How to Survive Totalitarianism. Lessons from Hannah Arendt.[1]

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Hannah Arendt opens The Origins of Totalitarianism by surveying the first half of the twentieth century, shaken by the collapse of empires, two world wars, totalitarianism, and creeping chill of the Cold War. A new political affect underlies these catastrophes, which divides people into "those who believe in human omnipotence […] and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives."[2] This polarization and breakdown in common standards of judgement requires a new form of comprehension. It demands "the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be" (O, viii). Over a half century later, a different audience turned to Arendt's work to comprehend a new reality in the wake of Donald Trump's election. Origins briefly sold out on Amazon. The Holocaust historian Timothy Snyder cited Arendt at length in his 'how-to' guide to resisting tyranny, while articles in the Los Angeles Review of Books, the Guardian, and the New York Review of Books regularly featured articles analyzing her thought.[3] Suddenly, Origins seemed to speak to 'fake news,' populism, and social media echo chambers. It spoke, in other words, to the emergence of separate realities.

Indeed, totalitarianism seeks to destroy "the whole texture of reality" (O, viii). To face up to—and resist—this reality it is essential to understand its fabric and not merely its political institutions. Totalitarianism insists that the true state of things is divorced from what appears, subsequently claiming its ideology is the only thing that can fully capture reality. These ideologies programmatically arrange facts to offer "the total explanation of the past, the total knowledge of the present, and the reliable prediction of the future." Ideological thinking is severed from the world individuals perceive through five senses "and insists on a 'truer' reality concealed behind all perceptible things" (O, 470-71). Totalitarianism erodes

not only how individuals keep touch with reality but also destroys "common sense," the collective organ that integrates individual sensory experience into a shared world. These political systems thus work at the level of perception. By changing what appears true,[4] they produce new realities in which the moral aberration of murder becomes a routine experience.[5]

The question of perception, appearance, and the senses points to the important role that aesthetics play in Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism. My use of aesthetics draws on the original Greek word aesthesis, meaning what pertains to sensory perception. Arendt never elaborated a theory of the aesthetic, but it flickers across her thinking on visibility, appearance, and the arts.[6] Throughout her oeuvre, sensory experiences are central to the expression of reality, and the work of art or literature contributes to this sense of the 'real' by creating durable objects that re-present—and thus bolster—the world. I argue that her work on totalitarianism presents an important source for her thinking on such aesthetic concepts.

My engagement with the aesthetics of totalitarianism via Arendt also invites a reevaluation of the connection between totalitarianism and aesthetics. Since the early days of Italian fascism and National Socialism, thinkers have accused totalitarianism of exploiting aesthetics to sublimate its violent aims into beautiful forms—what Walter Benjamin called the "introduction of aesthetics into political life."[7] My close reading of Arendt's writings on totalitarianism traces an alternative understanding of the 'aestheticization of politics.' I argue that totalitarianism directly targets aesthetic experience in the pursuit of political domination. Totalitarianism hollows out perception, a phenomenon I term 'totalitarian anaesthesia.' Without understanding the anaesthetic condition of totalitarianism's perceptual regime, we lack the full knowledge to combat its current permutations.

Totalitarianism seeks to destroy aesthetic experience. But aesthetic plurality and spontaneity also threaten totalitarianism. To understand this potential, I turn to Arendt's later thinking on artistic fabrication and metaphor. Far from entailing a retreat to autonomous

realms of thought, these aesthetic phenomena make reality concrete, and the works of art that emerge from aesthetic perception help construct a durable realm beyond the disorder of totalitarian ideology. Both aesthetic objects' materiality and the modes of perception they invite can help rebuild the perceptual world destroyed by totalitarianism's irreality (or 'alternative facts'). Aesthetics, I argue, are essential to understanding both Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism and, more broadly, the experiential texture of the world—for "facing up to, and resisting" violent political forces.

There are moments of confluence between Arendt's thinking on totalitarianism and aesthetics.[8] Fabrication, appearance, and common sense, concepts which are central to later works like The Human Condition and The Life of the Mind, are incipient in Origins. But this relationship remains largely undeveloped by either Arendt or scholarship on her, which tends to separate her historical and sociological inquiry into totalitarianism from her later analysis of the vita activa and thinking.[9] Aesthetic concerns have nonetheless inflected scholarship on her work. Research dealing with totalitarianism has noted the importance of storytelling for her philosophical and historical method.[10] Political scientists and philosophers have explored the role of aesthetic judgment in Arendt's work.[11] In turn, literary criticism has closely engaged with Arendt's work on both politics and culture, including "multidirectional" approaches to memory of the Holocaust and colonialism. Her relationships with writers like Walter Benjamin and Mary McCarthy, as well as Arendt's own literary criticism are well documented.[12] More recently, Cecilia Sjöholm's book, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, provides a brilliant demonstration of what an Arendtian aesthetics might entail and the most extensive analysis yet of the way aesthetic categories operate in Arendt's oeuvre.

Totalitarianism casts a long shadow that falls over much of this scholarship without becoming an explicit avenue of enquiry into Arendt's aesthetics. Yet by making totalitarianism an observable concept that operates across different phenomena—giving it an

aesthetic identity—Arendt made it possible to trace the lingering effects of totalitarianism in a political landscape no longer governed by it. Her criticism on the work of art also offers strategies for rebuilding the aesthetic void left in its wake. Through a close attention to the aesthetics of Arendt's own writing, I bring together these different strands together to understand how literature, art, and criticism can resist 'dark times.'

The 'Origins' of Aesthetics

The Origins of Totalitarianism may seem like an odd place to begin an exploration of the aesthetic dimension of Arendt's thought. It does not obviously address concepts such as fabrication, appearance, and common sense that are markers for the aesthetic in The Human Condition and The Life of the Mind. Nor does it focus on artworks or judgment, as found in her influential essay "The Crisis of Culture" or her lectures on Kant. Rather, Origins presents a historical and sociological enquiry into the emergence of totalitarianism, which also requires analysis of two other intertwined phenomena: antisemitism and imperialism. This leads to a somewhat 'lopsided' structure, which is reflected in the book's conceptual organization. The first two sections on antisemitism and imperialism are each roughly double the length of the final section on totalitarianism, which nevertheless provides the book's title. Imperialism is more important to totalitarianism's historical and political development, and helps clarify aspects of antisemitism,[13] but it is sandwiched in the middle. Situating the analysis of antisemitism at the beginning, then, suggests it is the most important 'element' in totalitarianism's emergence, even though Arendt argued antisemitism was a "catalytic agent" rather than an essential factor in this process.[14] However, this conceptual imbalance uncovers the importance of aesthetics in Origins—and Origins' importance for understanding how aesthetics develops in Arendt's thinking. Rather than trying to understand antisemitism,

imperialism, and totalitarianism in purely historical or political terms, aesthetics illuminates their relation.

Before I elucidate the aesthetic concepts that link these three phenomena, I will explore the aesthetic dimension of Arendt's thinking more broadly. Aesthetics can be defined in several ways. The most common understanding in philosophy deals with categories of beauty, standards of judgment, and the autonomy of the work of art, that is, the cultivation of sensorial experience into conceptual categories. Yet this intellectual tradition emerged from—and eventually sublimated—discourses on embodied sensory perception, what Terry Eagleton calls "the whole of our sensate life […] of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal biological insertion in the world."[15]

Origins mediates between these two elements of aesthetics, between "the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas." The movement between what Eagleton terms the "dense, swarming territory"[16] of sensate life and conceptualization is central Arendt's aesthetic approach to analyzing totalitarianism.[17] In a lecture delivered at the New School in 1954, she argued that "the elements of totalitarianism form its origins if by origins we do not understand 'causes.' […] Elements by themselves probably never cause anything. They become origins of events when they crystallize into fixed and definite forms."[18] In physics, the natural science that describes matter and energy, crystallization is a contingent process that transforms nebulous forms of liquid and gas into solid states. The concept of crystallization shapes Arendt's method in two important ways. First, the physical process parallels moving from the realm of abstractions to the level of the concrete, the identifiable, and the 'real' that constitute Arendt's central project: comprehension. Second, crystallization underpins Arendt's resistance to historical determinism, despite the use of the term "origins" in the book's title.[19] She accused contemporary sociological and historical

methods of preserving destructive elements of the past, like antisemitism or totalitarianism, by adducing an essential character to them.[20] By contrast, crystallization accounts for the contingent way historical 'elements'—antisemitism, imperialism, and racism—hardened into totalitarianism, without resorting to teleological narratives. By analyzing historical categories through this lens, Arendt also submits the raw physical energy of crystallization to aesthetic cultivation.

The aesthetic dimension of Arendt's method in Origins underpin the way aesthetic concepts emerge in the book. If crystallization accounts for the aesthetic process of giving ideas and sensations an appearance, then the sensory experience attached to the world of appearances is common sense. Rather than operating as an empty political epithet, common sense constitutes a people's shared judgments, perceptions, and understandings—it is a form of collective aesthetic experience.[21] All able-bodied human beings have the potential to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. But these are private, individual sensations. Common sense, on the other hand, cannot be reduced to a particular body; it unites the five senses and inserts them into a shared reality, "just as vision fitted man into the visible world."[22] This "sixth sense"—"the political sense par excellence"—is the sensibility of the body politic (LM, 50). As Sjöholm argues, "the plurality of the senses, in conjunction with the sheer variety of shapes, forms, objects, things, and persons that make up our world, contribute to our immediate grasp of appearances as somehow being real."[23] If vision makes the world visible, hearing makes the world audible, and touch makes it tangible, then common sense is an essential part of the world's realness. It provides that sense of concrete reality that the method of crystallization accounts for—and that totalitarianism tries to destroy.

While crystallization underpins Origins' aesthetic method and structure, common sense—an important concept in Arendt's later thinking—is more inchoate in this work, and she employs it somewhat unsystematically. At times she uses it to disparage the fallacies of

"utilitarian thinking" (O, 458) and traditional forms of enquiry (such as the kind of historiography her method opposes) that proved so feeble in the face of totalitarianism. At other times, it entails a shared perceptual framework. Despite this inconsistency, common sense illuminates totalitarianism's perceptual dimension.

The title of the book's first chapter, "Antisemitism as an Outrage to Common Sense," already indicates the term's ambivalence. The "outrage to common sense" refers to the way something as inconsequential as the "Jewish problem" could "set the whole infernal machine in motion" (O, 3). This understanding of common sense is related to conventional "cause and effect" thinking that equates the emergence of antisemitism with the rise of nationalism (O, 3). Arendt rejects these socio-economic explanations. Instead, she turns to aesthetic categories like appearance and performance to describe antisemitism's centrality to Nazi ideology. She argues that a "general weakening of political factors" at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries "brought about a situation in which reality and appearance, political reality and theatrical performance" parodied each other (O, 53). These conditions prepared the groundwork for Nazi antisemitism, which severs experience from ideology, eliding any narrative grounded in a sense of realness.[24] The "outrage to common sense" describes the discrepancy between Jews' minor status—their limited appearance within the political realm (O, 240)—and the monstrously disproportionate role they played in Nazism's ideological apparatus. Thus, Jews could supposedly control the flows of global capital while also steering the helm of international Communism. In other words, as Sjöholm argues, antisemitism "must be thought at the level of perception."[25]

Common sense thus has a dual meaning in Origins' first part. It is a holdover from earlier utilitarian ways of thinking that prove ineffectual in understanding the rise of antisemitism. But it also gestures towards perceptual relations and aesthetic appearance. The split between the two dimensions of common sense is equally apparent in Arendt's analysis

of imperialism, race, and racism. Instead of serving purely utilitarian motives, imperialism becomes "a movement of expansion for expansion's sake" that, like antisemitism, demonstrates "absurd disparities between cause and effect" (O, 131). Imperial expansion beyond the nation-state's ethnic and geographical borders produces the negative image of both aesthetic visibility and utilitarian thinking: a phantom economy in which the intersection of "superfluous money and superfluous men" produces "the most superfluous and unreal goods," namely gold and diamonds, which have no utilitarian purpose, being only a "symbol of mere wealth" (O, 188). Imperialism's phantom economy exists as a contentless form, separated from the supposedly rational rules of the market. It is bound up with race and racism, which also form a "phantom world" (O, 205) that suspends normal relations between perception and reality. Racism enabled imperialists to exist in a perceptual world devoid of consequences, in which racialized subjects (Arendt sarcastically but problematically uses the term "native savages" [O, 190]) could be massacred because they existed as "phantoms, unreal and ghostlike," lacking a "specifically human character" (O, 192).[26] They are "living abstractions" refused an aesthetic identity in a common world (O, 189). The "boomerang effect" (O, 155) will eventually bring this phantom racial economy of superfluous goods and humans back to Europe. Arendt's analysis of imperialism, then, demonstrates how it justifies the enslavement of racialized subjects by denying them a sensorial reality. This centers aesthetic, perceptual experience as a fundamental element of imperial expansion and, eventually, totalitarianism.

The phantom gestures towards the separation of reality and perception that Arendt will identify as a key component of totalitarianism and its destruction of common sense. The phantom world of racism has horrific material consequences. "Superfluous people" make up the stateless, unemployed, and dispossessed masses who are "deprived of expression within and action upon a common world" (O, 302). Some will join totalitarian movements; others

will be condemned to concentration camps, where they will become the "living dead"—the figure par excellence of the phantom world of antisemitism, racism, and the detritus of imperialism. In other words, Arendt demonstrates how the breakdown of common sense—a shared framework for understanding—has concrete political and social repercussions.

Sensory experience, the world of appearances, and perceptual reality are interwoven into Arendt's materialist analysis of antisemitism and imperialism. These phenomena's aesthetic dimensions provide a key, if not fully acknowledged, role in Arendt's project in the book's final section, which is to try and understand totalitarianism's novelty. It represents a break from not only previous political institutions and legal frameworks, but also a veritable explosion of all existing experiential modes (O, 460-61). As Bernard Crick notes, the breakdown of "the previous social order" is fundamentally a breakdown "of any possibility of ordinary people seeing the world as reasonable and predictable."[27] I argue, in other words, that there is something specific about totalitarianism's perceptual regime that pushes Arendt to revisit elements of her analysis of antisemitism and imperialism and to treat them as aesthetic concepts—to crystallize them—even if she never explicitly labels them as such.

The process of crystallizing antisemitism and imperialism into aesthetic categories brings me back to the book's structure. As I noted earlier, Origins' structure is a somewhat unbalanced. Antisemitism and imperialism occupy much more space than totalitarianism, Arendt's purported subject of analysis. While she draws historical connections between all three phenomena, she is reluctant to impose an overarching historical narrative. Another disconnection between the different sections is also apparent: Arendt refrains from explicitly referring to antisemitism or imperialism in her analysis of totalitarianism, evoking instead phenomena like the decline of the nation state, the power of the mob, and, less prominently but no less crucially, common sense in both its utilitarian and perceptual dimensions. When she returns to elements that traverse antisemitism, imperialism, and totalitarianism it is often

to highlight their aesthetic dimension—as if the extreme pressure totalitarianism exerts lays bare the perceptual conditions of its own emergence. Indeed, these phenomena crystallize as aesthetic in Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism, moving from her more concrete historical and sociological analysis in the earlier sections to an analysis of their perceptual dimensions through the lens of totalitarianism. Thus, antisemitism develops from a materialist explanation for the deterioration of Jews' social and political standing to a defining aspect of totalitarian selfhood, becoming "the intimate concern of every individual in his personal existence (O, 356). Similarly, the masses' loss of "social status" and "communal relationships" caused by widespread economic and social upheaval deprives them of a shared framework of "common sense" (O, 352). And imperialism's phantom racial economy ricochets back to Europe to produce millions of people who are not only uprooted, stateless, and homeless but subjected to an experiential condition of extreme aesthetic deprivation: loneliness, which defines totalitarianism's perceptual regime. Through the prism of totalitarianism, she reframes antisemitism and imperialism as aesthetic phenomena—perceptual regimes experienced at the sensorial, phenomenological, and existential level.

Totalitarian Anaesthesia

In the previous section, I explored the aesthetic dimension of crystallization and how common sense develops in Origins in relation to antisemitism and imperialism. These sections anticipate Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism's perceptual dimension, while her analysis of totalitarianism helps crystallize elements of antisemitism and imperialism as aesthetic. In this section, I will explore how totalitarianism's novelty lies not in its exploitation of aesthetics but in its hostility to aesthetic experience. Totalitarianism, I argue, produces an anaesthetic regime emptied of meaningful relations and experiences. This becomes apparent in the way Arendt introduces common sense in the "Totalitarianism"

section. She identifies it as a sensorial regime, rather than a functional necessity, at the same time she describes its destruction. The shift necessitates uncovering the perceptual conditions underpinning totalitarianism's economic, social, or political causes—the 'texture' of its reality. Totalitarianism's anaesthetic regime is evident in three interrelated areas: its destruction of common sense, the "fictitious" world of totalitarian ideology, and the existential crisis of loneliness.

Totalitarianism represents a series of violent forces: speed, constant motion, explosions, acceleration. These historical, social, and political shocks act upon the body politic's nervous system. When applied to sensory perception, this energy fragments common sense, "the experience of the materially and sensually given world […] which regulates and controls the other senses," into a vast undifferentiated daze of "unreliable and treacherous" data. People become unable to trust either their own "immediate sensual experience" or the plural experiences of others (O, 475-76). Whereas the messy contingency of the perceptual world may be tolerable when socio-political structures are relatively stable, the experience of widespread upheaval reveals the emptiness of utilitarian reasoning. As Arendt notes, the "masses" eventually refused to "believe in anything visible, in the reality of their own experiences," even though they still yearned for "a completely consistent, comprehensible, and predictable world" (O, 351). In this sense, totalitarianism completes the erosion of utilitarian thinking that had begun with imperialism and antisemitism. If common sense is the "mutual guarantee" that "men need in order to experience and live and know their way in a common world" (O, 477), then its breakdown results in material and existential 'homelessness.'[28]

In the face of this frightening destabilization, totalitarianism steps in to offer a logical explanation. But because the messy raw data of the perceptual world defies total reasoning, this logic must, as I noted in the introduction, become "emancipated from the reality that we

perceive with our five senses." It "insists on a 'truer' reality concealed behind all perceptible thing, dominating them from this place of concealment and requiring a sixth sense that enable us to become aware of it" (470-71). This "sixth sense" is ideology. It represents the second aspect of totalitarianism's anaesthetic identity. In Arendt's analysis, ideology does not describe an individual's belief system, which can shift over time and accomodate inconsistencies. It has a narrower sense designating an impossibly all-encompassing explanation for the state of the world (O, 470).[29] Totalitarianism produces alienated spheres of existence by severing reality from perception. Thus, one group of people could believe that Jews ritually murder Gentile children for their blood, while the other group gaped at the sheer irreality of it all. Combined with the breakdown in common sense, this monstrous ideological "supersense" becomes the anaesthetic condition of the alienated body politic (O, 458).

The combination of these two phenomena undermines the perception of realness, which contributes to the third element of totalitarian anaesthesia. At the beginning of Origins' final chapter, entitled "Ideology and Terror," Arendt argues that totalitarianism's "unprecedented" form relies upon a "basic experience" that has not yet served as "the foundation of a body politic and whose general mood" has never interpenetrated all levels of individual and political life (O, 461). This experience, made clear at the chapter's end, is loneliness. Loneliness is the culmination of totalitarian anaesthesia. Rather than describing an individual emotion, loneliness designates the radical loss of a commonly held world and thus a sense of reality. It underpins the "fictitious world" (O, 417) constructed by ideology. It differs from isolation, an affect I shall explore shortly, which occurs when the public, political sphere is destroyed but "the whole sphere of private life with the capacities for experience, fabrication, and thought are left intact." By contrast, loneliness extends to all spheres, destroying the very fabric of a common world (O, 474). One the one hand, individuals are subjected to a radical experience of 'homelessness'—they have no place in a

common world (O, 475). On the other hand, totalitarian terror creates "a band of iron" that squeezes people so closely together into "One Man of gigantic dimensions" (O, 465-66) that they no longer have any confidence in their own "sensual experience" (O, 476) and thus the experience of others. Totalitarianism, in other words, fatally damages what Arendt will later call the "space of appearances," which allows people to express individuality (HC, 7-8).

The logical end point of totalitarian anaesthesia is the concentration camp. It realizes totalitarianism's destruction of common sense, ideological irreality, and loneliness in spatial form. Echoing the phantom world of race and imperialism, Arendt uses ghostly, uncanny language to describe the camps: they are "images drawn from a life after death," constituting a "phantom world" (O, 445) populated by "living corpses" (O, 447) and "ghastly marionettes with human faces" (O, 455). Sometimes her language is starkly literal, captured by the inverted metaphor of a "corpse factory" (O, 459) that defamiliarizes both capitalist modes of productions and the totalitarian rationalization of murder. At other times, it is allegorical, transforming the figure of Lazarus into a parable for the reduction of humans to "a bundle of reactions" (O, 441), pure sensate beings without the shared framework of common sense to comprehend nervous stimuli. This anaesthetic world does not deaden "bestial" pain or suffering, which remains an important part of totalitarian terror (O, 441). Rather, the destruction of common sense and rise of loneliness mean this experience "lacks that structure of consequence and responsibility without which reality remains for a mass of incomprehensible data" (O, 445). The concentration camp eliminates "any expression of human behavior," transforming "the human personality into a mere thing" (O, 438). Like the living dead—retaining the outward form of human existence but emptied of sensation—sensory data become mere biological traces of extinct forms of experience. These camps are "laboratories" for experiments that activity go "against reality" (O, 392). They enabled totalitarian governments to test methods of terror—and, I would argue, anaesthesia—that

could be employed on the full population. The living dead and the concentration camp are the spectral imprint of aesthetic experience, yet they come to define totalitarianism's everyday experience.

For many scholars, totalitarianism, in particular fascism, represents the ultimate aestheticization of politics—the replacement of political representation with spectacle and the sublimation of beautiful forms.[30] To think of totalitarianism as anaesthetic departs from established narratives about the relationship between totalitarianism and aesthetics.[31] Scholars have also accused Arendt of advocating for an aesthetic form of politics through her idealization of political action as a performance that could be read in terms of artistic expression.[32] In fact, her analysis of totalitarianism provides a very different account. As we shall see shortly, Arendt strives to make reality concrete, what Margaret Canovan calls her "phenomenological impulse to get behind abstractions to experience."[33] In her analysis of totalitarianism, however, Arendt describes how it derealizes the world, emptying it of meaning and experience. Totalitarianism makes experience abstract.

Arendt would later triangulate the emptiness of totalitarian language, ideology, and phenomenological experience in her reflection on Eichmann, arguing that "his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think," and "no communication was possible with him" because "he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and presence of others, and hence against reality as such."[34] The novelty of this anaesthesia helps explain the way totalitarianism is able to take hold, for it releases individuals, such as Eichmann, from the need to reflect upon the world, offering them 'readymade' experiences that temporarily fill the affective void of disempowerment. In this realm, the outer form of sensory experience endures but, like the endless scrolling through a social media feed, it eventually erodes the sensation of reality. The senselessness of a system constructed by humans to make humans superfluous, the irreality of an ideology in which

truth and reality no longer have any connection, and the loneliness of a world in which individuals are severed from one another both physically and 'virtually' is anaesthetic.

Aesthetic Resistance

Thus far I have traced aesthetic elements of Arendt's method and thinking, including crystallization and common sense, in Origins. This, in turn, has led me to explore totalitarianism's anaesthetic dimension. Reframing the relation between totalitarianism and aesthetics in terms of anaesthesia challenges claims that totalitarianism and fascism exploit aesthetic experience. By contrast, I argue that totalitarianism empties reality of sensory experience and atomizes individuals, in the most extreme instance, reducing them to the living corpse of the concentration camp.

Is there a way out of this world that is at once both impenetrable and illusory? At first glance, Arendt's account of totalitarian anaesthesia leaves little room for agency, let alone any indication of resistance strategies or solutions. Yet amid this bleak landscape, I discern a brief glimpse of the kind of aesthetic activity needed to reconstruct a durable world and imbue it with sensory experience. This moment occurs near the very end of "Ideology and Terror," when she comes back to the hypothesis she offers at its beginning, namely, that totalitarianism relies upon the "basic experience" of loneliness, which "has never before served as the foundation of the body politic" (O, 461). Here, she distinguishes loneliness from isolation. Note how this distinction leads her to establish specific spheres of activity:

> Man insofar as he is homo faber tends to isolate himself with his work, that is to leave temporarily the realm of politics. Fabrication (poesis, the making of things), as distinguished from action (praxis) on one hand and sheer labor on the other, is always performed in a certain isolation from common concerns, no matter whether the result

> is a piece of craftsmanship or of art. In isolation, man remains in contact with the world as the human artifice; only when the most elementary form of human creativity, which is the capacity to add something of one's own to the common world, is destroyed, isolation becomes altogether unbearable. (O, 475)

"Ideology and Terror" acts as both a coda and a revision of the preceding discussion of totalitarianism. It provides her most succinct characterization of the way totalitarianism uses programmatic ideology to destroy common experience to achieve complete domination. Totalitarianism's perpetual motion destroys solid political structures and concrete experience. Arendt's evocation of fabrication—the meticulous making of things—is thus striking. Where does creative activity fit into this desolate sensorial regime? Jumping forward to Arendt's later thinking will help elucidate this problem.

Those familiar with Arendt's work will recognize in the quotation cited above an early articulation of the vita activa, the distinction between labor, work, and action that Arendt develops most extensively in The Human Condition. I will briefly outline it here for context: the cyclical, arduous activity of labor produces the immediate necessities needed for basic human survival, like food, water, and shelter—what Arendt terms "sheer labor" in the quotation above.[35] By contrast, work fabricates society's lasting structures, which culminate in the work of art. Although it takes place in isolation, work helps create the "human artifice" (as Arendt articulates it in Origins) that supports a common world; it embodies human emotions in durable forms that outlast mortal existence (HC, Ch. 3). This durability is not a metaphor—it is anchored in the concrete materiality of aesthetic objects, which lack functionality and thus last longer than objects like tables and chairs (HC, 167).[36] The aesthetic object's durability, in turn, produces a sense of realness, "as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art" (HC, 167). This concrete

experience underpins the third sphere of activity, political action (what Arendt terms praxis in the quote from Origins). In contrast to the relatively private sphere of work, the political realm is a space of appearances "where I appear to others as others appear to me" (HC, 198). It is a brightly lit stage that "comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action" (LM, 21). If work and fabrication produce a sense of realness, then the space of appearances transforms this into a shared sense of reality, or common sense. Common sense fits the sensory experience of the individual, who works in isolation, into a collective framework: "without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one's self, of one's own identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established without doubt" (HC, 208). Aesthetic work, political action, and common sense are thus closely tied together. Fabrication creates the conditions for a durable world in which political action can take place, but it remains tied to the experience of isolation. Common sense fits this individual experience into a shared perceptual framework, producing a sense of reality and underpinning political action.

This is a standard reading of the vita activa. But what happens if we reframe it within the context of Origins, in particular the pressures of totalitarian anaesthesia? First, totalitarianism provides a crucible that helps forge (we might say fabricate) one of Arendt's most paradigmatic concepts—and one that underpins her aesthetic thinking—providing a bridge between two seemingly distinct stages in Arendt's thought. In The Human Condition, labor, work, and action are often disconnected from contemporary social and political contexts. Instead, Arendt frequently harkens back to the classical spaces of the Greek polis or invokes metaphorical spaces like the theater. But this early articulation of the vita activa in relation to totalitarian terror imbues it, and in particular work and fabrication, with a new urgency and a relation to the phenomenological experience of those displaced and killed by

totalitarianism. Second, this new urgency points to the way the work of art and aesthetic perception can help resist totalitarian anaesthesia.

In the quotation from Origins I have cited above, fabrication is the fulcrum connecting action and "sheer labor." In The Human Condition, labor is associated with the demands of the 'natural' world that dictate basic survival. which is impossible to separate from her earlier discussion of the concentration camp. But in Origins it is inseparable from the concertation camp, a system in which humans toil only to actualize totalitarian domination: "the society of the dying established in the camps is the only form of a society in which it is possible to dominate men entirely" (O, 456). The concentration camp is also the most extreme expression of totalitarian loneliness, which "destroys man's capacity for experience and thought just as certainly as his capacity for action" (O, 474). The anaesthetic conditions of the concentration camp will gradually come to define totalitarian society, producing a highly unstable political and experiential system with no concrete anchors. Yet here work provides an opportunity to resist totalitarian loneliness and sheer toil. Fabrication can help reconstruct a durable world, restore common sense, and anticipate political action.

Of course, most aesthetic work is impossible in an environment like a concentration camp or gulag, and I am not suggesting that aesthetic fabrication should be the primary means of resisting totalitarianism or other extreme political forces. What Arendt terms praxis above, and what she later distinguishes as political action, is necessary for completing this change. However, by building a durable world and common sensory frameworks, sustained aesthetic activity can help stave off totalitarianism (and perhaps its successor movements), as well as help rebuild in its wake. It can bolster a common perceptual framework that is an essential element of a concrete reality. Let us now examine some of these strategies of aesthetic resistance.

Making Sense

How would an Arendtian resistance to totalitarianism take form? In the previous sections, I traced Arendt's thinking on aesthetic concepts to her early writings on totalitarianism, antisemitism, and imperialism. I demonstrated that rather than entailing an 'aestheticization of politics,' totalitarianism produces an anaesthetic realm emptied of experience. In the absence of meaningful forms of shared experience and perception, loneliness emerges as the dominant affect. This perceptual regime is realized in the topos of the concentration camp, a realm populated by figures whose ghostly form embodies their expulsion from the space of appearances. Yet, aesthetic fabrication can help rebuild a material and perceptual world in the wake of totalitarianism, a world that is not only durable but also 'makes' sense. In this section, I will explore strategies for restoring forms of sensory experience destroyed by totalitarian anaesthesia, and for constructing durable 'homes' for the uprooted.

In her literary criticism, Arendt often focused on writers who build worldly structures, through the "condensation" of language "spoken in the utmost density," such as Brecht, Kafka, and Auden (HC, 169). Implicit in Arendt's work, however, is also another mode of aesthetic fabrication: the act of criticism itself. As Deborah Nelson elegantly puts it, Arendt was devoted "to the concrete, whether person or fact, which stands in for reality as such."[37] This devotion is a form of resilience—a way of confronting the world so it can be understood. Arendt's desire to disclose the experience behind abstractions is evident in her aesthetic method in Origins. It is also, as I explore in this section, reified in her criticism. I argue that the form of Arendt's criticism reproduces the processes of aesthetic fabrication and sensory reconstruction that it describes, providing a possible model for the way both criticism and literature can resist the pull of dark times. If politics makes life visible,[38] Arendt's writing demonstrates how criticism can fabricate an aesthetic space where this action takes place.

Metaphor is central to this process both conceptually and formally. In The Life of the Mind, Arendt writes that metaphor bridges "the abyss between inward and invisible mental activities and the world of appearances" (105). In contrast to the literal function of totalitarian propaganda, which abstracts experience by flattening language, metaphor materializes the imagination. It makes thought concrete. In transforming the invisible into something that can be grasped by consciousness, metaphor is thus both an aesthetic and a political device.[39]

This ability to make thought concrete is part of a dual movement in Arendt's writing, which often uses metaphors of spaces, buildings, and public realms to reify their social and political function in aesthetic form. By turning material spaces into metaphors, she makes their 'invisible' aesthetic dimension tangible (and thus understandable). For instance, she often uses the theatre as a metaphor for the space of appearances, where "the political sphere of human life is transposed into art" (HC, 188). In turn, the polis becomes "a kind of theater where freedom could appear," a space in which the abstract ideals of politics are made concrete in the walls of the city and the bodies of citizens.[40] Spatial metaphors reveal the aesthetic dimension of political institutions.

This process of traveling back and forth (the original Greek term metapherein means to transfer) between the imaginary, aesthetic realm and concrete space is part of a larger structuring principle in Arendt's work, which builds boundaries, distinct spaces, and separate spheres that are nevertheless connected to each another through open channels of communication. Mary McCarthy captures Arendt's drive to clearly distinguish between different realms in terms of a physical space that one enters "through an arch into a liberated area" that is "occupied by definitions," each section forming its own furnished "little house."[41] The metaphorical walls that make up these little houses in turn draw on the original meaning of the term law, which signified an actual boundary line that simultaneously divided and protected the public and private realms (HC, 162). For this reason, totalitarianism's

annihilation of the experiential "boundaries," "channels of communication," and "fences of laws between men" coincides with its destruction of the different spaces human inhabit, create, and move between (O, 478).[42] This is particularly the case with the boundary between the public and private, which creates the isolation necessary for aesthetic fabrication. Totalitarian loneliness and anaesthesia entail a state of formlessness, in which tangible markers of worldliness and shelter are swept away. Walls—in both their literal and aesthetic dimensions—are the necessary scaffold of civilization; they give form to existence and they provide shelter.

If metaphor is both a literary and a political device, these 'concrete' metaphors defamiliarize political spaces, revealing their aesthetic dimension. In turn, this helps construct a durable world in which political action can take place. A similar process is at work in her metaphors for fabrication, which transform human labor into aesthetic work. The architecture of her thought was constructed from extended metaphors for the products and traces of labor—paddlewheels, ruins, and pillars—in which the fragility of human existence finds expression in the physical forms of historical motion and memory. In her analysis of Brecht's "Ballad of the Waterwheel," for instance, she interprets the waterwheel not as a perpetual process in which the unnamed masses are drowned in the churning waters of history, but as something that embodies "the production of a world in which all people are equally visible," just as each paddle eventually breaks the surface of the water.[43] The paddlewheel sublimates arduous labor and cyclical time into an object whose value lies in its durability, which in turn makes the space of appearances possible. At other times, Arendt turns away from the large arenas of public appearance and the tools of human production to intimate, domesticated processes. She often evokes the image of weaving, whether through the figure of Penelope, who puts into motion the constant doing and undoing of thinking (LM, 88),[44] or "Ariadne's thread of common sense" that materializes the scientific method of trial and error (UP, 311).

Arendt's metaphors for space and fabrication are not utopian. They make the world's aesthetic dimension visible and concrete. This, as we will remember from my discussion of Arendt's method, is essential to enabling new forms of comprehension.

Arendt does not explicitly posit fabrication as a way of resisting totalitarianism. But there is a clear line of communication between totalitarian anaesthesia and formlessness and her later concern with fabricating worldly structures in her writing. Arendt's metaphors for concrete spaces and fabrication both model and construct the durable shelters in which thinking after totalitarianism can take place. Yet Arendt's engagement with metaphor goes one step further. Metaphors for spaces, boundaries, and spheres not only make the world more concrete. They use the concrete to turn metaphor back upon itself and make it a material building block of an aesthetic world.

Metaphor defamiliarizes the world, but Arendt also defamiliarizes metaphor. In her comparison of Arendt and Viktor Shklovsky, the Russian literary critic who coined the term "defamiliarization" (or "estrangement"), Svetlana Boym notes that defamiliarization "offers the very opposite of anaesthesia: a creative awakening. By making things strange, the artist does not simply displace them from an everyday context into an artistic framework; he also helps return sensation to life itself, to reinvent the world, to experience it anew."[45] Defamiliarization does this in part by producing a sense of distance from the object of perception.[46] It also has a concrete, physical dimension. Shklovsky writes, for instance, that "this thing we call art exists in order to restore the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony."[47] The act of making "a stone stony"—of turning a physical, natural thing into a material object of aesthetic contemplation—prolongs perception in such a way that aesthetic perception itself becomes the subject of attention ("the process of perception is, in art, an end in itself and must be prolonged").[48] This intensification—the stone's amplified 'stoniness'—makes perception both more pleasurable and more concrete.

This restores sensorial experience to reality, thus providing the 'material' to build a durable, meaningful world.

Though she writes in a very different idiom from Shklovsky, Arendt nevertheless similarly details the way pleasurable "passions" intensify the awareness of reality, making our experience of it more concrete and meaningful (MDT, 6). Such images stand in stark contrast to the "living corpse" of the concentration camp, forced to toil in endless labor in the "phantom" world of totalitarian anaesthesia. Aesthetic perception becomes one of the stones in the foundation of a concrete reality.

Thus far, I have explored how the relation between metaphor and concrete reality intertwine with Arendt's metaphors for concrete spaces. I now want to undertake an extended analysis of her criticism to understand how spatial metaphors construct a durable realm that returns aesthetic sensation to life. A beautiful example of this takes place in Arendt's essay "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," originally given as an acceptance speech when she was awarded the Lessing Prize in Hamburg in 1959, and later published in Men in Dark Times. In the essay, she reevaluates the German Enlightenment and humanist thinker Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, whom she had originally considered to be a thinker who abandoned "the truths of history,"[49] now focusing on the way he advocates pluralism and rejects the dogma of "absolute truths."[50] She describes this plurality in spatial terms that provide an inverse image of totalitarianism's destruction of the spaces, boundaries, and walls between individuals—imposing a "band of iron" that squeezes out the collective breath of common sense. "The world," she notes, "can only form in the interspaces between men in all their variety." The destruction of these 'breathing spaces,' the unification of all individuals into "a single opinion […] as though not men in their infinite plurality but man in the singular, one species and its exemplars, were to inhabit the earth" results in a world becoming "inhuman in the literal sense of the world" (MDT, 31).

Lessing's notion of Selbstdenken ("self-thinking" or thinking independently for oneself) provides "another way of moving" through the iron curtain that descends upon the public realm during "dark times" (MDT, 8-9). It produces an "anticipated dialogue with others" (MDT, 10)—a kind of self-distancing. Thinking in and through motion, what Arendt would later call "thinking without bannisters,"[51] thus strongly resembles defamiliarization. It installs a distance between individuals and the world that casts the world a new light, and its connection to the physical world signals a sense of heightened realness.

In the essay, concrete space and defamiliarized modes of thinking converge in Lessing's political metaphor of "the wise men" who "make the pillars of the best-known truths shake wherever they let their eyes fall" (MDT, 5). In a similar manner to common sense, this metaphor has a dual meaning in Arendt's analysis: it ironically describes the instability of traditional epistemological modes, which totalitarianism's novelty would later quickly topple, as well as presenting an opportunity for a new way of thinking. The dangers and opportunities this metaphor represents culminate in a beautiful passage, situated at the end of the essay's first section. As in the preface to Origins, Arendt once again casts her eyes over Europe's past as a ruined material landscape, in which the "pillars of the best-known truths" now lie in "a veritable rubble heap" (MDT, 10). At first glance, this might offer the opportunity for "a new kind of thinking that needs no pillars and props, no standards and traditions to move freely without crutches over unfamiliar terrain" (MDT, 10). But the instability of the world of appearances makes it "difficult to enjoy this advantage," because this type of thinking without bannisters needs a stable, concrete realm in which it can take place:

> long ago it became apparent that the pillars of the truths have also been the pillars of the political order, and that the world (in contrast to the people who inhabit it and

> move freely about in it) needs such pillars in order to guarantee continuity and permanence, without which it cannot offer mortal men the relatively secure, relatively imperishable home that they need. To be sure, the very humanity of man loses its vitality to the extent that he abstains from thinking and puts his confidence into old verities or even new truths, throwing them down as if they were coins with which to balance all experiences. And yet, if this is true for man, it is not true for the world. The world becomes inhuman, inhospitable to human needs—which are the needs of mortals—when it is violently wrenched into a movement in which there is no longer any sort of permanence. (MDT, 10-11)

This impermanent world is made concrete in the metaphor of pillars "quivering, then collapsing anew," which increasingly destabilize common sense, heightening "people's mistrust of the world and all aspects of the public realm." We are left at the end of the passage with an image of common sense—those "best-known truths"—as a pile of rubble, the "repeatedly restored props" of the political order revealed as an empty political epithet that "scarcely anyone still believes in" (MDT, 11). This toppled world resembles the ruined landscape left in totalitarianism's wake. Or it could be the shaky foundations—homelessness, the failure of utilitarian thought, the fragmentation of sensory experience—that anticipate its emergence.

The passage's pessimistic content, however, contrasts with its aesthetic form. It begins by picking its way cautiously over the "unfamiliar terrain," but as the content becomes more critical of political solutions, its aesthetic force grows—a force made material in imagery of structures, pillars, foundations, and props. Within the confines of this aesthetic realm, different tempos create an internal structural tension: balance and instability, permanence and violent wrenching. The rhythm is poised between the possibility of

reconstruction and the threat of ruination. It grounds the lofty transcendental truths teetering under their own contradictions in the concrete space of the public realm. Indeed, even as Arendt describes the destruction of the space of appearances in metaphorical terms so too does she begin to rebuild it. The solution cannot only be political, then, it must also be aesthetic. Put otherwise, aesthetic fabrication is a pre-condition for a stable world in which political action can take place.

Let us dwell a bit longer on the way Arendt uses an extended metaphor for concrete space to construct this aesthetic realm. Buried within this ruined political space, as I noted above, is the possibility of a new kind of thinking that "needs no pillars and props." Rather than launching oneself into this "unfamiliar terrain," the reader's perceptual passage is hampered by the pillars, which gradually decline from the abstract to the concrete. They shift from conceptual "pillars of truth" to the institutional "pillars of the political order" and finally to the tangible bolsters that ensure the "continuity and permanence" of a "secure, relatively imperishable home" (MDT, 10-11). The reader's perception is thus led through ever more specific antechambers that model the construction of the concrete aesthetic space needed to combat loneliness and anaesthesia. The process reproduces thinking "mode of moving in the world" (MDT, 9), while thought is made increasingly tangible by advancing through gradually more concrete spaces.

Yet just when our perception of the passage has come to rest comfortably in this stable abode, it is destabilized by the warning that "the very humanity of man loses its vitality to the extent that he abstains from thinking." How to restore this vitality—the sense of being alive and 'real'—to this space? By way of conclusion, I want to bring in another metaphor, this one relating not to concrete space but to the phenomenological presence that inhabits it. In The Life of the Mind, which contains Arendt's most sustained examination of metaphor, she questions whether there is a metaphor for thinking itself. Since thinking is linguistically

and conceptually dependent on metaphor, it cannot capture itself in this device (LM, 123). At first, Arendt offers a possible metaphor for thinking in "the sensation of being alive": "Without the breath of life the human body is a corpse; without thinking the human mind is dead" (LM, 123, italics in original). Yet she then rejects this as a "singularly empty" (LM, 124). It is a tautology that does not sufficiently refer to (or carry over to) a world outside of itself. Put another way, metaphors for thinking are not able to defamiliarize themselves. This hollowed-out metaphor evokes the figure of the living dead—the embodiment of totalitarian anaesthesia—as well as the self-referential dimension of totalitarian propaganda, which enables the 'thoughtless' bureaucrat to avoid responsibility for his actions.

Another metaphor is possible, however. As Wout Cornelissen notes, "we may understand this invisible, mental activity by taking recourse to a visible, worldly experience."[52] The extended metaphor of thinking as a concrete space I have explored above achieves this: it breathes life and sensation back into metaphors for thinking by defamiliarizing itself. The passage's construction of concrete space turns metaphor into the act of fabrication, which provides the foundation for a world filled with meaningful forms of sensory experience. Even though this passage does not address fabrication directly, it models a form of criticism that is resolutely aesthetic. This aesthetic mode helps construct a concrete, worldly space of shared understanding. Her aesthetic fabrication constructs a "thought-thing" (L, 49)—a building block, a stony stone—that embodies the durability of aesthetic forms.[53] It makes the metaphor of aesthetic durability concrete.

This brings us back, once again, to the way art and literature—poesis, whose etymology means both poetry and making—can resist the pull of dark times. If Origins details how totalitarianism destroys aesthetic experience, "On Humanity in Dark Times" gives a demonstration of the way aesthetic criticism—criticism that is both concerned with aesthetic experience and that self-consciously uses aesthetic devices—can help rebuild a

common perceptual world. The aesthetic realm Arendt fabricates here is the opposite of totalitarianism's anaesthetic camps. Metaphorical walls and boundaries construct a shared space of perception ready to be filled with living, breathing experience.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism provides a crucible for her development of aesthetic concepts and methods, such as common sense and fabrication. Equally, I demonstrated that what is specific about totalitarianism's perceptual regime—what requires Arendt to reframe aspects of her historical analysis in aesthetic terms—is its hostility to aesthetic experience. In contrast to critical theory that maintains fascism and totalitarianism aestheticize politics, I have argued that totalitarian produces a form of anaesthesia. It destroys the concrete texture of reality and replaces it with hollowed out, atomized, and spectral traces of phenomenal experience. In turn, I showed that situating Arendt's aesthetic thinking, particularly on work and fabrication, in relation to totalitarianism reveals how aesthetic objects and criticism can help challenge political forces' assault on reality. One way they can do so is by making aesthetic experience and the imagination concrete. Aesthetic objects, which embody their nonutilitarian function, do so in their physical durability. Metaphors achieve this by giving figurative form to the sensory data that strikes the body's surface. It is for this reason that metaphors for concrete spaces and practices, such as architecture and weaving, are so important in Arendt's criticism. They build shared metaphorical spaces that reanimate common forms of aesthetic experience.

Our recognition of how important shared spaces and common sense are has only become more acute since I began writing a version of this article in the months after Trump was elected President of the United States. I could not have known that five years later, only months after submitting it for initial review, we would find the phenomenal texture of reality

rent once again by a global pandemic. It is unsurprising that Albert Camus used a plague as an allegory for totalitarianism. As Covid-19 showed with brutal force, many of the things that characterize totalitarianism's sensorial regime—loneliness, the fragmentation of sensory experience into incomprehensible data (anxiety, panic, paralysis), the deprivation of meaningful sensory experiences, not least touch and breath—are also characteristics of pandemics. Like totalitarianism, plagues transform the nature of reality. Unable to appear in the public realm, people's existence literally shrinks. Cut off from others, our internal worlds are impoverished. Existing only in dialogue with ourselves, we fall silent.

One of the common experiences of the pandemic was a feeling of irreality, which was heightened—indeed, produced—through a physical isolation that for many became an existential state of loneliness. It is not a coincidence that within this environment of existential loneliness an even further deterioration of common sense took place, meant in both perceptual and political terms. As Arendt notes, there is a clear connection between "a noticeable decrease in common sense in any given community and a noticeable increase in superstition and gullibility" (HC, 209). This was evident in the flourishing of conspiracy theories and far-right movements, which took hold in virtual spaces that provided the simulacrum of a physical community—a phantom version of the space of appearances.

Concrete shared phenomenal experience is missing from this abstracted virtual world (virtual meaning 'almost' but not quite) where physical contact is replaced by emojis. Arendt once identified the loss of common sense as a key element in totalitarianism's emergence, and the pandemic seems to have intensified the conditions for far-right political movements' success. Yet the pandemic has also laid bare the importance perceptual regimes play in the construction of viable and just political realities—of the need to be able to touch others, to share the air we breathe without fear. It is equally important that we do not cede to the virtual world. Zoom is not totalitarian, but it cannot replace the concrete realm of appearances, one

brought into being through the materiality of aesthetic fabrication, the phenomenological reality of embodied experience, and the visibility of others. During these crises aesthetic work, particularly criticism, may seem like the last thing that would contribute to bringing about a better political order. However, as the revival of popular interest in Arendt's work—and my aesthetic reading of it—demonstrate, political criticism that engages with the aesthetic can help us imagine and perhaps build shared spaces of common sense.

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[1] Many thanks to Noreen Masud, Cat Moir, Jonathan Long, Jonathan Freedman, Denise Grollmus, and Charlie Barrett for their comments on this article.

[2] Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976 [1951]), vii. Hereafter O.

[3] Timothy Snyder, On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century (London: Bodley Head, 2017); Alison Griswold, "'The Origins of Totalitarianism,' Hannah Arendt's Definitive Guide to Tyranny, Has Sold out on Amazon," Quartz (blog) (January 29, 2017); Roger Berkovitz, "Why Arendt Matters: Revisiting 'The Origins of Totalitarianism,'" Los Angeles Review of Books (March 18, 2017); Zoe Williams, "Totalitarianism in the Age of Trump: Lessons from Hannah Arendt," The Guardian (February 1, 2017). For work critical of the invocation of Arendt during this period see Jake Romm, "How Hannah Arendt Is Being Used and Misused in the Age of Trump," The Forward (February 2, 2017) and Emmett Rensin, "You Don't Know Hannah Arendt." The Outline (blog) (January 31, 2017).

[4] Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind (New York: Harvest Books, 1971), 19. Hereafter LM.

[5] Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York: Penguin, 1963, 2006), 153.

[6] Cecilia Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt: How to See Things (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), ix-x.

[7] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations, by Walter Benjamin, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 241.

[8] These include some of the chapters collected in Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times (San Diego: Harvest Books, 1970), hereafter MDT, and the influential essay, "The Crisis of Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance," in Between Past and Future (New York: The Viking Press, 1961).

[9] For exceptions to this see tendency Kimberley Curtis, Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1999); Svetlana Boym, Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt; and Lyndsey Stonebridge, "Refugee Style: Hannah Arendt and the Perplexities of Rights," Textual Practice 25, no. 1 (2011): 71–85 and The Judicial Imagination: Writing After Nuremberg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). Totalitarianism's aesthetic dimension nevertheless does not form the focus of these works.

[10] See, amongst others, Seyla Benhabib, "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative," Social Research 57, no. 1 (1990): 167–96; Agnes Heller, "Hannah Arendt on Tradition and New Beginnings," in Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem, ed. Steven Aschheim (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 19–32; Julia Kristeva, Hannah Arendt: Life Is a Narrative, trans. by Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, "Hannah Arendt's Storytelling," Social Research 44.1 (1977): 183–90; Melvyn A. Hill, "The Fictions of Mankind and the Stories of Men," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 275–300; and Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb, Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). Many of

Arendt's writings on literature are collected in the volume Reflections on Literature and Culture, ed. Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[11] I am unable to address Arendt's interest on judgment here. See Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt* for a recent excellent discussion of Arendt's thinking on Kant and aesthetic judgment. Further scholarship that focuses on this topic includes, Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," Political Theory 16, no. 1 (1988): 29–51; Linda M. G. Zerilli, A Democratic Theory of Judgment (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2016) and "'We Feel Our Freedom': Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," in The Aesthetic Turn in Political Thought, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012); and Patchen Markell, "Arendt, Aesthetics, and 'The Crisis in Culture,'" in The Aesthetic Turn in Political Thought, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012).

[12] For a discussion of Arendt's literary criticism see Erich Heller, "Hannah Arendt as a Critic of Literature," Social Research 44, no. 1 (1977): 147–59; Deborah Nelson, Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, Mccarthy, Sontag, Weil (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); and Young-ah Gottlieb's introduction to Reflections on Literature and Culture.

[13] Bernard Crick, "On Rereading Origins of Totalitarianism," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 27–47: 32.

[14] See Margaret Canovan, Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 28.

[15] Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 13.

[16] Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, 13.

[17] For discussions on Arendt's aesthetic and literary methods see Young-Bruehl, "Hannah Arendt's Storytelling," 183, 184, and Bryan Cheyette, Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and

Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), xiii.

[18] Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding" (type-script, Library of Congress, undated), 7.

[19] See Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt, 200-201 for a discussion of the book's title.

[20] See Eric Voegelin, "The Origins of Totalitarianism," The Review of Politics 15, no. 1 (1953): 68–76 and Hannah Arendt, "A Reply to Eric Voegelin," in Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 401–8 for an example of this type of historical method and her critique of it. On Arendt's critique of sociological methods, see Peter Baehr, "Identifying the Unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Critique of Sociology," American Sociological Review 67, no. 6 (2002): 804–31, 805.

[21] For a discussion of the complex relationship between common sense as a faculty of perception or judgment see Remi Peeters, "Truth, Meaning and Common World: The Significance and Meaning of Common Sense in Hannah Arendt's Thought - Part One," Ethical Perspectives, no. 3 (2009): 337–59.

[22] Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 283. Hereafter HC.

[23] Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, 83.

[24] Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Hannah Arendt, 144.

[25] Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Hannah Arendt, 143.

[26] On Arendt's reproduction of racist language see Kathryn Gines, "Race Thinking and Racism in Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism," in Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide, ed. Richard H. King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

[27] Crick, "On Rereading Origins of Totalitarianism," 30.

[28] Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 41.

[29] Canova, Hannah Arendt, 26.

[30] Discourses warning about the "aestheticization of politics" are often associated with Benjamin's argument, referred to earlier, that the ideal of aesthetic totality leads to fascist political forms, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." See also Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002). For a critique of these approaches see Martin Jay, "'The Aesthetic Ideology' as Ideology; Or, What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?," Cultural Critique, no. 21 (1992): 41–61, 43.

[31] See Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," October 62 (1992): 3–41, for a discussion of fascism's fundamental "sensory alienation."

[32] For scholarship on the dictator as artist see Boris Groys, The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond, trans. Charles Rougle (New York: Verso Books, 2011), Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and Frederic Spotts, Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2009). For a critique of Arendt's 'aestheticization' of action see George Kateb, Hannah Arendt, Politics, Conscience, Evil (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984). Karin Fry provides a counterpoint to Kateb's position in "The Role of Aesthetics in the Politics of Hannah Arendt:" Philosophy Today 45, no. 9999 (2001): 46–52, 46.

[33] Hannah Arendt, 4.

[34] Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, 49.

[35] Arendt discusses labor in The Human Condition, Chapter 3.

[36] Fry, "The Role of Aesthetics in the Politics of Hannah Arendt," 48.

[37] Nelson, Tough Enough, 51.

[38] Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, 108.

[39] See Mel A. Topf, "Hannah Arendt: Literature and the Public Realm," College English 40, no. 4 (1978): 353–63, 356.

[40] Hannah Arendt, "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," Chicago Review 14, no. 1 (1960): 28–46, 34. See Sjöholm, Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, 106-107 for a discussion of Arendt's use of the polis.

[41] McCarthy expressed these views in a conversation with Arendt as part of a 1972 conference on her work. Edited exchanges have been collected in Hannah Arendt, "On Hannah Arendt," in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 301–39, 337.

[42] See Young-ah Gottlieb, Regions of Sorrow, 30.

[43] Hannah Arendt, "Beyond Personal Frustration: The Poetry of Bertolt Brecht," in Reflections on Literature and Culture: 130–42, 326 n10. In a note on her translation of the poem, Young-ah Gottlieb notes that for Arendt, "every paddle" of the waterwheel "comes to light" in "Introduction," in Reflections on Literature and Culture, xi–xxxi, xviii.

[44] Canovan, Hannah Arendt, 5-6.

[45] Boym, Another Freedom, 207.

[46] See Boym, Another Freedom, 207.

[47] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art, as Device," trans. Alexandra Berlina, Poetics Today 36, no. 3 (September 2015): 151–74, 162.

[48] Shklovsky, "Art, as Device," 162.

[49] Hannah Arendt, "The Enlightenment and the Jewish Question," in The Jewish Writings, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 4.

[50] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2004), 94.

[51] The term in German is "Denken ohne Geländer," cited in Richard J. Bernstein, Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 41.

[52] Wout Cornelissen, "Thinking in Metaphors," in Artifacts of Thinking: Reading Hannah Arendt's Denktagebuch, ed. Roger Berkowitz and Ian Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 73–87: 77.

[53] Sjöholm explores the artistic object as a "thought-thing" that is both "material and immaterial," in Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, 33.