

Complicity in Mass Violence

Stephen L. Esquith

In 2003 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concluded that “Overall, the number of undernourished people in the countries in transition grew from 25 to 34 million between 1993–1995 and 1999–2001.” The concept of “transition” has come to mean many things during this period. Recently we have witnessed the expansion of the European Union from fifteen to twenty-five countries, the tenth anniversary of the first democratic elections in South Africa, the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, and the intensification of the war in Iraq. Fifteen years after the euphoria of 1989, it is unclear in what direction “countries in transition” are moving, or even who is “in transition” and who is not. It is clear that what is occurring in “countries in transition” cannot be separated from the larger processes of globalization and that ‘transition’ covers a much wider range of countries than was thought when the Berlin wall fell.

In this context, I want to discuss the question of responsibility for mass violence, and its relationship to democratic citizenship. The conventional wisdom is that responsibility for mass violence comes in two forms: moral and juridical. Moral responsibility is less stringent in the sense that so long as coming to the aid of those in need is not too risky, then regardless of who is at fault, moral persons have a duty of beneficence to intervene and help. If it is too risky for them, regardless of who is at fault, they are not bound to act on this duty. In contrast, juridical responsibility depends upon who is at fault, and in cases of mass violence those who have contributed causally, either through their actions or omissions, ought to be held legally liable. Juridical responsibility is a matter of justice, not a matter of moral beneficence, and failure to meet this responsibility is punishable by law.

One finds attempts to fill in the space between these two forms of responsibility with a general notion of political responsibility. Citizens in, for example, a democratic society bear more political responsibility for the violent acts of their government than do subjects of a tyranny. But, many forms of mass violence

are not the acts of governments, let alone democratically elected governments. What responsibility, if any, do democratic citizens have for mass violence when it occurs through complex international, multinational, and other global institutions? How are we to map the responsibilities of democratic citizens in a world in which one finds many types of democracy and in which our conventional intuitions about moral and juridical responsibility are at best insufficient?

I suggest that we use two related ideas, complicity and re-enactment, to make better sense of the responsibilities of democratic citizens in the current context. Complicity refers to a wide range of responsibilities between moral responsibility on one side and legal liability on the other. Re-enactment refers to a particular

What responsibility, if any, do democratic citizens have for mass violence when it occurs through complex international, multinational, and other global institutions?

form of democratic political education that enables citizens to recognize their constitutive roles in the generation of political power and the imposition of mass violence. Asking ‘complicity’ to do this much work is itself risky. The term comes to us with strong connotations. Relying on re-enactments is no less dangerous; re-enactments can just as easily provide vicarious and cathartic experiences as they can prompt greater clarity and civic engagement.

Having said this, however, it still seems possible to articulate how certain kinds of re-enactments can encourage appropriate feelings and beliefs about responsibility for mass violence among democratic citizens. As Martha Nussbaum has noted, this was the Greek playwright Euripides’s purpose in *The Trojan Women*. At a time when Athenian democracy was committing mass violence on the island of Melos, Euripides found a way to re-enact that massacre

through a play about the aftermath of the Trojan War. Similarly, contemporary playwrights often return to classical themes in order to bring to life the issue of responsibility for mass violence. Peter Sellars's production of *The Children of Herakles* aspired to be a similar vehicle for political education after the events of September 11, 2001. Re-enactment is a particular kind of democratic political education that can make better use of the notions of complicity in an age of escalating violence and deepening poverty across national borders. To be effective as democratic political education, re-enactments must prompt democratic deliberation, not substitute catharsis and polemic for it.

My goals are (1) to explore the relationship between complicity and responsibility, (2) to understand why moral sympathy is an inadequate virtue for democratic citizens, and (3) to suggest how re-enactment as a form of democratic political education can clarify and motivate political responsibilities.

Complicity

Determining who is an accomplice to a crime, after or before the fact, is never easy. Distinguishing between collaborating with an occupying force and sharing some responsibility for the consequences of occupation short of criminal guilt is equally, if not more difficult. So much is left to chance that settling accounts can become arbitrary. Yet, the urge to identify and punish complicity, not in round numbers but down to the decimal point, is hard to resist.

This is only part of the problem. The report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) identified institutional, not just individual, accomplices after the fact, including religious denominations and parts of the legal profession. Beyond that, the report criticized the Commission itself for focusing on exceptional perpetrators while ignoring the "little perpetrator" in each of us: "... it is only by recognizing the potential for evil in each one of us that we can take full responsibility for ensuring that such evil will never be repeated."

If talk of complicity in crimes against humanity may only produce frustration and hyperbole, why raise the issue of complicity in global poverty? The lines of causation are even *more* intricately woven, suggesting to many that only duties of beneficence based upon moral sympathy can possibly exist for mass violence. Before addressing the inadequacy of moral sympathy as a response to global poverty and mass violence, let me note an important assumption about the connections between poverty and violence in the argument that I am about to make.

I assume that there is an unhappy, close relationship between war, on the one hand, in the form of civil wars, militia terrorism, and wars of aggression, and

deprivation, in the form of poverty, hunger, and famine on the other. Some attempts to reduce global poverty have actually exacerbated mass violence, and unless the political causes of mass violence are addressed, global economic development programs will fail. In this essay I will refer to deprivation and war together as mass violence, leaving aside the very complicated question of how they influence each other in particular cases.

Responsibility

What can be done to sharpen the sense of responsibility of citizens who are committed to democracy, and benefit from global economic development, but at the same time fail to recognize their own complicity in the global structures of power that generate unprecedented levels of mass violence?

Commonly, we think of responsibilities of beneficence or justice as the responsibility that an individual has for his or her actions. In this case, responsibility depends upon the freedom of the individual to make and act on his or her decisions. Varying degrees of freedom lead to varying degrees of responsibility. One must also consider responsibility to others to remedy existing conditions, or to compensate for past wrongs and ill-gotten gains. It is in discussions of responsibilities to others that the vexed question of collective

Collective responsibility requires less a philosophical investigation into the notion of free will than it requires a political investigation into the fabric of democratic citizenship. . . .

responsibility for the causes of and benefits from the exercise of power, as well as the effects of mass violence arises.

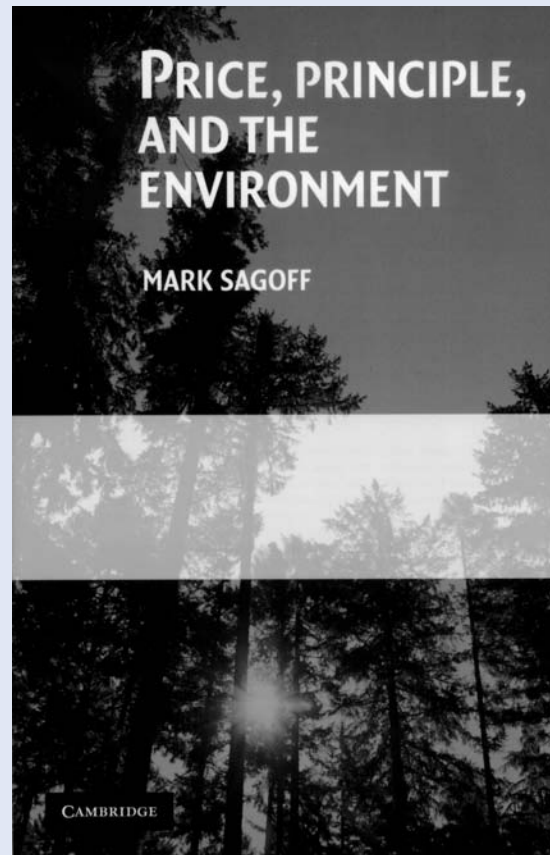
Collective responsibility requires less a *philosophical* investigation into the notion of free will than it requires a *political* investigation into the fabric of democratic citizenship, which is why there is a need for the concept of complicity as a type of political responsibility not reducible to individual moral guilt or legal liability. Complicity in this sense is a symptom of compromised democratic citizenship, that is, alienation from the democratic political process. In this sense, victims, perpetrators, and bystanders share an important characteristic: for complex and different reasons they all find themselves outside the democratic political process. This kind of damage to the body politic can only be repaired through democratic political education.

**Price, Principle, and the
Environment**
Mark Sagoff

Mark Sagoff has written an engaging and provocative book about the contribution economics can make to environmental policy. Sagoff argues that economics can be helpful in designing institutions and processes through which people can settle environmental disputes. However, he contends that economic analysis fails completely when it attempts to attach value to environmental goods. It fails because preference-satisfaction has no relation to any good. Economic valuation lacks data because preferences cannot be observed. Willingness to pay is benchmarked on market price and thus may reflect producer cost not consumer benefit. Moreover, economists cannot second-guess market outcomes because they have no better information than market participants. Mark Sagoff's conclusion is that environmental policy turns on principles that are best identified and applied through political processes. Written with verve and fluency, this book will be eagerly sought out by students and professionals in environmental policy as well as informed general readers.

"If it is the job of philosophers to keep everyone else intellectually honest, Mark Sagoff is doing his job for environmental economists with persuasive logic and graceful writing. There are very few members of our profession who will be able to read this without feelings of embarrassment over how easily they have fallen into the traps and fallacies revealed in Sagoff's analysis. But even as they are chastened they will be entertained rather than lectured to. This is, in fact, a book that ought to be required reading in graduate school, before the socialization process has become nearly irreversible."

Clifford Russell, Vanderbilt University



284 pages
Cloth, \$70.00
Paper, \$24.99

The book may be ordered from the publisher:

Cambridge University Press
40 West 20th Street
New York, New York 10011
<http://www.cambridge.org>

Democracy

Consider the practice of democracy—not the classical or the modern ideal, but actually existing democracy, what Thucydides attempted to describe in ancient Greece and what Tocqueville thought he saw in nineteenth-century America. The practice of democracy today is not the constitutional rules of the road for individual citizens of nation-states. It is a network of intersecting and overlapping structures of power, including multinational corporations, multi-lateral organizations, international nongovernmental organi-

zations, social movements, and (but not centered on) nation-states. It is this complex network that defines how we use the democratic language of citizenship, participation, and membership. Like the ancient Athenian assembly, today's global institutions and movements determine how we *practice* democracy. They are the engines of power that drive actually existing democracies and they are what the contemporary distinction between transitional and consolidated democracies attempts to capture. This theoretical attempt is failing, but that is no reason to abandon the

notion of democratic transition. On the contrary, properly understood, the notion of democratic transition can help us restore the fabric of democratic citizenship in practice. At a time when self-described consolidated democracies have lost the qualities of a participatory and deliberative democratic political culture that have been thought to distinguish them from merely transitional democracies, a more inclusive notion of democratic transition can provide the ground for more extensive bonds of political responsibility.

Over the past half century many post-colonial and post-authoritarian societies in Latin America and Africa, then in Eastern Europe and the area covered by the former Soviet Union, have moved erratically

It has become hard to distinguish between the stranger in our midst to whom even limited sympathy is owed, and the distant foreigner with whom we have more contact than our most intimate compatriots.

towards democracy. By comparison, liberal democratic societies initially prided themselves on their records of successive electoral regime changes, stable democratic culture, and sustained economic growth, in other words, democratic consolidation. It has been politically expedient for politicians and intellectuals seeking a justification for the distortions caused by the half-century of Cold War mobilization to make invidious comparisons between their own consolidated democracies and the travails of barely transitional new democracies. They have done this without recognizing how closely linked are consolidation and transition. Without the support of client states, mercenaries, guest workers, and illegal and unfair terms of trade, consolidated states would not have been able to maintain their relative stability.

However, as the Cold War era gave way to a new period of warfare, mixing hi-tech spectacles, cruel ethnic campaigns by local militias and warlords, and conventional territorial warfare, it has become much more difficult to ignore the relationship between consolidation and transition. It has become clearer that consolidation, understood as political stability and economic growth for some, often has been purchased at the expense of violent instability and deprivation for others. One sees this in disputes about import quotas and crop subsidies, not just in the pitched battles between client states and mercenaries on one side and insurgents on the other.

Grudgingly, citizens of self-proclaimed consolidated democracies have grasped the transitional nature of their own democratic projects. Sometimes this recognition has taken the form of monetary reparations paid

to living survivors or their families by the state and corporations complicit in past crimes against humanity (or guilty of less serious violations of human rights). For example, in 1999 the German government, in cooperation with the United States, arranged to limit reparations to survivors of slave labor from corporations that collaborated with the Nazi regime. More frequently, reparation has been symbolic. For example, some universities have opened their books to allow for discussion of the involvement of their founding fathers in slavery, and some municipalities have begun to require that private contractors disclose any ties to the history of slavery before they can be employed on public projects.

Further evidence of the need to expand our working concept of democracy is the way that the related distinction between nationals and foreigners and the distinction between nearby and distant strangers are failing us. Democracy, whether we call it transitional or consolidated, has also been associated with territory on which fellow citizens enjoy commonly-understood conceptions of justice. The patterns of migration, remittance, and illicit trafficking in arms, drugs, and human beings that have made national boundaries so porous have not just increased the speed and range of international trade and war. As philosopher Eduardo Mendieta describes, what is 'now' is not always what is 'here,' what is 'here' is sometimes distant yet familiar; sometimes nearby, routine *and* still unfamiliar. One thing that this compression of time and space has done is forced citizens in democratic societies to re-examine the familiar notion of sympathy. It has become hard to distinguish between the stranger in our midst to whom even limited sympathy is owed, and the distant foreigner with whom we have more contact than our most intimate compatriots.

Sympathy

As these changing circumstances have put pressure on the boundaries of democratic citizenship, the task of democratic political education has changed as well. Citizens can no longer simply be taught to abide by the rule of law, participate in periodic elections, and be prepared to play the role of the loyal opposition. Such liberal democratic virtues were designed for idealized self-sufficient nation states. Unable to separate clearly transitional and consolidated democracies, and unable to distinguish between distant and nearby strangers, citizens committed to democracy now need a more practical democratic political education. If they are to act responsibly in the unavoidable transitions continually faced by democratic societies, citizens must learn how to recognize the constitutive roles they already play in a complex global network of power and violence.

How can democratic citizens find enough footing to

recognize their complicity in this complex network? Some have argued that the answer to these questions may depend upon restoration of the moral sentiment of sympathy, not an easy task. Philosopher Jonathan Glover, for example, argues that any sympathy for the victims of mass violence is today likely to be eroded by (1) the vast physical distance that separates victims and perpetrators, (2) the seemingly 'clean' and 'smart' technologies that are used to impose violence, (3) the precedents that already exist for relying on mass violence in political conflicts, and (4) the slippery slope that leads to the escalation and spread of mass violence. Only if we can find a way to restore our moral imagination, that is, our capacity to recognize the shared humanity that unites victims and perpetrators, are perpetrators or bystanders likely to feel much sympathy for victims. Even a realistic political scientist

Our moral principles are in no better shape than our intuitions.

such as Robert O. Keohane seems unable to resist the lure of sympathy, or what he calls "transnational bonds of empathy":

Our principal task as scholars and citizens who believe in more accountability is to build support within our powerful, rich countries for acceptance of more effective and legitimate multilateral governance to achieve human purposes, for stronger transnational bonds of empathy, and for the increased external accountability that is likely to follow.

Glover's chronicle of the erosion of moral sympathy, unfortunately, leaves us wondering how such "bonds of empathy" possibly can arise. The moral intuitions we normally rely upon to guide our actions toward the world's poor are indeed in disarray. Similarly, our moral intuitions about what counts as a crime against humanity are equally flawed. Instead of seeing these crimes as products of corrupt state power and the militia groups this corruption spawns, we remain mesmerized by the immorality of individual perpetrators and bystanders. Our moral principles are in no better shape than our intuitions. The principles that have been offered to reorder our moral intuitions are either too stern or too idealized. Political philosopher Thomas Pogge, for example, scolds us for being "hunger's willing executioners," suggesting a parallel between blind consumerism and collaboration with Nazi war crimes. Ethicist Onora O'Neill rightly rejects John Rawls's principles of justice because they rest upon an idealization of the self-sufficient nation-state and its basic institutions while ignoring the way that transnational institutions *actually* shape our desires and needs.

In theory, the Rawlsian method of reflective equilibrium—that is, the movement back and forth between moral intuitions and institutional principles in order to get a better fit between the two—seems like a plausible approach to the problem of philosophical justification. However, so long as our intuitions remain in such disarray and the principles to which we are most wedded are out of step with transitional and global circumstances, we will need something more to prompt our imagination than reflective equilibrium. We must find a way to move back and forth between the competing points of view of those O'Neill calls "impoverished providers" and the complicity of bystanders to—as well as perpetrators of—mass violence. This is not a purely reflective process. It requires forms of embodied participation in the overlapping worlds of unfamiliar neighbors and distant strangers. Describing exactly what this might look like is not easy, but at least for students *and faculty* it would include civic engagement projects, community service-learning programs, and study abroad programs that were part of an integrated curriculum, and not isolated experiences.

The needed moral imagination, then, will not take the form of sympathy (or "empathy") for, in Rawls's words, "the least advantaged class." Compelling images of the starving poor and the innocent victims of violence may prompt vague feelings of guilt and sympathy, but the results of this sympathetic reaction in the current context are often perverse. Consider journalist Philip Gourevitch's admittedly outraged assessment of the United Nations refugee camps built in Zaire for refugees of the 1994 genocide by members of Hutu Power in Rwanda:

This was one of the great mysteries of the war about the genocide: how, time and again, international sympathy placed itself at the ready service of Hutu Power's lies. It was bewildering enough that the UN border camps should be allowed to constitute a rump genocidal state, with an army that was regularly observed to be receiving large shipments of arms and recruiting young men by the thousands for the next extermination campaign. And it was heartbreaking that the vast majority of the million and a half people in those camps were evidently at no risk of being jailed, much less killed, in Rwanda, but that the propaganda and brute force of the Hutu Power apparatus was effectively holding them hostage as human shields. Yet what made the camps almost unbearable to visit was the spectacle of hundreds of international humanitarians being openly exploited as caterers to what was probably the single largest society of fugitive criminal against humanity ever assembled.

Sympathy under these conditions may not be even a necessary condition, let alone a sufficient one, for appreciating the networks of transitional and global violence that link the victims of Hutu Power with, Gourevitch goes on to say, "all of us who paid taxes in countries that paid the UNHCR" (The United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights). If recognizing

complicity requires that we place ourselves squarely within this shifting frame of reference, we actually may have to make an effort to resist feelings of sympathy for the dramatic images of starving and suffering refugees. Such feelings only may reassure us that we have not lost our capacity for sympathy. We also will have to find a democratic practice through which more fine-grained distinctions regarding complicity can be made. Holding *all* taxpayers accountable is no better than holding *no* taxpayers accountable.

Re-enactment

Democratic citizens in the current context have a better chance of learning to recognize their complicity in the exercise of power and the creation of mass violence through a process of deliberation and discussion prompted by re-enactment than through the cathartic evocation of moral sympathies. By re-enacting our imperfect ways of politically coming to terms with global power and local violence, we may be able to see ourselves within this complex picture, instead of uncritically identifying with victims or observing them more comfortably from afar. Tribunals and commissions are necessary for this process, but alone they are not enough. As development ethicist David Crocker has argued, when war crimes tribunals, truth commissions, and other political proceedings are re-examined under a critical light, citizens are better able to see the limitations of legal punishment and moral forgiveness. Actively engaged as an audience to the

Democratic citizens . . . have a better chance of learning to recognize their complicity . . . through a process of deliberation and discussion prompted by re-enactment than through the cathartic evocation of moral sympathies.

re-enactment of these spectacles, philosopher Hannah Arendt argued, citizens can begin to form political judgments in particular cases. It is in this sense that re-enactments may enable citizens to move with poise and humility between their familiar surroundings and the worlds of impoverished providers and bystanders. These re-enactments most often take the form of films and dramatic performances, but they can also be sculpture, poetry, and fiction. What they have in common is the goal of prompting a critical understanding of the complicity that links the “impoverished providers,” bystanders and perpetrators who have appeared before tribunals and commissions seeking justice, understanding, and sympathy.

Schematically, re-enactment is a public performance that creates a temporary space in which to contest official efforts to counter mass violence. Within this space, one finds the opportunity for critical self-reflection on the relationship between complicity and other types of responsibility.

Re-enactments, such as the work of the filmmaker Mandy Jacobson (*Calling the Ghosts; The Arusha Tapes*) and the artist William Kentridge (*History of the Main Complaint; Ubu and the Truth Commission*), create a space in which viewers, listeners, and readers can see themselves among the sufferers and benefiting bystanders of mass violence without losing sight of differences in degree as well as kind between actual sufferers and beneficiaries who regret this suffering.

William Kentridge’s *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, performed in 1997 in collaboration with Jane Taylor and the Handspring Puppet Company, is particularly instructive because of its approach to understanding the goals of democratic political education in an age of mass violence. Despite its serious limitations, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), like other truth commissions and war crimes tribunals, has created an almost unprecedented opportunity for democratic political education. What distinguishes the TRC and these official institutions from re-enactments such as *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is the way that the latter frame questions of responsibility and raise questions about the evolution of power in a manner that encourages democratic imagination and practice rather than cynicism, apathy, or moral relief.

Kentridge is perhaps best-known for his animated film studies of the responsibilities of beneficiaries of apartheid, most notably *The History of the Main Complaint* (1996). The medical examination of the white tycoon Soho Eckstein takes us inside Soho and back through his entanglement in the violence of apartheid. Soho’s diagnosis is performed in the protected space of a hospital room, with Soho surrounded by a wall of sympathetic doctors. However, in a coma Soho is haunted by his own complicity with apartheid as he ‘drives’ back in time. Nobel Laureate writer J.M. Coetzee describes the action in Soho’s dream this way:

A third drive sequence begins. Soho passes by a body lying at the roadside. He passes a roadside fight in which two men attack a third, kicking and beating him brutally (the sequence looks forward to the appalling torture sequences in the 1997 theatre production, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, with their strong debt to cartoon violence). The points of impact on the victim’s skull are marked with red crosses. The skull is superimposed over Soho’s, his too, in an X-ray, is revealed to be marked. A whole field of crosses appears on the windscreen, and is wiped away. An eye blinks, with the same effect. In the space of the screen, created by Eisensteinian montage, windscreen and eye and monitor become metonymically the same.

It is this internalized violence that torments Soho and that takes center stage in *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. The challenge, Kentridge suggests, is to render the proceedings of the TRC so that this violence is neither obscured and forgotten nor harmlessly preserved in memory.

Ubu and the Truth Commission consists of Kentridge's animated drawings projected on a screen at the back of a stage on which actors, puppets, and puppeteers re-enact testimony before the TRC and the accompanying dramas that surrounded the official hearings. According to Kentridge, there is a great, unavoidable irony in the TRC's efforts to come to terms with mass violence. He notes that as, "people give more and more evidence of the things they have done they get closer and closer to amnesty and it gets more and more intolerable that these people should be given amnesty." Democratic citizens after mass violence must learn to interpret and live with this irony. The more effective the TRC is in providing a relatively peaceful public forum for the private stories of victims and perpetrators, the more it denies this irony and the more unacceptable it is as a method for resolving the disputes over intentions and responsibilities that it has opened up. *Ubu* is designed to contest the peaceful closure some advocates of the TRC hoped to achieve, but in a way that advances the process of political dialogue.

The casting and imagery in *Ubu* captures this irony without declawing it. The movements and expressions of the long-suffering puppets who testify before the TRC are much more human than the human figures, Ma and Pa Ubu, who venomously battle to see who will shred the records and who will use them to buy amnesty. It is this juxtaposition, Kentridge observes, upon which the success of the re-enactment turns.

But the question of how to do justice to the stories bedevils all of us trying to work in this terrain. With *Ubu and the Truth Commission* the task is to get a balance between the burlesque of Ubu and Ma Ubu and the quietness of the witnesses. When the play is working at its best, Ubu does not hold back. He tries to colonize the stage and be the sole focus of the audience. And then it is the task of the actors and manipulators of the puppets to wrest that attention back. This battle is extremely delicate. If pushed too hard the danger is that the witnesses become strident, pathetic, self-pitying. If they retreat, they are swamped by Ubu. But sometimes, in a good performance and with a willing audience, we make the witness' stories clearly heard and throw them into a wider set of questions that Ubu engenders around them.

In the end Pa Ubu sacrifices the three-headed dog puppet that represents the secret police and other "dogs of war" in order to finagle his amnesty. He and Ma Ubu sail off into the setting sun animated on the back screen—a sun that is also an open eye that may see them for what they are. We cannot be sure. This tentative promise of a future day of reckoning suggests that the TRC is only the beginning of the story, not the final chapter on apartheid. "This theatre," Kentridge writes:

rekindles each day the questions of the moment. How to deal with a guilt for the past, a memory of it. It awakes every day the conflict between the desire for retribution and a need for some sort of social reconciliation. Even those people (and there are a lot) who will have nothing to do with the Commission and who are in denial of the truths it is revealing are, in their very strident refusals, joining in the debate.

Admittedly, this is still an optimistic view of the prospects for democratic discourse. Cultural re-enactments like *Ubu and the Truth Commission* remind us, in director Jane Taylor's words, that the TRC is a "monumental process, the consequences of which will take years to unravel." The significance of cultural re-enactments like *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is that political education conveys a sense of unavoidable indeterminacy. In Kentridge's own words,

To say that one needs art, or politics, that incorporate ambiguity and contradiction is not to say that one then stops recognizing and condemning things as evil. However, it might stop one being so utterly convinced of the certainty of one's own solutions. There needs to be a strong understanding of fallibility and how the very act of certainty or authoritativeness can bring disasters.

Films like *Calling the Ghosts*, which traces the subsequent political odyssey of women who were victims of genocidal rape at Omarska, and productions like *Ubu and the Truth Commission* are encouraging signs that our democratic imagination has not entirely failed us in these most difficult times. Such cultural re-enactments provide a language that citizens can use to come to terms with the complexity of political responsibilities. They also create a space within which citizens can learn how to adapt this language to their own particular circumstances.

Cultural re-enactment must be done in local dialects but in such a way that protects the cosmopolitan promise of democracy, even if it can never be fully realized. Kentridge reports this response of one audience member after a performance of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*.

And after a performance of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* a woman came up to us, obviously moved by what she had seen. She said she was from Romania. We expressed surprise that the play had been accessible to her as it was so local in its content. "That's it," she said. "It is so local. So Local. This play is about Romania."

Ubu is no more about Romania than *The Trojan Women* or *The Children of Herakles* is about September 11, 2001. However, just as adaptations of ancient plays can provide an open-textured language for political resistance and a means for affirming democratic principles of justice, cultural re-enactments of war crimes tribunals and truth commissions can broaden the meaning of complicity and responsibility so that these terms carry across national boundaries. Their audiences do not fall into the trap of acknowledging the suffering of others only to bring attention to their own capacity for sympathy. Rather than act as

judges of guilt, innocence, or sincerity, with the aid of re-enactments they may become self-critical participants in a dialogue over what they are responsible for beyond the reach of legal indictment and outside the realm of moral forgiveness. By rephrasing the indictments of war crimes tribunals and the amnesties of truth commissions, re-enactments can become vehicles for democratic political education. That is, they are ways of orienting citizens through various forms of democratic participation toward the power and violence for which they are responsible.

Stephen L. Esquith
Department of Philosophy
Michigan State University
esquith@msu.edu

Sources: Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, vol.13, no. 1 (2002); for a discussion of the responsibility of democratic citizens for mass violence when it occurs through complex international, multinational, and other global institutions, see Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2002); Martha C. Nussbaum, "Compassion & Terror," *Daedalus* (Winter 2003); the quote concerning the "little perpetrator" in each of us occurs in Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002); for a discussion of the political causes of famine, see Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1998); for a discussion of the escalation of mass violence in the twentieth century, see Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003); on aspects of democratic consolidation, see Juan J. Linz. and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996); for a discussion of the Cold War era giving way to a new period of warfare, see Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2003); on the 1999 case in which the German government arranged to limit reparations to survivors of slave labor from corporations that collaborated with the Nazi regime see *Burger-Fischer v. Degussa*, 65 F. Supp.2d 248; Eduardo Mendieta, "The Ethics of Globalization and the Globalization of Ethics," *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization: Ethics,*

Politics, and Alternative Visions, ed. Mario Saenz (Boston, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2000); Robert O. Keohane, "Global Governance and Accountability," *Taming Globalization: Frontiers of Governance*, edited by David Held and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2003); on the point that the moral intuitions on which we normally rely upon to guide our actions towards the world's poor are in disarray, see Samuel Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances: Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal Thought* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001); on the point that state corruption is the source of crimes against humanity, see Richard Vernon, "What is Crime Against Humanity?" *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol.10, no. 3 (September 2002); Onora O'Neill, *Bounds of Justice* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000); Philip Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998); on the unintended link between human rights advocacy and militarism, see David Chandler, "The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda," *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23 no. 3 (August 2001); David A. Crocker, "Punishment, Reconciliation, and Democratic Deliberation," *Buffalo Criminal Law Review*, vol. 5 (2002); the observation by Hannah Arendt occurs in Eric B. Gorham, *The Theater of Politics: Hannah Arendt, Political Science, and Higher Education* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000); Mandy Jacobson, *Calling the Ghosts* (Executive Producer: Julia Ormond; Directed by Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic, 1996, 63 min.) and *The Arusha Tapes* (video, 2001); William Kentridge, *History of the Main Complaint* (1994, four-minute animated film) and *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, published by Jane Taylor, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press, 1998); J.M. Coetzee, "History of the Main Complaint" in *William Kentridge* (New York: Phaidon, 1999); on distinctions between contemporary cultural re-enactments and ancient public theater, see Rush Rehm, *Radical Theatre: Greek Tragedy and the Modern World* (London: Duckworth, 2003); for a discussion of the role of cultural re-enactments of war crimes and truth commissions in broadening the meaning of complicity and responsibility, see Stephen L. Esquith, "Re-enacting Mass Violence," *Polity*, vol. XXXV, no. 4 (July 2003); the point that audiences should acknowledge the suffering others but not fall into the trap of bringing attention to their own capacity for sympathy, see Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing Our Attention to Suffering* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).