to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes unclouded by philosophy"[15] for she wanted no part in the traditional philosophical enmity towards all politics. The full meaning of her statement had to be looked for later on in the same interview, when Arendt told Gaus that she had come to politics because of her German intellectual friends' cooperation with the Nazi regime in 1933. She said: "In the wave of *Gleichschaltung* (co-ordination), which was relatively voluntary - in any case, not yet under the pressure of terror - it was as if an empty space formed around one".[16] Her friends' *Gleichschaltung* led Arendt to two conclusions that she extensively developed in her whole work. First, since Socrates's sentence of death philosophers have feared free political action and "naturally" trend towards tyranny, for such a regime is likely to provide them with the peace and security they require to think.[17] Second, such a disdain for public affairs and attraction to a system that transforms free actions into obedience makes the search for a non-philosophical form of political thought necessary. Many interpretations of this new thought and of Arendt's original thinking position have lately arisen and show the *critical* dimension of her attempt.[18] Independently of this point, however, I would like to emphasize a detail of Arendt's answer to Gaus, namely that in 1933 she felt surrounded by *emptiness*. She surprisingly begins the preface to *Between Past and Future* with the same metaphor to recount the coming to politics of the French poet Rene Char and other European writers: "The collapse of France, to them a totally unexpected event, had emptied, from one day to the next, the political scene of their country, leaving it to the puppet-like antics of knaves or fools, and they who as a matter of course had never participated in the official business of the Third Republic were sucked into politics as though with the force of a vacuum".[19] Arendt knew Jews had enemies and Hitler was

one of their most serious ones before she felt surrounded by emptiness. But this knowledge had not urged her to break her philosophical passivity and start a "work of a practical nature",[20] just as the knowledge of Europe being menaced by war had not forced Rene Char into politics before politics meant absolute emptiness. For Arendt, she argues, as for Rene Char and others, the feeling of the public space's emptiness was the sign that one had to start to fill it up, namely to *act*, and, in the context of Nazism to defend oneself and resist. The "work of a practical nature" was Arendt's brief encounter with Zionist action in Paris, where she worked for Youth Aliyah and the Jewish Agency, [21] and which ended with her leaving for the United States in 1940. In New York, in a country where, she thought, the public scene was undoubtedly filled up with political actions[22], she stopped "acting" and tried to develop a new kind of political *theory* that attempted to understand the signification of emptiness and imagine the ways to neutralize it.

She then resumed the idea of the political scene's emptiness by Brecht's expression "dark times". In "On Humanity in Dark times: Thoughts about Lessing", written in 1959, one year after the first publication of *The Human Condition*, Arendt gives her definition of such a situation: "History knows many periods of dark times in which the public realm has been obscured and the world become so dubious that people have ceased to ask any more of politics than it show due consideration for their vital interests and personal liberty".[23] Dark times are periods when the distinction between public and private spaces has lost all signification, or at least has been dramatically weakened. Let us recall that in *The Human Condition* Arendt founds her understanding of human activities on a distinction between public and private domains, which is itself based on the ancient Greek separation between the public realm, where male citizens freely discussed political issues and war heroes marched past throngs, and the private realm, where women, slaves, and animals assured the citizen-master his economical survival, and allowed him to find time to enjoy "leisure for politics". What Arendt claimed through her long description of the Greek system, was that only within a space of common visible activities may authentic freedom and equality arise. She meant that real justice and real equality are characteristics of what is shared in common and appears publicly, *insofar as* a space of privacy

also exists which is itself not immediately defined by freedom and equality. She did not mean that the private space has to be a place of slavery, injustice, and inequality or even that it would not matter if such were the case, but that this "obscure" space is not the *specific* scene of equality. What was primarily important for Arendt was not who stands in the public and private spaces and what activities belongs to them (and these "omissions" have been extensively commented on and criticized[24]), but the necessity of a separation between a world of appearance and a world of privacy: "The most elementary meaning of the two realms indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all. If we look at these things, regardless of where we find them in any given civilization, we shall see that each human activity points to its proper location in the world".[25] The modern "rise of the social" had therefore negative aspects because "since the admission of household and housekeeping activities to the public realm, an irresistible tendency to grow, to devour the older realms of the political and private as well as the more recently established sphere of intimacy, has been one of the outstanding characteristics of the new realm".[26] The destruction of the distinction between private and public is what leads to the "emptiness" of dark times, a confused situation where people no longer know how to act and what to expect from publicity as well as from privacy. When this happens, the world of disclosure, which "lies between people", which is an "in-between", starts to disappear and be empty: "what is lost is the specific and usually irreplaceable in-between which should have formed between this individual and his fellow men"[27]. The idea of disclosure has thus to be renewed in a way that would fit modern times: war and resistance had an end, but the need for a world of revelation, distinct from a world of privacy, was still urgent.

In the article "On Humanity in Dark Times", Arendt uses another metaphor to explain the nature of dark times, the metaphor of *broken pillars*: "The "pillars of the best-known truths" (to stay with [Lessing's] metaphor), which at that time were shaken, today lie shattered; we need neither criticism nor wise men to shake them any more. We need only look around to see that we are standing in the midst of a veritable rubble heap of such pillars".[28] She goes on: for a long

time political order depended on pillars of truth. But now that they have been overthrown it is useless to restore them repeatedly, for they collapse again and again. She concludes: "In the political realm restoration is never a substitute for a new foundation". Dark times are a broken edifice that cannot be restored.

There is in *Men in Dark Times* a resurgence of the pillars' idea, which however stays hidden *behind the text*. In her chapter on Walter Benjamin, which was first written to introduce Benjamin's *Illuminations*, Arendt states that Benjamin used metaphors as a method of writing. She explains that the metaphor "establishes the *correspondances* between physically most remote things", quoting Baudelaire's word in French, namely referring explicitly to his own poem "Correspondances" and his theory of affinities. This is of course not surprising since Benjamin analyses the poem in his *Illuminations*. We are here confronted to Arendt's reading of Benjamin, which refers to Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire, and in which Arendt compares Benjamin's "poetic thinking" to Baudelaire's poetic theory of synesthesia. The interesting aspect of these inter-textual relations is that, in the first lines of "Correspondances", nature is defined as a "temple" with "living pillars": "La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles"[29]. Besides, in his study of "Correspondances" in *Illuminations*, Benjamin suggests that the poem is "devoted to something irretrievably lost"[30]. The "living pillars" seem to be those of a lost, broken world.

Arendt, no doubt, knew Baudelaire's "Correspondances" perfectly, especially since it was quoted in Benjamin's *Illuminations* which she edited. The poem stands behind *Men in Dark Times* much more than in her short mention to it. She specifically refers to its *content* because she mentions it in a book where she quotes Lessing's pillars, namely because the "pillars of best-know truths" that have collapsed reflect the "living pillars" of lost times. Yet "Correspondances" also underlies her method of writing, for she relates both the colored metaphor of "darkness" and the architectural metaphor of "pillars" to a *political* situation. Doing so, she connects Brecht's darkness to Lessing's pillars, meaning that this connection is the essence of modern times. This metaphoric writing echoes Baudelaire's "Correspondances":

Arendt's text "responds" to the poem, while the response is the very essence of *correspondances*: "Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent/Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,/Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté/Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent."[31]

Why didn't Arendt refer explicitly to Baudelaire's idea of synesthesia, which is so present in *Men in Dark Times*? Perhaps because it would have been explaining her own writing, while, as she herself claimed and Vollrath and Disch have noted, she considered it self-indulgent to concentrate on methodological approaches.[32] Nevertheless there might be another reason, which can be inferred from her answers to Gunter Gaus. She confessed to him that she had always switched between *two* languages, English, which she used to write political *theory*, and her mother tongue, German, which had remained "somehow in the back of my mind"[33] as *poetry*. Arendt knew German poems "by heart", and *thought* through them, and for that reason could *write* about them. It seems that in this spontaneous transfer, this *translation* from German to English, there was no place for a French poem.[34] And indeed, Arendt hardly ever quoted in French, which she spoke and read very well.[35] But the idea of "Correspondances" was there, as it expresses the essence of all poetry. I am not arguing that Arendt clearly wrote in reference to Baudelaire's poem but consciously chose not to recognize it. I am arguing that in her whole work and principally in *Men in Dark Times* there is an affinity between Baudelaire's conception and hers due to her poetic thinking, and she may have been aware of it. Indeed, when Arendt said that Benjamin was thinking poetically without being a poet, it was also true for herself, because the "back of [her] mind" was full of "a rather large part of German poetry".[36] Not only did she never share "the unfounded disdain of poetic insight on the part of those who extol the exactness of 'scientific' truth claims",[37] but she was spontaneously making *correspondances* and spontaneously perceiving the world as producing *correspondances*, although in dark times this world had been somehow broken or emptied. Her conception of the world echoed Baudelaire's perception of Nature.

Arendt's Conception of Politics as Public Wanderings

According to Arendt, as to Baudelaire, the various domains of the world communicate. No barriers define them separately, so that they naturally overlap, and produce "passages" among themselves. At first sight it means that what happens in one sphere influences other spheres, and sometimes radically transforms them. In *The Human Condition* Arendt establishes a relation between "the situation created by the sciences" and the political area.[38] Not only have the discoveries of modern sciences affected the political area, she argues, but they may also have changed its very nature. However such influences are able to occur only because the different domains are connected by *affinities,* which means that the events of one realm echo the events of another, and share the same structure, the same meaning, or the same purpose. In *Between Past and Future* Arendt suggests a possible paradoxical connection between religious faith and freedom.[39] She also claims that "The performing arts [...] have indeed a strong affinity with politics".[40] Yet, she notes that this affinity is not "a definition but a metaphor, and the metaphor becomes completely false if one falls into the common error of regarding the state or government as a work of art".[41] The world is made of bridges between its different realms but these bridges are "metaphors", namely passages, not complete identification. Furthermore, only "poetic thinking" allows one to distinguish them for they are *metaphors*: "Since Homer the metaphor has borne that element of the poetic which conveys cognition... Metaphors are the means by which the oneness of the world is poetically brought about".[42] In "Thinking and Moral Considerations" Arendt emphasizes the link between poetry and thinking: "Heidegger... [stated] that thinking and poetry (*denken* and *dichten*) were closely related; they were not identical but sprang from the same root. And Aristotle, whom so far no one has accused of writing "mere" poetry, was of the same opinion: philosophy and poetry somehow belong together".[43] Hence she recognizes that only the specific *correspondance* between thinking and poetry makes it possible to perceive *all* the worldly *correspondances.*

Arendt shared with Baudelaire[44] the idea that the *correspondances* - influences and affinities - between domains of the world imply people's movements within it. Like Baudelaire she understood mankind as passing, wandering through the world: "this collection of essays and

articles is primarily concerned with persons - how they lived their lives, how they *moved in the world*"[45]. In "On Humanity in Dark Times" she refers to the people who "inhabit [the world] and move freely about in it".[46] The explicit project of *Men in Dark Times* was to relate biographies of men and women who changed place in the spatial world, as did Rosa Luxemburg, Waldemar Gurian, Walter Benjamin, Isak Dinesen, Bertold Brecht, and others. Their spatial movements and their "passages" were not summed up in their many flights from enemies, or international trips, as they also drifted from place to place inside their countries or cities as a way of life. Arendt even notices that Hermann Broch's novel *The Tempter* was meant to be called *The Wanderer*.[47] In "Walter Benjamin" she describes Paris as "the only one among the large cities which can be comfortably covered on foot", and suggests that the *passage-ways* that connect the great boulevards are "indeed like a symbol of Paris, because they clearly are inside and outside at the same time and thus represent its true nature in quintessential form".[48] However, her conception of life as a concert of worldly movements is considerably more extensive than a geographical idea. It includes wanderings through all corresponding realms: poetry and politics in the case of Brecht, different religions in the case of Gurian, spiritual trends in the case of Benjamin, social groups (Pope John XXIII), and even sexes (Isak Dinesen). Other examples of such conception may be found in her posthumous works *The Life of the Mind* and her lectures on Kant. In her reading of the *Third Critique*[49] she indeed attempts to discern a concept of political judgment in Kant's theory of the judgment of taste. In other words, she argues that political judgment is a kind of taste,[50] and that accordingly people get somehow into the political realm through their judgments of taste. In *Thinking,* moreover, the ability of shifting between concrete life and the domain of reflection is considered one of the principal characteristics of the political thinker's model, embodied by the "ideal-type" of Socrates, who "unified two apparently contradictory passions, for thinking and acting... [in the sense of] being equally at home in both spheres and able *to move from one sphere to the other* with the greatest apparent ease, very much as *we ourselves constantly move back and forth* between experiences in the world of appearances and the need for reflecting on them".[51]

The original element of Arendt's conception of worldly "wanderings" is her emphasis on their *publicity.* All those of whom she told the story had been committed to *show*[52] through their moving in the world who they were and what they were able to do. The passages through different geographical and non-geographical spaces of the public world (from literature to politics or from poetry to thinking, etc.) are the basis of disclosure. "Moving through" makes people public, which means that it makes them *real.*[53] However, as well-known the concept of public revelation developed in *The Human Condition* is considered the core of Arendt's political theory, and of her definition of the political. As a result public wanderings should be regarded as essentially political. But in *The Human Condition* disclosure is also identified with noticeable "actions and speeches". (This issue is the starting point of the "interpretive battle"[54] about Arendt's thought, some commentators emphasizing the *free intersubjective communication* allowed by deeds and words, others focusing on the *competition* or *performance* apparently inherent in Arendt's concept of political publicity.[55]) The striking problem is that if we turn back to *Men in Dark Times*, we have to admit that except for Rosa Luxemburg none of the persons described as revealing himself or herself in the world had ever been a political agent, nor had he or she acted politically. None of them ever appeared in the public space in the way Greek heroes or modern politicians did. If there is any coherence in Arendt's work Benjamin's, Dinesen's and Jarrell's lives have to be regarded in some way as political. But at the same time, these people obviously did not disclose themselves through political words and deeds and were not involved in politics. Is there any way out of this paradox?

There is, if we realize that *The Human Condition* is an unfinished project. Arendt intended to write a book in German (she discussed the idea with her publisher, R. Piper), which would have been called *Introduction to Politics.* It was supposed to start where *The Human Condition* ends,[56] and in it she planned to provide a comprehensive definition of the political. The work was never completed, and we are left with her description of the human condition which does not provide any definitive concept of the meaning of politics. It does establish a framework, namely the necessity of a distinction between public and private spaces in order to achieve freedom and

equality, but it does not determine the meaning of political life for modern people. This determination is missing not because Arendt, overcome by the difficult conditions of "dark times", would have been an anti-modern theorist longing for Greek heroic politics, but because she did not write the theoritical book that would have defined it.

Nevertheless, in "What is Freedom" Arendt states: "Whatever occurs in this space of appearances is political by definition, even when it is not a direct product of action".[57] All lives that appear in public are political, whether or not involved in political action. What makes "words and deeds" political is that they are visible, not that they are related to what we generally understand as glorious political activities. In a letter to Jaspers of 1955, where she confesses her discomfort in academic life, Arendt writes: "I don't ever want to go through that again! Curiously enough, the thing about it I really can't tolerate is, of all things, *the political aspect - being in the public eye* every day".[58] Life on university campus, teaching, are considered political because they imply publicity. Accordingly, the political is the web of all the visible passages through the various realms of the public world. It is the "theatrical" disclosure of individuals' wandering lives through the worldly *correspondances*. Arendt's summary of Waldemar Gurian's conception of the political seemingly fits her own: "His political sense therefore became essentially a sense for the dramatic in history, in politics, in all contacts between man and man, soul and soul, idea and idea".[59]

III. Storytelling as Disclosure.

As stated, Arendt never wrote the theoretical book that would have defined the essence of politics. Nevertheless she gave full expression of her understanding of the political through her definition of storytelling and her use of it as method of political writing.

The Political Nature of Stories

In a famous chapter of *The Human Condition* Arendt explains that storytelling is a relevant way of relating politics because action produces stories: "the reason why each human life tells its story and why history ultimately becomes the storybook of mankind, with many actors and speakers and yet without any tangible authors, is that both are the outcome of action".[60] Stories

result from actions, and then relate them, so that actions and speeches become the content of these stories. It may therefore seem that stories, that chart words and deeds, are the recollection of active involvement in politics. However, actions and speech are not the primary condition of stories. With no particular words and deeds, there would certainly be no story at all, yet the *possibility* of stories would still exist. Arendt stresses that something comes before words and deeds, as their principle, and, as such, as the essence of stories. It is *courage*, namely the *willingness of disclosure*:

> The hero the story discloses needs no heroic qualities; the word "hero" originally, that is, in Homer, was no more than a name given each free man who participated in the Trojan enterprise and about whom a story could be told. The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self. The extent of this original courage, *without which action and speech and therefore, according to the Greeks, freedom, would not be possible at all,* is not less great and may even be greater if the "hero" happens to be a coward.[61]

Action, speeches, and therefore freedom, produce stories, but the willingness to expose oneself is prior to them, and is as such the true condition of every day politics and of stories that relate actions. Since "whatever occurs in this space of appearances is political by definition", Arendt suggests that the political exists independently of *specific* actions and speeches, namely even "if the 'hero' happens to be a coward", so long as he or she has the original courage to go out of his or her private space. Indeed "to leave one's private hiding place" does not immediately involve acting and speaking. As Arendt's mythological example emphasizes dramatically, to expose oneself consists first in taking part in "the Trojan enterprise", which, even before being a war is an expedition, a *trip*, no matter how one eventually behaves on the battlefield. The disclosure is the acceptance of leaving home (the "private hiding place") behind, in order to move into the world. The "moving disclosure" - the political - is also called *participation* and has two meanings: in his or her decision to *take part in* the world of appearances the "political hero" becomes *a part of* it. Political participation means an active will to be there, and related to this is the fact that one occupies a particular place in the web of worldly *correspondances*.

Accordingly, a "political" story can be told of anyone who discloses himself or herself through wandering in the world: "In Homer, the word *heros* has certainly a connotation of distinction, but of no other than every free man was capable".[62] In that context, *Men in Dark Times* may be regarded as dealing more specifically than *The Human Condition* with what Arendt considered political, for it consists of stories of wanderers in modern times. It is her real "political theory" because it explicitly describes the "moving disclosure" of "heroes" (would they be cowards) who participated in the public world through their passages between its different realms. As Elisabeth Young-Bruehl observed, Arendt's stories were of many kinds, from "etiological tales" to biographies, but in all cases, "she told of people in the world, not of the worlds in people"[63]: her concern was of a political kind, and not of a psychological one. Politics is participating in trips through the web of worldly *correspondances,* and stories that describe them are the writing of politics.

But why are *stories* a proper way to draw the political trajectories of people in the world? Why may stories relate what Arendt understands as the political? Because stories are one of the worldly realms of revelation. In revealing heroes, they turn out to be a sphere of disclosure through which heroes - appearing people - wander. Telling about heroes' lives, they prove to be a public aspect of these lives; giving individual life a scene to appear in, they are political by nature. They are the disclosure of all disclosures, and as such they are also a part of these disclosures. Homer showed emphatically the political nature of stories when he told stories about heroes who were true "politicians". But all stories have a political nature.

Political Stories as Illumination

Then why are stories more political than poetry or theory? To answer that question, David Luban resumes Arendt's analysis of the concept of history and divides it into four ways of recollecting memory and immortalizing glorious actions, "four ages of immortality". The first is ancient Greek poetry, singing the deeds of mythological heroes. The second is Athenian political life, the *polis,* commemorating its heroes. The third is historical narrative, which "becomes essential when the political community cannot keep memory alive". And the fourth is the age of

modern science, attempting to discover the laws that govern historical processes.[64] Arendt, Luban rightly argues, used a narrative that differs from all these methods and particularly from historical narrative, for it is not supposed to extract general meanings from particular events. Her storytelling, he says, does not carry with it any lesson, although it contains a meaning.[65] Yet, Luban does not really succeed in getting any further in his understanding of Arendt's original narrative because he narrows the field of political writing to commemoration and remembrance of "great deeds".[66] In other words, like other commentators he regards Arendt's concept of politics as a concept of *heroic performance*.

I suggest maintaining Luban's distinction of four "ages" in a different perspective. Poetic metaphors, historical narrative, and scientific theory obviously share the same idea of commemoration, as they are different ways of *writing history for remembrance*. As Arendt stresses in her "Reply" to Voegelin, "all historiography is necessarily salvation and frequently justification"[67]. She also explains in *Men in Dark Times* that poetic and historical narratives share an attempt to "master" the past.[68] The Greek *polis*, however, was not a writing, but a concrete political space, namely a realm of public, present appearances. These appearances simply occurred, even before being immortalized. Indeed, people who disclosed themselves even happened to be cowards, so that about them no particular action was to be remembered. We should note that although in some places Arendt describes Athens with quite a Hegelian nostalgia of glorious sacrifices of the individual to the community, and that in "The Concept of History" she refers to the Greek concepts of glory and greatness, she also mentions the public realm as the domain of *simple* public life[69]. In the end, the center of Athenian public life was no more the battlefield or the speakers' platform than the market place or the amphitheater. This life was made of passages through these different realms, which only sometimes resulted in glorious actions and speeches to be remembered. What was so special in Athens, according to Arendt, is that people could freely participate in these domains and activities, while they were precisely not immortal heroes but only simple citizens.

Like the *polis*, Arendt's narrative is a realm of publicity, not of memory. It is not poetic or historical, but political, because it is *per se* a public apparition of life. Storytelling as political writing proves to be a part of the political and not a distant comment on politics. Arendt wrote in the Preface to *Rahel Varnhagen* that "It was never my intention to write a book *about* Rahel... What interested me solely was to narrate the story of Rahel's life as she herself might have told it".[70] Her biography of Rahel was supposed to be an *autobiography*, an auto-revelation on paper of Rahel's own life. Hence I argue that Arendt's purpose to catch the personal participation in the world through political stories, namely "*[w]ho* somebody is or was", and not *what* he or she was,[71] has nothing to do with remembrance. It is distinct from any kind of historiography precisely because it is related to the public essence of every simple life that comes out in every possible domain of revelation. The purpose of political stories, says Arendt, is to *illuminate* and not to commemorate:

> That even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and in their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth - this conviction is the inarticulate background against which these profiles were drawn.[72]

Stories can illuminate because the people they tell about are light in the world: they came out of their hiding place and showed themselves, namely put themselves under the light of publicity. In fact, these people showed us that there is a way and a place to appear: they *reflected* to us the light of the worldly public spaces, the whole structure of the corresponding world. Political stories, then, are the reflection of this reflection through writing. And this is why they are *illuminations*.

Although she denied it, Arendt explained her method or "the basic assumption of [her] investigation" at the end of the first part of *The Life of the Mind*. There she quoted a few lines of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in order to clarify her purpose: she has dealt with fragments of the past after their sea-change into pearls and coral.[73] She used the same quotation and the same metaphor in her chapter on Benjamin, so that she seemingly identified her writing with his. But she never said that Benjamin, or she herself, descended like pearl divers to the bottom of the

sea "to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and carry them to the surface" in order to remember them.[74] She *did* say that in Benjamin's case "The main work consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d'etre* in a free-floating state, as it were".[75] Reinforcing the metaphor of light and illumination, the mutual "illustration" indicates that the activity of a pearl diver through stories is to bring to light elements that will illuminate each other, and, through these "echoing" lights, illuminate the whole world.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Arendt's writing is a reaction to dark times. Stories are an effective tool against darkness because the political is worldly disclosure and stories are the bright reflection of this disclosure. They do not intend to nostalgically commemorate a golden age or a broken tradition. They lighten dark times, and show that even in such times there still is room for disclosure, for the political. And they do it precisely in a period when people are *hiding*. Arendt's attempt to illuminate dark times is related to the obscure condition of pariah peoples that the Nazis tried to annihilate.

III. Stories in the Dark

The Darkest Side of Darkness

As *The Origins of Totalitarianism, The Jew as Pariah, Eichmann in Jerusalem* and many articles show, the Jewish condition and the fate of the Jewish people were among Arendt's central preoccupations, if not the central ones. Using Bernard Lazare's terminology, Arendt regarded the Jewish condition of the two centuries before the genocide as divided into three ways of dealing with its "difference": the "*parvenu*" way, or the readiness to compromise to be a part of society; the "pariah" way, namely radical exclusion, referring principally to unemancipated eastern European Jews; and the "conscious pariah" way, which was some emancipated Jews' attitude of struggle in order to get a place in the world and stay Jews. But Arendt authoritatively showed that the "*parvenu*" and "conscious pariah" traditions lost their relevance when all Jews were deprived of their political rights,[76] and no country made any effort to offer them a political solution. The moment all Jews were considered stateless, they lost their place in the world and

became *worldless*. Furthermore, Arendt demonstrates a specific link between non-belonging and death, the latter coming as the final and complete realization of the former: the Nazis first isolated the Jews from all social and political contexts, then kept them out of all *spaces*, concentrating them into ghettos and camps, and finally destroyed them, excluding them from life. Worldlessness, said Arendt, is the non-political: "remember that being a Jew does not give any legal status in the world",[77] and the danger of the non-political is death.

At this point Arendt's uses of the Greek distinction between public and private spaces proves to have a new breadth. It indicates the readiness to consider the whole world as made of spheres of belonging, which would leave no possibility of absolute exclusion. In Athens, those who were relegated into the private realm still had a place to be in: "even those excluded from the world could find a substitute in the warmth of the hearth and the limited reality of family life".[78] The genocide, however, showed that a new situation and a new kind of persons appeared: the situation of radically non-belonging people.[79] Arendt did certainly not mean that we should go back to the Greek concept of private space because it could be a refuge of the kind that was missing during the war. She meant that in our times we should emphasize the idea of the right of everybody to belong to somewhere, and she strongly claimed that this somewhere should be political. Hence in her thought the example of the Greek private space functions at two unrelated levels: it shows the importance of keeping some aspects of life in intimacy in order to allow others go outside to light; it also shows the crucial importance of giving everybody the right to belong.

When Arendt stressed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that "[t]o be a slave was after all to have a distinctive character, a place in society - more than the abstract nakedness of being human and nothing but human",[80] she was drawn to a severe critique of the Declaration of human rights of the French Revolution. She pointed out three major paradoxes in the 18th-century concept of rights. First, these rights were "reckoned with an 'abstract' human being who seemed to exist nowhere"; second, they proved to be rights of *citizens* so that "[t]he whole question of human rights... was quickly and inextrixcably blended with the question of national

emancipation"[81]; lastly, the idea of an abstract humanity obviously contradicted that of national citizenship. It occurred then that human rights could not be guaranteed by any law, for they themselves were supposed to be the basis of all laws. For all these reasons, they were unenforceable in the case of people who were not citizens of nation-states. Arendt concluded: "It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man"[82]. She argued that the so-called human rights did not really refer to the basic human condition, which should be respected in all cases, for the loss of freedom, property, equality, etc., " does not entail absolute rightlessness". There is however one right whose loss is fatal and means the end of the human condition: it is the right to "a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective", "the right to have rights (and that means to live in a framework where one is judged by one's actions and opinions)". [83]

The "right to have rights" includes three elements: a place or framework in the world, self-expression through opinions and actions, and others' consideration or "judgment" of this expression. In sum, it is the right to stand in a space of disclosure. The basic human right, according to Arendt, is not "political" in the sense that it would be guaranteed by the political sphere. By itself it is *the political*. It is the right to appear in the world as a person, namely *to have a role on the political scene.*[84]

Here Arendt's concept of disclosure is undoubtedly becoming more complex. What is at stake in public revelation is not only one's ability to appear, but one's ability to be judged for the quality of one's appearance. It is related to others. Besides, the right to be judged contains the right to "respond" about oneself, to be responsible.[85] Disclosure implies the right to justify, or explain, or deny, or confess one's own self, one's very nature as disclosure. It implies the right of the individual to be "verbalized". Accordingly, Arendt's idea of disclosure entails that of discussion or communication between different persons: revelation means the revelations of many, *plus words* about these revelations. The passages through the public realms of the world, or public "roles", include discursive contacts with other "participants". While they go through domains that respond to each other, responsible individuals respond to each other about themselves. But if responsible

disclosure is communication, then communication is light. Arendt emphasized the identity between disclosure, responsibility, communication, and light in dark times all along *Men in Dark Times,* for example in her life story of Pope John XXIII, or in the chapters on Herman Broch and Bertold Brecht. But it is undoubtedly in her stories about Jaspers's life and work that this issue is stressed the most:

> For him, responsibility is not a burden and it has nothing whatsoever to do with moral imperatives. Rather, it flows naturally out of an innate pleasure in making manifest, in clarifying the obscure, in illuminating the darkness. His affirmation of the public realm is in the final analysis only the result of his loving light and clarity. He has loved light so long that it has marked his whole personality... to take it upon oneself to answer before mankind for every thought means to live in that luminosity in which oneself and everything one thinks is tested.[86]

She concluded that "Jaspers's thought is spatial because it forever remains in reference to the world and to the people in it... Thought of this sort, always 'related closely to the thoughts of others,' is bound to be political *even when it deals with things that are not in the least political*; for it always confirms that Kantian 'enlarged mentality' which is the political mentality *par excellence*."[87] The political is the ability to appear, namely be responsible, or communicate, or illuminate through passages between all existing domains of the public world.

In her stories Arendt emphasized the political responsibility of her "heroes". However, by contrast with Benjamin she never focused on the definition of the storyteller, and never enlarged her own concept of the "pearl-diver". Is the narrator only supposed to bring to the surface elements that are already "light" - the lives of "responsible" people - or is it his or her function to arrange what comes from the bottom of the sea in a way that would lighten it? In her chapter on Isak Dinesen, she somehow suggested that a storyteller has choices to make, which imply a kind of risk, for they sometimes bring to light things that should stay in obscurity. [88] In her "Reply" to Voegelin she explained that she had "parted quite consciously with the tradition of *sine ira et studio*", and refused to write in an "objective" manner in order not to renounce the "human faculty to *respond*"[89] adequately to each particular event. Nevertheless she never went thoroughly into these matters in her other writings. She insistently argued in *The Human Condition* that the political stories have heroes and audience but no objective and exterior author. But she did not

mention the narrator. This lack of reflection about the narrator, who is not an author, nor a participating hero, yet *reveals* the stories to the world, may be regarded as a lack of reflection about his or her *political* role, namely his or her *responsibility,* and may cause some difficulties to understand her work. For example, I am going to show that Arendt's "report" of Eichmann's trial in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* may provoke an uncomfortable feeling because it is incomplete. Its "missing stories" clearly prove that the narrator's choices sometimes relegate public elements into invisibility. As a result, according to her own conception of public responsibility Arendt should have explained and justified her storytelling "strategy" much more than what she did. Her refusal to do so indicates that her attempt to develop a worldly political thinking through storytelling[90], namely a thinking that appears "politically" and is a part of the visible world, has seemingly had some difficulty in bearing the consequences of her own definition of disclosure.

Storytelling's Responsibility: Eichmann's Story

Radically opposed to Jaspers, who represented light and was "what was left of *humanitas* in Germany"[91], stands Eichmann in Jerusalem, in his glass cage, refusing to be considered responsible after having hidden himself in Argentina. Through his constant use of cliches, Arendt argued, he showed his inability to communicate with others. His repeated claims that he just had obeyed orders proved his inability to justify himself and more generally to answer appropriately about his acts.

Arendt understood Eichmann's position as a complete "absence of thinking".[92] She "reported" the trial in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, but analyzed its meanings only some years later in *The Life of the Mind*. What is striking in the process of her reaching conclusions about the nature of evil and, by contrast, of thinking, is her confession that she reached them the very moment she saw Eichmann and the witnesses, namely at the moment of their worldly revelation. As we know, Arendt herself asked the *New Yorker* to be assigned to report the trial. She explained to Jaspers that she needed to "*look* at this walking disaster" because she had left Germany very early and had experienced "all this" very little.[93] On her arrival to Jerusalem she still understood the genocide in the terms she used in her wartime and post-war articles and in *The Origins of*

Totalitarianism: the killers were monsters, and what had been done was "radical evil".[94] But when she *saw* Eichmann, the categories she first believed in proved irrelevant:

> However, what I *was confronted with* was utterly different and still undeniably factual. I *was struck by a manifest* shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer - *at least the very effective one now on trial* - was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was *no sign in him* of firm ideological convictions...[95]

From Eichmann's manifest presence, from his physical and verbal appearance that she was confronted with, Arendt could deduce the meaning of his acts. Therefore she attempted to "report" in her book what Eichmann was really, namely how he *appeared* to be really, hence what he really had to be judged for. What he had to be judged for was identical with what he appeared to be: someone who became one of the biggest criminals of his time because of pure absence of thinking (which was very different from stupidity, she said)[96]. Through the "revelation" of his shallow presence Arendt realized that Eichmann should be considered like any other human being revealing himself or herself, and be judged for his acts only. To regard him as a monster was to play his game, namely his refusal to appear and be responsible. Accordingly she thought the trial had failed in its most important task, which was to recognize the meaning of Eichmann's disclosure.

The trial failed, but *she* tried to succeed. She told the story of Eichmann and his acts, revealed him, and asked her readers to judge. In a certain sense, she *forced* him to appear through her storytelling in a stronger way than the prosecution did through the trial. However, while she was discovering that Eichmann was not a monster[97] she also was confronted by the fact that the victims were not saints, just innocent people. The problem is that she did not devote a single "story" to the concrete victims that perished, and only a very short chapter to the witnesses' testimonies. Amazingly, Arendt, who concentrated so much on the Jewish condition and fate, never wrote about those Jews, about the Gypsies, or about other communities that had been deprived of their basic right to "responsible disclosure", and consequently "vanished". She told the life story of pariahs, like Rahel Varnhagen, and refugees who had to flee from country to

country, namely of people who had not lost *everything* yet, and were still struggling to somehow appear in the world. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* where everybody could expect to find at least some stories about the victims, one can only discover the story of Eichmann himself, while the Jews are mentioned as numbers of dead only.

Still, I argue that Arendt's silence on the victims and the dead is not due to mere insensitivity, but results from her understanding of the link between stories and the political. Nevertheless, I also intend to show that some necessary explanations are strangely missing in her report.

From her various writings on the history of the Jewish people, and her concept of disclosure, Arendt's silence about the dead victims may be first understood as follows. People who have been deprived of the basic human right to "respond"[98] have suffered worldlessness[99], and have consequently been deprived of any kind of appearance. Stories are one of the diverse spheres in which people disclose themselves, so that people who have disappeared "appear" in literally no stories. There is nothing "political" to be told about them, for they have undergone the worst: to be taken out of the world. The only thing to do about what has already be done is *remember,* but, as I have said above, the purpose of Arendt's political storytelling is not remembrance. She "reveals" Eichmann because she wants him to be judged, not remembered. Her storytelling is a non-theoretical way of writing political theory, not memory. In other words, it is illumination which should be able to oppose *future* darkness.

According to her own claim, Arendt exclusively focused on people who appeared during the trial because her purpose was precisely to write a "report" meant to reflect their disclosure, to reveal them through stories, and not to bring their memory alive. Barnouw rightly argues that "The report was not meant to support ritual mourning; the narrator, showing the inversion of morals, concentrated emotional and intellectual energy on the act of showing, not that of suffering".[100] In her answer to Scholem's criticism of her book, indeed, the distance between his interest and hers became evident:

> In my report I have only spoken of things which *came up* during the trial itself. It is for this reason that I could not mention the 'saints' about whom you speak. Instead I had to limit myself to the resistance fighters whose behavior, as I said, was the more admirable because it occurred under circumstances in which resistance

> had really ceased to be possible. There were no saints among the witnesses for the prosecution, but there was one utterly pure human being, old Grynszpan, whose testimony I therefore reported at some length. On the German side, after all, one could also have mentioned more than the single case of Sergeant Schmidt. But since his was the only case mentioned in the trial, I had to restrict myself to it.[101]

In stating that there were no saints in the trial Arendt did not refer to the question of who has to be included in a remembrance narrative and how. Scholem's concern, on the contrary, was historical and related with the idea of commemoration. In this context he argued that some of the victims of the genocide should be remembered as saints, for they had in some way acted heroically. Arendt's silence about them, he stressed, proved not only her lack of *Herzenstakt*, but also a scientific error: "this is not the way to approach the scene of that tragedy".[102] In fact the two of them were not speaking on the same level, and not answering each other. If, according to Arendt, the discussion had been about the memory of the dead, she could have easily argued against Scholem that the victims of the genocide were not saints, but should be remembered although they were not, and precisely because they were not. But that is not what she meant when she told Scholem there were no saints in the trial. What she meant was not related to remembrance but resulted from her conception of stories as disclosure. She did not *see* saints during the trial, so she could not tell their story.

The problem is that she did not relate the story of simple people she *did* see either. She stayed silent about the dead she heard about, and for unclear reasons she also refused to report most of the testimonies. She wrote that the witnesses did not know the "rule of simplicity" and were unable to tell a story,[103] and it seems that it is why *she* did not report their words. She made a very specific choice among the testimonies, and only told the story of those who in her mind *lightened* the trial, while she set aside those who, she thought, made for obscurity. Old Grynszpan had never performed any known action of a "saint" but was of a "shining honesty".[104] The telling of Anton Schmidt's story by Abba Kovner had been "like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impenetrable, unfathomable darkness"[105]. Although many other people testified, namely appeared in the hall and recalled the stories of relatives or friends in addition to their own, she hardly gave them any place in her book. Her claim to be objective, which she was obviously not,

and her refusal to justify her own choices as a narrator uncomfortably perplexed her readers, who themselves did not always succeed in understanding and explaining their own feelings.

Undoubtedly a reflection on the storyteller's role would have helped her explain her choices to her readers and perhaps revise them. In her Postscript to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* she stated:

> The focus of every trial is upon the person of the defendant, a man of flesh and blood with an individual history, with an always unique set of qualities, peculiarities, behavior patterns, and circumstances. All the things that go beyond that, such as the history of the Jewish people in the dispersion, and of anti-Semitism, or the conduct of the German people and other peoples, or the ideologies of the time and the governmental apparatus of the Third Reich, affect the trial only insofar as they form the background and the conditions under which the defendant committed his acts. All things that the defendant did not come into contact with, or that did not influence him, must be omitted from the proceedings of the trial and consequently from the report on it.[106]

But even there she did not consider her responsibility as narrator. Indeed she denied a simple fact: while she told the story of the influences on Eichmann, and the story of his direct acts and decisions, she forgot the *stories of the consequences* of his acts. She did report the stories of his decisions to deport and kill, not the stories of the living individuals' deportations and killings. Yet Eichmann had to be judged for acts that had consequences, and these consequences were an inseparable part of the trial. Arendt's treatment of the facts reflected perfectly the way Eichmann dealt with them. Nevertheless his victims had undergone experiences that could be recalled independently of *his* point of view, for the consequences of any act depend on it but also transcend it. To that extent the readiness to tell the stories of the victims could have been not essentially bound to mourning or remembering, but to the meaning of Eichmann's acts till their very end.

IV. Conclusion

Arendt understood the political in a way that made her work become a part of the political. She regarded the political as the right of every person to reveal himself or herself in every worldly realm. As a result, her own storytelling as a specific domain of revelation was a part of the political, in which "responsible heroes" could appear. However, she never consistently tried to define the role of the narrator and determine to which extent he or she was a part of the

political world. Her silence on this issue led her to be sometimes misunderstood, particularly when she published *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In Arendt's political stories, the responsible lives of individuals became lightened, but that of the narrator somehow remained in the dark.

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[1] See Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains.' A Conversation with Gunter Gaus", *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954* (New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), p. 1, and "A Reply" [to Eric Vogelin's review of *Origins of Totalitarianism*], *Review of Politics* 15 (1953), p. 80.

[2]On Arendt's "independence" see Margaret Canovan, "Hannah Arendt as a Conservative Thinker", *Hannah Arendt. Twenty Years Later*, edited by Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England :The MIT Press, 1996), p.11; Melvyn A. Hill, "Introduction" to *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. x.; Ernest Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking," *Social Research*, vol. 44, (Spring 1977), pp. 160-82.

[3]Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, July 24, 1963, *The Jew as Pariah* (New York: Grove Press: 1978), p.250.

[4]Hannah Arendt, "Action and the Pursuit of Happiness," lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1960, Library of Congress, MSS Box 61, 1.

[5] See Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking".

[6] Lisa Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[7] David Luban, "Explaining Dark Times: Hannah Arendt's Theory of Theory", *Social Research*, vol. 50 (Spring 1983), p. 218.

[8] Seyla Benhabib, "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative", *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No.1 (Spring 1990), p.188.

[9] Disch, *Hannah Arendt*, pp.162-3.

[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 163-4.

[11] Luban, "Explaining Dark Times", p. 246.

[12] See Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," p. 4; see also *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1992), p. 31.

[13] Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures 1* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), pp. 50-1

[14] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 6.

[15] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains", p. 2.

[16] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains", p. 11.

[17] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1963), pp. 17-8, 107; "On the Nature of Totalitarianism - An Essay in Understanding", in *Essays in Understanding*, p. 360; *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, p. 160.

[18] These interpretations include, as already noted, Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy;* and also Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dana

R. Villa, "The Philosopher versus the Citizen," *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No.2 (April 1998), pp. 147-72;and Phillip Hansen, *Hannah Arendt. Politics, History and Citizenship* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993). In addition see the brilliant study by Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces. Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

[19] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 3.

[20] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains", p. 11.

[21] See Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 138-48; and Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, p. 95.

[22] "...people here feel themselves responsible for public life to an extent I have never seen in any European country", *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, p. 30.

[23] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p.11.

[24] See, among the incredibly large feminist critique of Arendt, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, "Hannah Arendt among Feminists" in *Hannah Arendt. Twenty Years Later*, pp. 307-324; Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992), p. 91; "Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's Concept of Public Space", *History of the Human Sciences* 6, No.2 (1993), pp. 97-114; Mary G. Dietz, "Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics", in *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, edited by Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carol Pateman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University State, 1991), pp. 232-52; Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public", *Political Theory* 9, No. 3 (August 1981), pp. 327-52; Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 203-14.

[25] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 65.

[26] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 42. It could be said without opposing Arendt's view, although she *did not say it*, that from the moment economic and family issues happen to be part of the public realm and of the issues debated in common, they should be characterized by equality, freedom and justice. But then on the side should exist an untouched sphere of privacy. Arendt does not try to imagine this "new" privacy, for she does not believe society able to respect any privacy. This pessimism is obviously caused by her experience of totalitarianism.

[27] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, pp. 4-5.

[28] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 10.

[29] The English translation in Benjamin's *Illuminations* is: "Nature is a temple whose living pillars/Sometimes give forth a label of words". See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 183-184.

[30] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 183-184.

[31] As long-resounding echoes from afar/Are mingling in a deep, dark unity/Vast as the night or as the orb of day/ Perfumes, colors, and sounds commingle.

[32]Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess* , translated by Richard and Clara Winston (London, Jerusalem, New York, East and West Library: 1957), p. xi; Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Thinking* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 211; Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking", p. 162; Disch, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 108.

[33] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains", p. 13.

[34] Yet, it has to be stated that she did not refer either to Goethe's concept of *Wahlverwandtschaft*, "elective affinity". About the concept of affinity, its dynamic and static elements, and the difference between Goethe's and Baudelaire's concepts, see Michael Lowy, *Redemption and Utopia* , translated by Hope Heaney (London, The Athlone Press, 1992), pp. 6-13.

[35]Two noteworthy exceptions are Paul Valery's sentence "Tantôt je pense et tantôt je suis", which appears at the end of *The Life of the Mind. Thinking* (p. 197) and Paul Eluard's "Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament" at the beginning of *Between Past and Future* (p. 3).

[36] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains", p. 13.

[37] Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking," p. 166. About Arendt's poetic thinking, see also Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*, pp.155 and 172.

[38] Arendt, *the Human Condition*, p. 4.

[39] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 168.

[40] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 154.

[41] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 153.

[42] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p.166.

[43] Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Social Research*, Vol. 38 (1971), p.419.

[44] "L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles". "Man wends his way through forests of symbols".

[45] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. vii.

[46] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 10.

[47] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 114.

[48]Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 175.

[49] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[50] See Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*, p.147. It is not my purpose here to determine if she has read Kant correctly or not.

[51] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind-Thinking*, p. 167 (my emphasis).

[52] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, pp. 5, 59, 75, 79, 95, 224, 252, 266, etc.

[53] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. viii.

[54] Dana R. Villa, "Hannah Arendt: Modernity, Alienation, and Critique", in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, edited by Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 181.

[55]On this conflict of interpretations, see Craig Calhoun, "Plurality, Promises, and Public Spaces," in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, pp.232-59.

[56] See documents related to the book's project: "Rockefeller Foundation", Library of Congress, Container 23 (formerly 20), p.0132872; published in German in *Was ist Politik?* (Munchen: R. Piper GmbH & Co, 1993) and in French *Qu'est-ce que la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).

[57] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p.155.

[58] *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, p. 260 (my emphasis).

[59] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 259.

[60] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 164.

[61] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 166 (my emphasis).

[62] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 351.

[63] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, "Hannah Arendt's Storytelling", *Social Research*, Vol. 44 (1977), p.186.

[64] Luban, "Explaining Dark Times, pp. 219-24.

[65] Luban, "Explaining Dark Times", p. 241.

[66] Luban, "Explaining Dark Times", p. 219.

[67] Arendt, "A Reply", p. 77.

[68] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 21.

[69] See for example Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 45-53.

[70] Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, p. xi.

[71] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 166.

[72] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. ix.

[73] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Thinking*, p. 212.

[74] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 205.

[75] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 202.

[76]Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah* , p. 66.

[77] Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, p. 65.

[78] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 59.

[79] Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, p. 56.

[80] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1963), p. 297.

[81] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 291.

[82] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 300.

[83] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 296.

[84] The Latin word *persona*, meaning "character", has an Etruscan origin meaning "mask of theater".

[85] See David Ingram's interesting comparison between Arendt's and Derrida's concepts of responsibility, "Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Trial of (Post) Modernity or the Tale of Two Revolutions", in *Hannah Arendt. Twenty Years later*, pp. 221-50, principally pp. 228-38. About the moral aspects of Arendt's concept of responsibility see Garrath Williams, "Love and Responsibility: a Political Ethic for Hannah Arendt", *Political Studies* (1998), XLVI, pp. 937-50.

[86] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 75.

[87] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 79 (my emphasis).

[88] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 106.

[89] Arendt, "A Reply", pp. 78-9 (my emphasis).

[90] As already reminded, Disch names this paradox "situated impartiality". See *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 161.

[91] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 76.

[92] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Thinking*, p. 4.

[93] *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, pp. 409-10 (my emphasis).

[94] See for example*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 443; about the monstrosity of the killers, see for example "Keinen Kaddisch wird man sagen'", in *Aufbau*, June 19, 1942, or "The Image of Hell" in *Commentary* 2/3, September 1946 pp. 291-295; see also Jaspers's criticism of Arendt's early conception in *Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, p. 62. I therefore disagree with Richard J. Bernstein who argues that Arendt never shared such conception: see "Did Arendt Change Her Mind? From Radical Evil to the Banality of Evil", in *Twenty Years Later*, p. 132.

[95] Arendt, *The Life of The Mind. Thinking*, p. 4 (my emphasis).

[96] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 288.

[97]See Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, pp. 238-9. On *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see also Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); and Dana R. Villa, "The Banality of Philosophy: Arendt on Heidegger and Eichmann", in *Twenty Years Later*, pp. 179-196.

[98] See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 8.

[99] See Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," p. 17.

[100] Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, p. 238.

[101] Arendt to Scholem, *The Jew as Pariah*, p. 249 (my emphasis).

[102] Scholem to Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, p. 242.

[103] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 224.

[104] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 230.

[105] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 231.

[106] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 285-6.