Introduction

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This volume takes up the challenge to reformulate two fundamental concepts—vulnerability and resistance—beyond two assumptions pervasive in several popular and theoretical discourses. The first holds that vulnerability is the opposite of resistance and cannot be conceived as part of that practice; the second supposes that vulnerability requires and implies the need for protection and the strengthening of paternalistic forms of power at the expense of collective forms of resistance and social transformation.

Our point of departure is to call into question through the analysis of concrete contexts the basic assumption that vulnerability and resistance are mutually oppositional, even as the opposition is found throughout in mainstream politics as well as prominent strands of feminist theory. Dominant conceptions of vulnerability and of action presuppose (and support) the idea that paternalism is the site of agency, and vulnerability, understood only as victimization and passivity, invariably the site of inaction. In order to provide an alternative to such frameworks, we ask what in our analytic and political frameworks would change if vulnerability were imagined as one of the conditions of the very possibility of resistance. What follows when we conceive of resistance as drawing from vulnerability as a resource of vulnerability, or as part of the very meaning or action of resistance itself? What implications does this perspective have for thinking about the subject of political agency? What ideas of the political subject, and political subjectivity, emerge outside, or against, this binary? These preliminary questions lead us to others, where our initial conceptions must be rethought: How are vulnerability and bodily exposure related, especially when we think about the exposure of the body to power? Is that exposure both perilous and enabling? What is the relation

between resistance and agency? In what ways is vulnerability bound up with the problem of precarity?

As we know, there is always something both risky and true in claiming that women or other socially disadvantaged groups are especially vulnerable. On the one hand, we very much want to point it out where it exists. Yet one might conclude that women are in a powerless position and, by implication, that men are always in a powerful one. As a result, feminist activism may turn to paternalistic political and social institutions, investing them with the power to realize feminist goals.[1] In other instances, women struggle to establish practices and institutions that seek to provide protection, or to rescue (always already othered) women, which, albeit not necessarily linked to paternalistic powers, do still enforce paternalistic logics, or rely on figures of victimhood that assume that those who are vulnerable are therefore without agency, or can be summarized by categories that figure them as essentially without agency.[2] Yet there are other initiatives that, while refusing these forms of politics that amount to the stigmatization and the further disempowerment of the women they are said to protect or save, do not dismiss the induced vulnerability to which many women are exposed and try to offer alternative resources for self-empowerment, collective agency, and protection. These can include feminist forms of self-defense, networks and shelters for battered women, and grassroots modes of organizing within civil society or outside its established terms.

By itself, the discourse on vulnerability can support any version of politics and has no special claim to supporting a politics on the Left, or a politics for feminism. It can describe the vulnerability of those in power against the forces of resistance by those who are seeking a new political order. Moreover, the discourse on vulnerability can lead to objectionable ontological claims about the constitutive vulnerability of women's bodies, claims we would doubtless want to reject in favor of a social and political account about how vulnerability is produced and distributed. That latter view would be compelled to point out that women—and here we seek to rely on a gender category at once inclusive and open-ended—are the ones who suffer most from poverty and illiteracy, two defining global features of the oppression of women. So the question that emerged for this group, and formed one of our areas of contention, has been this: How do we think about feminist modes of agency, and how can we rethink them in light of global conditions and emerging possibilities of global alliance? And though we concur on this as a task that feminism must take up, we are in different ways engaged in queer, trans, antiracist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-austerity struggles. The terms we examine take on very specific mean-

ings under neoliberal and austerity conditions when the state structures of social democracy and institutions of social welfare are losing their own resources and standing, thus exposing more populations to homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, and inadequate health care. How, then, is the political demand to address these issues to be directed toward those institutions that should be responding to these conditions, at the same time that we seek to resist the models of power represented by those institutions? Are we stuck in the situation in which there are two opposing alternatives, paternalism and victimization? And in accepting those alternatives, do we not reinstate a gendered opposition?

In some forms of feminism, vulnerability has been regarded as a value in feminist theory and politics. Feminists of different strands have long argued for a relational subject as a way to contest liberal forms of individualism primarily, implicated as they are in capitalist concepts of self-interest and masculinist fantasies of sovereign mastery. Whereas some feminists have sought to establish vulnerability and care as values which are specific to women and to which women have special access, we are making no claims about the capacities or dispositions of women as a group. Indeed, what follows is a wide-ranging feminist approach to questions of power and agency that prove to be quite central to some forms of resistance today.

Our common point of departure is derived from critical feminist social theory that seeks to overcome uncritically accepted versions of the mind/body distinction and its reliance on associations of activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity, in order to show that the received definitions of vulnerability as passive (in need of active protection) and agency as active (based on a disavowal of the human creature as "affected") requires a thorough going critique. In our view, the focus on vulnerability is not intended to validate conventional ways of distinguishing between men and women (or even to validate that binary as a mode of framing an analysis), so the conclusion is, once again, not to make ontological claims about women, nor to underscore their singular ethical dispositions. Those modes of stabilizing gender division through generalized forms of differentiation do not further the task of rethinking modes of resistance. Whatever differential distribution of attributes we may find in some locations depends in part on the lens through which we see, the epistemic grid laid into that lens, and the operative norms of gender operating in the description.

As much as we can, and do, track the way that power operates to establish the disenfranchised as "vulnerable populations," it remains imperative to

critically examine the logic of disavowal by which vulnerability becomes projected and distanced from prevailing ideas of agency and mastery. Psychoanalytic feminists have remarked that the masculine positions are effectively built through a denial of their own vulnerability. This denial or disavowal requires one to forget one's own vulnerability and project, displace, and localize it elsewhere. Such a mechanism of disavowal operates within the scene of power. In fact, it can work to exacerbate vulnerability (as a way of achieving power) or to disavow it (also as a way of achieving power). For instance, when nations advertise their hypervulnerability to new immigrants, or men openly fear that they are now the victims of feminism, the recourse to "vulnerability" in such instances can become the basis for a policy that seeks to exclude or contain women and minorities, as when the vulnerability of "white people" constructs black people as a threat to their existence.

The argument about disavowal has to be attended to carefully. On the one hand, if we are interested in how vulnerability is socially produced and managed, then we may seem to be saying that vulnerability is the effect of social power. On the other hand, if we claim that vulnerability has a purely ontological status, it seems that we accept a presocial account of vulnerability, and that opens up a new set of theoretical and political problems. So if we argue instead that vulnerability emerges as part of social relations, even as a feature of social relations, then we make (a) a general claim according to which vulnerability ought to be understood as relational and social, and (b) a very specific claim according to which it always appears in the context of specific social and historical relations that call to be analyzed concretely.

The language that we use to describe vulnerability and its disavowal presumes that there is "an already there-ness" to the vulnerability, or that denial is secondary, a cover-up, and so always somewhat false and frail. We can speak of individuals who deny their own vulnerability, or whole nations. Though individuals and groups are different, the logics that condition and reproduce disavowal cut across that difference. When vulnerability is projected onto another, it seems as if the first subject is fully divested of vulnerability, having expelled it externally onto the other. When vulnerability is owned as an exclusive predicate of one subject and invulnerability attributed to another, a different kind of disavowal takes place. Indeed, asymmetry and disavowal work together. Such strategies can work either way: "others" may be exposed to vulnerability as a way of shoring up power, but vulnerability can also be claimed by those who seek to rationalize the subjugation of minorities. Such strategies of claiming vulnerability on the part of the powerful become all

the more complicated, and paradoxical, when norms of white heterosexuality are considered "under attack" by LGBTQ communities, or when feminism is figured as a castrating "threat" to ostensibly vulnerable men. If the concept of vulnerability always operates within a tactical field, how do theoretical affirmations of vulnerability enter into that field? Can such affirmations ever avert the risk of being appropriated by paternalism? At stake is whether this dialectical inversion—which can, at one time, assert the hypervulnerability of those in dominant positions of power and, at another, rely on the presumptive invulnerability of those with power—can be refuted. Further, can that refutation give way to a notion of bodily vulnerability linked with practices of resistance in the service of social and political justice?

In Marxist analysis, the politics of redistribution pertains to goods, and we see water and land rights activism asking for equal distribution of such resources. It may sound odd to refer to an unequal distribution of vulnerability, but perhaps there is no other way to understand the condition of contemporary precarity. That unequal distribution often works in tandem with the management of "vulnerable populations" within discourse and policy. Often social movements, human rights advocates, and institutions refer to precarious or vulnerable populations, for whom political strategies are accordingly devised to ameliorate conditions of exposure and precarity. Does that way of naming a population extend or ameliorate conditions of precarity? Do we lose the sense of those operations of power that differentially assign vulnerability when we take such assignments for granted in launching the analyses that we do? Do we need to understand through what mode of power vulnerable populations are formed as such? While we could think of those forms of institutionalized violence that render certain populations disposable as a form of necropolitics,[3] those humanitarian governmental practices that designate them "in need of protection" not only negate the capacity of those declared vulnerable to act politically, but also expand biopolitical forms of regulation and control.[4]

When such redistributive strategies abound, then other populations, usually the ones helping to orchestrate or effect the processes of redistribution, posit themselves as invulnerable, if not impermeable, and without any such needs of protection. In order to counter this untenable framework, vulnerability and invulnerability have to be understood as politically produced, unequally distributed through and by a differential operation of power. In following this path, our discussion moves beyond the human rights framework in which the positing of "vulnerable populations" can become a way of foreclosing or

devaluing modes of collective resistance among those designated as vulnerable.[5] The significance of human rights would not be negated within such a framework, but human rights would not operate as the presumptive framework for such discussions.

We would like to recontextualize the discussion of vulnerability in such a way that its links with paternalism or even with discourses of victimization are critically ameliorated, precisely to make room for an analysis of the role of vulnerability in strategies of resistance. In thinking vulnerability and resistance together, we hope to develop a different conception of embodiment and sociality within fields of contemporary power, one that engages object worlds, including both built and destroyed environments, as well as social forms of interdependency and individual or collective agency. The strategies of resistance on which we propose to focus involve a rethinking of human acts and infrastructural mobilizations, including barricades, hunger strikes, the improvised character of informal groups at the checkpoint, modes of deliberate exposure, and forms of art and artistic intervention in public space that involve "laying bare" and opposing forms of power. The wager of this volume is that one of the main reasons why there is opposition to (if not an outright denial of) vulnerability is that vulnerability has not been adequately related to the existing practices of resistance. Such a formulation involves thinking as well the psychoanalytic and political dimensions of resistance, taking into account its different registers, from the practices of the self, to collective, individual, subjective, or social practices.

Further, we propose to consider resistance in a new light in order to differentiate its strategies from notions of neoliberal resilience that cover over the structural conditions of accelerated precarity, inequality, statelessness, and occupation. Our task is to resist the neutralization of practices of social transformation that follows when the discourse of protection becomes hegemonic, undermining and effacing varied forms of popular resistance or political agency. Our aim is to expand our political vocabulary to meet the challenge to think about modes of vulnerability that inform modes of resistance, and to "resist" those frameworks that seek to underplay or refuse forms of political agency developed under conditions of duress, without presuming, as some accounts of resilience tend to do, that they always prove effective.

Drawing from recent demonstrations that mobilize important forms of embodied resistance as ways of calling attention to the unjust effects or austerity, precarity, neoliberalism, authoritarian control, and securitarian politics, we track the emergence of a vocabulary that breaks with masculinist models of

autonomy without essentializing the feminine or idealizing vulnerability as an ultimate value. The point is to show that vulnerability is part of resistance, made manifest by new forms of embodied political interventions and modes of alliance that are characterized by interdependency and public action. These hold the promise of developing new modes of collective agency that do not deny vulnerability as a resource and that aspire to equality, freedom, and justice as their political aims.

Although dedicated to thinking about these common problems, each of the authors represented in this volume undertook different tasks of cultural translation—we came at the issue from very different geopolitical locations and through different modes of theoretical reflection.[6] Whereas each contributor has a distinct view, each of us also made an effort to participate in what Zeynep Gambetti called "plural and collective thinking." Our collaborative work on this topic required a practice of translation that sought to traverse, without denying, the distances among languages, disciplines, theoretical and political genealogies, and areas of research, among academic work, the arts and art criticism, and activism. Not least of our tasks was to mediate among different political and academic tonalities, logics, and lexicons, striving to find a polyphonic mode of making sense of the shifting problematic before us. If we were able finally to move beyond the conventional binary that governs the relationship between vulnerability and resistance, that effort was made possible by our commitment to attend to these different modalities of thought, the different political space-times with which they engage, and the formulations of the political field within which they operate and intervene. Although in some ways the contributors to this volume take these precepts as a common point of departure, their chapters resonate with one another not because they came to adhere to any one language or theory. On the contrary: questions of self-determination, hegemony, mourning, violence, memory, occupation, public demonstrations, representation, the visual field and the visual arts, or freedom pose different challenges to the task of political thinking within a framework that does not oppose vulnerability to resistance. The exchanges among the authors here are reflected in their finished essays, showing how these concepts work or vary when reflected in different registers, moving from the individual scholarship to collaborative forms of making knowledge, all refracted by varying geopolitical conditions and concerns.

The essays in this volume draw from recent events in Turkey and Greece, but also focus on ongoing political struggles of women and minorities in the face of state violence, antiwar and antioccupation activists, struggles at

the level of cultural representation and aesthetic practice, and oppositional dilemmas emerging within anti-austerity politics. They do not claim to represent a full global field; rather, they represent the partial and perspectival offerings of politically engaged scholars working in various regions. Judith Butler's contribution seeks to establish the important ways that vulnerability, reconceived as bodily exposure, is part of the very meaning and practice of resistance. Construing bodily vulnerability as induced by social and material relations of dependency, she shows how popular gatherings in public spaces enact the demand to end precarity by exposing these bodies' vulnerability to failing infrastructural conditions. Zeynep Gambetti revisits the notions of exposure and popular protest, but this time through an Arendtian theory of agonistic individuation. She evokes the Occupy Gezi protests of 2013 to illustrate the intricate connection between acting and suffering, as a result of which social identities and political alignments are destabilized through pluralistic encounters with others. In her critical consideration of a different set of concepts and practices, Sarah Bracke foregrounds how the neoliberal category of "resilience" functions as a governmental tactic aimed at managing resistance and concealing destitution. She argues that "resilience" constitutes a new moral code that works through gendered notions of subjectivity and agency to produce the idea of a subject willing to cope with conditions of increasing precarization. One other major theoretical dilemma is addressed by Marianne Hirsch's chapter. Hirsch brings notions of vulnerability and resistance to bear on theories of trauma and memory that often falter on the question of how it is possible to identify with the pain of others without appropriating that pain. She focuses on the work of several artists and writers who mobilize vulnerability as a way to respond to and take responsibility for traumatic and violent histories. The Occupy Gezi protests and the theme of memory reappear in Başak Ertür's contribution on barricades as a resource of resistance. Ertür understands forms of barricading with human and nonhuman resources as forms of countermonumentalization and bricolage whose strength might be found precisely in their transient and vulnerable structure. She argues that the barricades simultaneously operate as repertoires of collective action and as forms of reattunement to vulnerability.

Elena Loizidou's chapter on dreams and the political subject offers an alternative consideration of involuntary forms of longing as crucial to the understanding of political action, and thus revises our understanding of the political actor as one who exercises wakeful mastery in the course of acting. Can we understand resistance without the sensual domain in which

mastery no longer controls love, dreams, and the arts so essential to civil disobedience or other forms of resistance? Considering the artwork of Mona Hatoum, Elena Tzelepis in turn asks what grammar of vulnerable belonging is produced in the wake of forcible expulsion and diasporic existence for Palestinians. Is there a potential for resistance opened up by art that focuses on questions of loss and finitude? Provoked by such questions, Tzelepis reflects on how Hatoum's feminist aesthetics bring forth a bodily representation of vulnerability. Turning to the occupied West Bank, Rema Hammami's chapter focuses on the struggle and strategy of Palestinian activism that happens within the daily labor of sustaining existence. In contrast to the concept of "protective accompaniment" popularized by human rights discourse, it underscores those forms of connection and alliance that are based less on the need for protection or, indeed, philanthropy than on informal networks of solidarity. The question of the differential visibility of violence in occupied zones foregrounds Hammami's exploration of forms of resistance under conditions of hyperprecarity. In her contribution, Nükhet Sirman focuses on another precaritized population, the Kurds in Turkey. By engaging with the Kurdish struggle for political freedom, she considers the salience of the figure of Antigone for thinking about Kurdish women's vulnerability to Turkish state violence. She highlights the dissimilarities between Turkish and Kurdish feminist discourses and shows how the latter produce a new form of knowledge that accounts simultaneously for the victimization of Kurdish women and their achievements as guerrilla fighters. Meltem Ahıska's critical consideration of the "Violence against Women" campaign in Turkey also questions the language of victimization. Ahıska argues that the efforts to "humanize" battered women establish their substitutability and anonymity, such that "women" come to represent death and victimhood anonymously. She argues for a mode of resistance against this form of "humanization" that would counter the conflation of women's sexuality with injurability and death. In a quite different geographical context, Elsa Dorlin visits a similar yet different problem. Dorlin's essay offers a critical analysis of how the "face" as an ethical category undergoes a political transvaluation in France. Situating "unveiling" as a requirement of French civility, Dorlin shows how mandatory hypervisibility informs the debates on the *niqab* and contemporary surveillance. She explores how the figure of the "mask" connects with forms of resistance that are prefigured in vigilante feminist writings. The double valence of vulnerability is also examined in Athena Athanasiou's considering of agonism as a nonsovereign form of power. The Serbian Women in Black movement is the focus of her analysis of a form of resistance that relies

on what she calls agonistic mourning. She shows how the not-being-at-home-with-itself of mourning poses a challenge to the ordinances of the "affirmation versus mourning" structural opposition. Finally, using a different conception of agonism and antagonism, Leticia Sabsay's contribution poses a set of critical questions to theories of vulnerability and the contemporary discourse on affect to see how far they are compatible with the theory of hegemony and a broader concept of the political. She suggests permeability as the marker of subjectivity as a transindividual way of being in the world and, drawing on Bakhtin, offers a way to think about the relational subject in conjunction with hegemonic articulation.

As these chapter descriptions suggest, we differ on issues such as agonism and antagonism, how best to think about vulnerability, and which versions of resistance ought to be foregrounded. What strikes us as most important, however, is that vulnerability and resistance enter the picture differently depending on the context and the political question we pose. Our regions vary (Greece, Turkey, Palestine, France, Europe, the United States) and so, too, do our theories (hegemony, agonism, performativity, Marxism, feminism). The terms, vulnerability and resistance, are implicated not only in one another, but also in the settings that activate their relations. This multiplicity does not undo our common aim; rather, it facilitates and furthers the aliveness of this exchange. We are aware of the many sites we could not touch on within the framework of this volume, including the prison industry, refugees, epidemics, and various forms of violence, including state-sponsored racism. We trust that this volume will continue in a perpetual state of becoming, so that what we offer here is not a "result" of our collaboration, but a series of provocations for further thought. We were ourselves provoked by the events in Turkey in 2013, but our questions changed in the course of the journey. One of the principles of collaboration is that each member is affected by the other, becoming transformed in the process, and constituting now a provisional yet promising form of textual belonging in which all the rough edges matter.

Notes

1 Nancy Fraser's "Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History" makes an appeal to women's movements to reconsider calling the state back in. But many feminists are highly critical of state institutions that perpetrate white heterosexual middle-class supremacy in dealing with domestic violence, gender inequality, or

legal justice. Among the most powerful of these critiques are Beth Richie's *Arrested Justice* and Angela Davis's *Abolition Democracy*. Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach has also been criticized for implicitly requiring paternalistic intervention and regulation. Cf. Claassen, "Capability Paternalism," and S. Charusheela, "Social Analysis and the Capabilities Approach," for a review of charges of institutional and cultural paternalism inherent in Nussbaum's framework. Martha Fineman's ontological approach to vulnerability as a universal and constant characteristic of all human beings, and therefore the ground of a reconceived subject of rights, may lead to forms of state paternalism as well (see Fineman, "The Vulnerable Subject"). Inspired by Fineman's perspective, the "Vulnerability and the Human Condition" Initiative, hosted at Emory University, is dedicated to envisioning models of state support and legal protection on the grounds of subjects' vulnerability conceived as a human feature.

2 For a critical review of these trends, see D'Cruze and Rao, "Violence and the Vulnerabilities of Gender."

3 Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

4 Didier Fassin offers a complex and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the Foucauldian notion of biopolitical regulation and humanitarianism. Fassin highlights that while the notion of biopolitics refers to the technologies of government and normalization of populations, humanitarianism also contributes to the production of differentiated meanings and values of human lives (see Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*).

5 Cf. the seminal text by Pithouse, "Producing the Poor," and a more recent critique of the "fight against poverty" by Cornwall and Fujita, "Ventriloquising 'the Poor'?"

6 This volume is the collaborative result of a week-long seminar, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance: Feminism and Social Change," organized by Judith Butler and Zeynep Gambetti at the Columbia University Global Center in Istanbul in 2013. The seminar was sponsored by the "Women Creating Change" initiative housed in the Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University.

CHAPTER 1

Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance

JUDITH BUTLER

We know that those who gather on the street or in public domains where police are present are always at risk of detention and arrest, but also forcible handling, even death. So when we consider police violence against protestors—the killing of forty-three students assembled for a protest in Ayotzinapa, Mexico, in September 2014 is a flagrant example—it is already more than clear that those who gather to resist various forms of state and economic power are taking a risk with their own bodies, exposing themselves to possible harm.

That formulation seems true enough: vulnerability is enhanced by assembling. But perhaps we need to rethink this sequence that gives narrative structure to our understanding of the relationship between vulnerability and resistance. First you resist, and then you are confronted with your vulnerability either in relation to police power or to those who show up to oppose your political stance. Yet vulnerability emerges earlier, prior to any gathering, and this becomes especially true when people demonstrate to oppose the precarious conditions in which they live. That condition of precarity indexes a vulnerability that precedes the one that people encounter quite graphically on the street. If we also say that the vulnerability to dispossession, poverty, insecurity, and harm that constitutes a precarious position in the world itself leads to resistance, then it seems we reverse the sequence: we are first vulnerable and then overcome that vulnerability, at least provisionally, through acts of resistance.

Of course, it will be important to establish a more precise relationship between vulnerability and precarity (they are not the same), but let us consider as a clear example modes of resistance that emerge in opposition to failing infrastructure. The dependency on infrastructure for a livable life seems clear, but when infrastructure fails, and fails consistently, how do we

understand that condition of life? We have found that that on which we are dependent is, in fact, not there for us, which means we are left without support. Without shelter, we are vulnerable to weather, cold, heat, and disease, perhaps also to assault, hunger, and violence. It was not as if we were, as creatures, not vulnerable before when infrastructure was working, and then when infrastructure fails, our vulnerability comes to the fore. When movements against homelessness emerge, the unacceptable character of that vulnerability (in the sense of exposure to harm) is made clear. But a question still remains: does vulnerability still remain an important part of that mode of resistance? Does resistance require overcoming vulnerability? Or do we mobilize our vulnerability?

Consider that a movement may be galvanized for the very purpose of establishing adequate infrastructure, or keeping adequate infrastructure from being destroyed. We can think about mobilizations in the shantytowns or townships of South Africa, Kenya, Pakistan, the temporary shelters constructed along the borders of Europe, but also the *barrios* of Venezuela, the *favelas* of Brazil, or the *barracas* of Portugal. Such spaces are populated by groups of people, including immigrants, squatters, and/or Roma, who are struggling precisely for running and clean water, working toilets, sometimes a closed door on public toilets, paved streets, paid work, and necessary provisions.[1] The street, for instance, is not just the basis or platform for a political demand, but an infrastructural good. And so when assemblies gather in public spaces in order to fight against the decimation of infrastructural goods—for instance, to protest austerity measures that would undercut public education, libraries, transit systems, and roads—we find that the very platform for such a politics is one of the items on the political agenda. Sometimes a mobilization happens precisely in order to create, keep, or open the platform for political expression itself. The material conditions for speech and assembly are part of what we are speaking and assembling about. We have to assume the infrastructural goods for which we are fighting, but if the infrastructural conditions for politics are themselves decimated, so too are the assemblies that depend on them. At such a point, the condition of the political is one of the goods for which political assembly takes place—this might be the double meaning of "the infrastructural" under conditions in which public goods are increasingly dismantled by privatization, neoliberalism (the United States), accelerating forms of economic inequality (Greece), the antidemocratic tactics of authoritarian rule (Turkey), or the violent combination of government and cartel interests (Mexico).[2]

I wish to point out that even as public resistance leads to vulnerability, and vulnerability (the sense of "exposure" implied by precarity) leads to resistance, vulnerability is not exactly overcome by resistance, but becomes a potentially effective mobilizing force in political mobilizations. In effect, the demand for infrastructure is a demand for a certain kind of inhabitable ground, and its meaning and force arise precisely when that ground gives way. So the street cannot be taken for granted as the space of appearance, to use Hannah Arendt's phrase—the space of politics—since there is, as we know, a struggle to establish that very ground. And Arendt is at least partially right when she claims that the space of appearance comes into being at the moment of political action. That is a romantic notion of an embodied performative speech act, to be sure, since in any time or place that we act, the space of appearance for the political comes into being. It is not always true, of course—we can try to act collectively, and no space of appearance is established, and that usually has to do with the absence of media, or particular ways that the public sphere is structured to keep such actions from appearing (e.g., zoning, permits, rules against congregating). Arendt clearly presumes that the material conditions for gathering are separate from any particular space of appearance. But if politics is oriented toward the making and preserving of such conditions, then it seems that the space of appearance is not ever fully separable from questions of infrastructure and architecture, as Arendt herself clearly acknowledged.[3] Although Arendt could not have formulated the relationship between contemporary media and the public sphere, for us, infrastructure now includes not only public media, but all forms of media through which, and within which, the space of appearance is constituted. This would include forms of media that constitute, mediate, and monitor the public. Media can function as part of "infrastructural support" when it facilitates modes of solidarity and establishes new spatio-temporal dimensions of the public sphere, including not only those who can appear within the visual images of the public, but those who are, through coercion, fear, or necessity, living outside the reach of the visual frame.

What implications does this notion of supported political action have for thinking about vulnerability and resistance? We are already familiar with the idea that freedom can be exercised only if there is enough support for the exercise of freedom, a material condition that enters into the act that it makes possible. Indeed, when we think about the embodied subject who exercises speech or moves through public space, across borders, it is usually presumed to be one who is already free to speak and move without threat of imprisonment or

deportation or loss of life. Either that subject is endowed with that freedom as in inherent power, or that subject is presumed to live in a public space where open and supported movement is possible. The very term "mobilization" depends on an operative sense of mobility, itself a right, one that many people cannot take for granted. For the body to move, it must usually have a surface of some kind, and it must have at its disposal whatever technical supports allow for movement to take place. So the pavement and the street are already to be understood as requirements of the body as it exercises its rights of mobility. No one moves without a supportive environment and set of technologies. And when those environments start to fall apart or are emphatically unsupportive, we are left to "fall" in some ways, and our very capacity to exercise most basic rights is imperiled.

And we could certainly make a list of how this idea of a body, supported yet acting, supported *and* acting, is at work implicitly or explicitly in any number of political movements: struggles for food and shelter, protection from injury and destruction, the right to work, affordable health care, protection from police violence and imprisonment, from war, or illness, mobilizations against austerity and precarity, authoritarianism and inequality. So, on one level, we are asking about the implicit idea of the body at work in certain kinds of political demands and mobilizations; on another level, we are trying to find out how mobilizations presuppose a body that requires support. In many of the public assemblies that draw people who understand themselves to be in precarious positions, the demand to end precarity is enacted publically by those who expose their vulnerability to failing infrastructural conditions; there is plural and performative bodily resistance at work that shows how bodies are being acted on by social and economic policies that are decimating livelihoods. But these bodies, in showing this precarity, are also resisting these very powers; they enact a form of resistance that presupposes vulnerability of a specific kind, and opposes precarity. What is the conception of the body here, and how do we understand this form of resistance?

If we make the matter individual, we can say that every single body has a certain right to food and shelter, freedom to move and breathe protected from violence. Although we universalize in such a statement ("every" body has this right), we also particularize, understanding the body as discrete, as an individual matter, and that individual body is significantly shaped by a norm of what the body is, and how it ought to be conceptualized. Of course that seems quite obviously right, but consider that this idea of the individual bodily subject of rights might fail to capture the sense of vulnerability, exposure, even

dependency, that is presupposed by the right itself and corresponds, I would suggest, with an alternative view of the body. In other words, if we accept that part of what a body is (and this is for the moment an ontological claim) is its dependency on other bodies and networks of support, then we are suggesting that it is not altogether right to conceive of individual bodies as completely distinct from one another. Of course, neither are they blended into some amorphous social body, but if we conceptualize the political meaning of the human body without understanding those relations in which it lives and thrives, we fail to make the best possible case for the various political ends we seek to achieve. What I am suggesting is that it is not just that this or that body is bound up in a network of relations, but that the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that make its own life and action possible. As I will hope to show, we cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside this conception of social and material relations.

But we also undergo linguistic vulnerability, and in this sense who we are, even our ability to survive, depends on the language that sustains us.[4] One clear dimension of our vulnerability has to do with our exposure to name-calling and discursive categories in infancy and childhood—indeed, throughout the course of life. All of us are called names, and this kind of name-calling demonstrates an important dimension of the speech act. We do not only act through the speech act; speech acts also act on us. There is a distinct performative effect of having been named as this gender or another gender, as part of one nationality or a minority, or to find out that how you are regarded in any of these respects is summed up by a name that you yourself did not know and never chose. We can, and do, ask with the great nineteenth-century black feminist Sojourner Truth, "Am I that Name?"[5] How do we think about the force and effect of those names we are called before any of us emerge into language as speaking beings, prior to any capacity for a speech act of our own? Does speech act on us prior to our speaking, and if it did not act on us, if it were not actively working on us, could we speak at all? And perhaps it is not simply a matter of sequence: does speech continue to act on us at the very moment in which we speak, so that we may well think we are acting, but we are also acted on at that very same time?

Eve Sedgwick wrote about the relationship between performance and performativity in consequential ways, showing that speech acts deviated from their aims, very often producing consequences that were altogether unintended, and oftentimes quite felicitous.[6] For instance, one could take a marriage vow, and

this act could then establish a public recognition of marriage which then allows, or opens up, a zone of possible sexuality that takes place quite under the radar, taking advantage precisely of its nonrecognizability. The marriage vow provides public cover for forms of sexual life that remain unrecognized, and happily so. In such cases, marriage organizes sexuality as we might expect, in conjugal and monogamous forms, but it also produces another zone of sexuality defined precisely by its lack of overt recognition in the public sphere. Sedgwick underscored the sense of how a speech act could veer away from its apparent aims, and this "deviation" was one sense of the word "queer," understood less as an identity than as a movement of thought and language contrary to accepted forms of authority, always deviating, and so opening up spaces for desire that would not always be openly recognized within established norms.

Discourses on gender seemed to create and circulate certain ideals of gender, generating those ideals. What we sometimes take to be natural essences or internal truths are ideals, phantasms, or norms that have taken hold of us in a deep and abiding way. So the ideals produced by a discourse—in this case, a set of gender ideals—can be inhabited in one's gestures and actions, even come to be understood to be essential to who we are. Indeed, we cannot cast off abiding and governing images, norms, and ideals such as these without losing a sense of who we are. That essential sense of who we are is to some extent the workings of a set of social norms. Having a sense of who we are "essentially" is not for that reason an argument for innate differences; arguments from innate-ness constitute only one form of essentialism, and one can have a sense of what is essential for one's life without exactly being an essentialist.

My early formulation that "gender is performative" became the basis for two quite contrary interpretations: the first is that we radically choose our genders; the second was that we are utterly determined by gender norms. Those wildly divergent responses meant that something had not quite been articulated and grasped about the dual dimensions of any account of performativity. For if language acts on us before we act, and continues acting in every instant in which we act, then we have to think about gender performativity first as "gender assignment"—all those ways in which we are, as it were, called a name, and gendered prior to understanding anything about how gender norms act on and shape us, and prior to our capacity to reproduce those norms in ways that we might choose. Choice, in fact, comes late in this process of performativity. And then second, following Sedgwick, we have to understand how deviations from those norms can and do take place,

suggesting that something "queer" is at work at the heart of gender performativity, a queerness that is not so very different from the swerves taken by iterability in Derrida's account of the speech act as citational, but that takes on specific embodied and social meanings in Sedgwick's view.

So let us assume, then, that performativity describes both the processes of being acted on and the conditions and possibilities for acting, and that we cannot understand its operation without both of these dimensions. That norms act on us implies that we are susceptible to their action, vulnerable to a certain name-calling from the start. And this registers at a level that is prior to any possibility of volition. An understanding of gender assignment has to take up this field of an unwilled receptivity, susceptibility, and vulnerability, a way of being exposed to language prior to any possibility of forming or enacting a speech act. Norms such as these both require and institute certain forms of corporeal vulnerability without which their operation would not be thinkable. That is why we can, and do, describe the powerful citational force of gender norms as they are instituted and applied by medical, legal, and psychiatric institutions, and object to the effect they have on the formation and understanding of gender in pathological or criminal terms. Yet this very domain of susceptibility, this condition of being affected, is also where something queer can happen, where the norm is refused or revised, or where new formulations of gender begin. Although gender norms precede us and act on us (that is one sense of its enactment), we are obligated to reproduce them (and that is a second sense of its enactment). Precisely because something inadvertent and unexpected can happen in this realm of "being affected," we find forms of gender that break with mechanical patterns of repetition, deviating from, resignifying, and sometimes quite emphatically breaking those citational chains of gender normativity, making room for new forms of gendered life. The theory of gender performativity, as I understood it, never prescribed which gender performances were right, or more subversive, and which were wrong, and reactionary. The point was precisely to relax the coercive hold of norms on gendered life—which is not the same as transcending all norms—for the purposes of living a more livable life.

It seems important to distinguish here between two different actions of the norm. In the first case, the norm is interpellated, and it could be understood most easily in this context as the interpellating action of gender assignment. We are treated, hailed, and formed by social norms that precede us and that form the constraining context for whatever forms of agency we ourselves take on in time. We do not precisely overcome our formations, but we do veer

from the apparent aims at times, and this means that finding a queer way and becoming an agent are somehow linked. But there is a second sense of norms, and those are not precisely counter to our sense of agency: they constitute the intersubjective and infrastructural conditions of a livable life. We hardly seek to overcome those social and material conditions of our lives, but we do seek to make them more just, more equal, and more enabling. In relation to both interpellating and infrastructural norms, we are embodied creatures who are to some extent exposed to what we are called and dependent on the structures that let us live. So whatever performative agency might mean, it cannot overcome these prior and constituting dimensions of social normativity. It is here, then, that I would identify both dependency and vulnerability as part of the performative account of agency. Indeed, the embodiment presupposed by both gender and performance is one that is dependent on institutional structures and broader social worlds. We cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body and what its relation to that support—or lack of support—might be. In this way, the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living. Thus, the dependency of human and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported, when those infrastructural conditions characterizing our social, political, and economic lives start to decompose, or when we find ourselves radically unsupported under conditions of precarity or under explicit conditions of threat.

Both performance studies and disability studies have offered the crucial insight that all action requires support and that even the most punctual and seemingly spontaneous act implicitly depends on an infrastructural condition that quite literally supports the acting body. This idea of "support" is quite important not only for the retheorization of the acting body, but for the broader politics of mobility: what architectural supports have to be in place for each of us to exercise a certain freedom of movement, one that is necessary in order to exercise the right to public assembly? In the same way we claim that the speech act depends on its social conditions and conventions, we can also say that the performance of gender more generally depends on its infrastructural and social conditions of support. This bears implications for a general account of embodied and social action, and also for understanding the bodily risks that women take walking on certain streets at night, assembling in public squares (the sexual assault would be a clear example), and trans people risk in walking on the street or gathering in public assemblies.

As I have argued elsewhere,[7] all public assembly is haunted by the police and the prison. And every public square is defined in part by the population that could not possibly arrive there; either they are detained at the border, or they have no freedom of movement and assembly, or they are detained or imprisoned. In other words, the freedom to gather as a people is always haunted by the imprisonment of those who exercised that freedom and were taken to prison. And when one arrives in public or common spaces with radical and critical views, there is always an anxious or certain anticipation that imprisonment may well follow. Sometimes we walk, or run, knowingly in the direction of prison because it is the only way to expose illegitimate constraints on public assembly and political expression. The deliberate exposure to harm was crucial to Gandhi's notion of nonviolent civil disobedience.[8]

In Gezi Park, some who were assembled were detained, and others were hurt. The lawyers who came to help those who were detained were themselves detained; and sometimes the medical workers who came to help the injured were themselves subject to injury. And yet a new group of activists or journalists, health professionals or lawyers, would arrive, replenishing the network of support. With the imprisonment of some Pussy Riot members after their Cathedral performance in Moscow, demonstrations broke out in major cities all across the globe, and Internet forms of solidarity emerged to put pressure on governments and human rights agencies to press for the release of those imprisoned and to object to the conditions of political imprisonment. Both of these examples, and the growing movement against the death penalty, compel us to turn our attention to political imprisonment, and to the institution of the prison industry as a global mechanism for the regulation of the rights of citizenship, for the administration of violence. In the United States, two-thirds of prisoners are black men, and nearly every person on death row is a person of color. Angela Davis has argued that the prison in the United States continues the work of slavery by suspending the very rights of citizenship for people of color; in this way, it becomes the continuation of slavery by other means.[9]

Feminism is a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance precisely because feminist critique destabilizes those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice, and it criticizes those institutions and practices that inflict violence on women and gender minorities, and, in fact, all minorities subject to police power for showing up and speaking out as they do. We are now witnessing popular movements against the notion of "gender" in France and in several Eastern European countries, such as

Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia, and these are allied with movements against reproductive freedom and gay marriage, against lifting constraints imposed on women's literacy, employment, and expressive freedoms. Time and again we hear from government authorities in several parts of the world that what women and minority populations regard as basics of equality and freedom go against the "common norms" of a national culture, or that their goals are unrealistic or ungrateful, or that what they call equality and freedom are actually dangerous, posing grave security risks to the nation or to Europe or, indeed, to civilization itself. The Russian government accused Pussy Riot of "attacking the soul of man." Few struggles are more important than those that call into question so-called common norms by asking whose lives were *never* included in those norms. Whose lives are, in fact, explicitly excluded from those norms? What norm of the human constrains those common norms? And to what extent is that a masculinist norm, or a norm of racial privilege?

I have suggested that we rethink the relationship between the human body and infrastructure so that we might call into question the body as discrete, singular, and self-sufficient, and I have proposed instead to understand embodiment as both performative and relational, where relationality includes dependency on infrastructural conditions and legacies of discourse and institutional power that precede and condition our existence. I am also suggesting that certain ideals of independence are masculinist and that a feminist account exposes the disavowed dependency at the heart of the masculinist idea of the body. This is different from saying what women's bodies are or what men's bodies are. I am not making those claims; I am only showing what I take to be a masculinist conception of bodily action that should be actively criticized. My reference to dependency may well include dependency on the mother or the primary caretaker, but that is not the form of primary dependency that concerns me here. By theorizing the human body as a certain kind of *dependency* on infrastructure, understood complexly as environment, social relations, and networks of support and sustenance by which the human itself proves not to be divided from the animal or from the technical world, we foreground the ways in which we are vulnerable to decimated or disappearing infrastructures, economic supports, and predictable and well-compensated labor. Not only are we then vulnerable to one another—an invariable feature of social relations—but, in addition, this very vulnerability indicates a broader condition of dependency and interdependency that challenges the dominant ontological understanding of the embodied subject.

Of course, there are many reasons *not* to like vulnerability. Most of us wish we were less vulnerable under conditions in which we are impinged on in ways we do not choose, and "vulnerability" names this very condition. But that alone is no reason to reject a theoretical consideration of its uses, especially when it turns out that vulnerability cannot rightly be reduced to what we cannot willingly want. In the final set of my remarks, I want to argue against the notion that vulnerability is the opposite of resistance. Indeed, I want to argue affirmatively that vulnerability, understood as a deliberate exposure to power, is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment. I know that speaking about vulnerability produces resistance of various kinds for the reasons I have just mentioned. There are those who worry that vulnerability, even if it becomes a theme or a problem for thinking, will be asserted as a primary existential condition, ontological and constitutive, and that this sort of foundationalism will founder on the same rocky shores as have others, such as the ethics of care or maternal thinking. Or some people worry that if feminism in any way becomes associated with vulnerability, no matter which version, it will become captured by the term and women will end up being portrayed in ways that rob them of their agency. Does a turn to vulnerability seek to reintroduce those foundationalist or essentialist modalities of thinking and valuing back into public discourse?—is it smuggling in discounted paradigms for reconsideration? Does the idea of vulnerability work to the detriment of women? Or does that very question presuppose that any concession made to vulnerability will lead to vulnerability as (a) a foundational premise for politics (which it is not), (b) an essential identity (which it is not), or (c) an identification of women with injurability (which is not necessary)? All of these concerns assume that vulnerability is disjoined from resistance, mobilization, and other forms of deliberate and agentic politics. Such an assumption is at the basis of many of our political misunderstandings about the importance of the term.

Yet the resistance to vulnerability is often based on political anxieties such as these. After all, if women or minorities seek to establish themselves as vulnerable, do they unwittingly or wittingly seek to establish a protected status subject to a paternalistic set of powers that must safeguard the vulnerable, those presumed to be weak and in need of protection? Does the discourse of vulnerability discount the political agency of the subjugated? So one political problem that emerges from any such discussion is whether the discourse on vulnerability shores up paternalistic power, relegating the condition of vulnerability to those who suffer discrimination, exploitation, or violence. What

about the power of those who are oppressed? And what about the vulnerability of paternalistic institutions themselves? After all, if they can be contested, brought down, or rebuilt on egalitarian grounds, then paternalism itself is *vulnerable to* a dismantling that would undo its very form of power. And when this dismantling is undertaken by subjugated peoples, do they not establish themselves as something other than, or more than, vulnerable? Indeed, do we want to say that they overcome their vulnerability at such moments, which is to assume that vulnerability is negated when it is converted[10] into agency? Or is vulnerability still there, but only now assuming a different form?

Finally, there are justified political objections to the fact that dominant groups can use the discourse of "vulnerability" to shore up their own privilege. In California, when white people were losing their status as a majority, some of them claimed that they were a "vulnerable" population. Vulnerable to what? A multinational and multiracial state? Such a claim was clearly racist. Indeed, colonial states have lamented their "vulnerability" to attack by those they colonize and have sought general sympathy on the basis of that claim. Some men have complained that feminism has made them into a "vulnerable population" and that they are now "targeted" for discrimination. Various European national identities now claim to be "under attack" by new and established migrant communities. We can see that the term has a way of shifting, and since we may not like some, or even many, of the shifts it makes, we may find ourselves somewhat awkwardly opposed to vulnerability. Of course, that is a rather funny thing to say, since we might conjecture that any amount of opposition to vulnerability does not exactly defeat its operation in our bodily and social lives. Indeed, vehement opposition to vulnerability may prove to be the very sign of its continuing operation. That seems to be a minimal truth that we can accept from psychoanalysis. Yet do our political objections to vulnerability make us into psychoanalytic fools? And do our psychoanalytic affirmations of vulnerability make us complicit with political positions we do not condone?

When we oppose "vulnerability" as a political term, it is usually because we would like to see ourselves as agentic, or we think that better political consequences will follow if we see ourselves that way. If we oppose vulnerability in the name of agency, does that imply that we prefer to see ourselves as those who are only acting, but not acted on? And how might we then describe those regions of both aesthetics and ethics that presume that our receptivity is bound up with our responsiveness, a zone in which we are acted on by the world, by what is said and shown, by what we hear, and by what touches us? If

we take this domain of impressionability as primary, then can we ask what aspects of the world impress on us at the very moment we form an impression of that world? What we find is at the same time that we act on it in certain ways. Does the opposition to vulnerability also imperil a host of related terms of responsiveness, including impressionability, susceptibility, injurability, openness, indignation, outrage, and even resistance? If nothing acts on me against my will or without my advanced knowledge, then there is only sovereignty, the posture of control over the property that I have and that I am, a seemingly sturdy and self-centered form of the thinking "I" that seeks to cloak those fault lines in the self that cannot be overcome. What form of politics is supported by this adamant mode of disavowal? Is this not the masculinist account of sovereignty that, as feminists, we are called on to dismantle?[11]

As I have tried to suggest by calling attention to the dual dimension of performativity, we are invariably acted on and acting, and this is one reason performativity cannot be reduced to the idea of free, individual performance. We are called names and find ourselves living in a world of categories and descriptions way before we start to sort them critically and endeavor to change or make them on our own. In this way we are, quite in spite of ourselves, vulnerable to, and affected by, discourses that we never chose. In a parallel way, I want to suggest that there is a dual relationship to resistance that helps us understand what we mean by vulnerability. On the one hand, there is a resistance to vulnerability that takes both psychic and political dimensions; the psychic resistance to vulnerability wishes that it were never the case that discourse and power were imposed on us in ways that we never chose, and so seeks to shore up a notion of individual sovereignty against the shaping forces of history on our embodied lives. On the other hand, the very meaning of vulnerability changes when it becomes understood as part of the very practice of political resistance. Indeed, one of the important features of public assembly that we recently see confirms that political resistance relies fundamentally on the mobilization of vulnerability, which means that vulnerability can be a way of being exposed and agentic at the same time. Such collective forms of resistance are structured very differently than the idea of a political subject that establishes its agency by vanquishing its vulnerability—this is the masculinist ideal we surely ought to continue to oppose.

A most important criticism emerges from those who argue that vulnerability cannot be the basis for group identification without strengthening paternalistic power. Once groups are marked as "vulnerable" within human rights discourse

or legal regimes, those groups become reified as definitionally "vulnerable," fixed in a political position of powerlessness and lack of agency. All the power belongs to the state and international institutions that are now supposed to offer them protection and advocacy. Such moves tend to underestimate, or actively efface, modes of political agency and resistance that emerge within so-called vulnerable populations. To understand those extrajuridical modes of resistance, we would have to think about how resistance and vulnerability work together, something that the paternalistic model cannot do. In my view, as much as "vulnerability" can be affirmed as an existential condition, since we are all subject to accidents, illness, and attacks that can expunge our lives quite quickly, it is also a socially induced condition, which accounts for the disproportionate exposure to suffering, especially among those broadly called the precariat for whom access to shelter, food, and medical care is often quite drastically limited. Even so, it would not be a sufficient politics to embrace vulnerability or to get in touch with our feelings, or bare our fault lines as if that might launch a new mode of authenticity or inaugurate a new order of moral values or a sudden and widespread outbreak of "care." I am not in favor of such moves toward authenticity as a way of doing politics, for they continue to locate vulnerability as the opposite of agency, to identify agency with sovereign modes of defensiveness, and to fail to recognize the ways in which vulnerability can be an incipient and enduring moment of resistance. Once we understand the way vulnerability enters into agency, then our understanding of both terms can change, and the binary opposition between them can become undone. I consider the undoing of this binary a feminist task.

To summarize: vulnerability is not a subjective disposition. Rather, it characterizes a relation to a field of objects, forces, and passions that impinge on or affect us in some way. As a way of being related to what is not me and not fully masterable, vulnerability is a kind of relationship that belongs to that ambiguous region in which receptivity and responsiveness are not clearly separable from one another, and not distinguished as separate moments in a sequence; indeed, where receptivity and responsiveness become the basis for mobilizing vulnerability rather than engaging in its destructive denial.

Of course, I am aware that I have used "resistance" in at least two ways: first, as the *resistance to* vulnerability that characterizes that form of thinking that models itself on mastery; second, *as a social and political form* that is informed by vulnerability, and so not one of its opposites. I have suggested that vulnerability is neither fully passive nor fully active, but operating in a middle

region, a constituent feature of a human animal both affected and acting. I am thus led to think about those practices of deliberate exposure to police or military violence in which bodies, put on the line, either receive blows or seek to stop violence as living blockades or barriers. In such practices of nonviolent resistance, we can come to understand bodily vulnerability as something that is actually marshaled or mobilized for the purposes of resistance. Of course, such a claim is controversial, since these practices can seem allied with self-destruction, but what interests me are those forms of nonviolent resistance that mobilize vulnerability for the purposes of asserting existence, claiming the right to public space, equality, and opposing violent police, security, and military actions. We may think that these are isolated moments in which a group decides in advance to produce a blockade or to link arms in order to lay claim to public space or to resist being removed by the police. And that is surely true, as it was in Berkeley in 2011 when a group of students and colleagues were assaulted by police forces on campus at the very moment they were practicing nonviolent protest. But consider as well that for trans people in many places in the world and women who seek to walk the street at night in safety, the moment of actively appearing on the street involves a deliberate risk of exposure to force. Under certain conditions, continuing to exist, to move, and to breathe are forms of resistance, which is why we sometimes see placards in Palestine with the slogan "We still exist!" As we know, this is certainly true of groups who gather without permits and without weapons to oppose privatization and rally for democracy, as we saw in Gezi Park in Istanbul last June. Although such groups are shorn of legal and police protection, they are not for that reason reduced to some sort of "bare life." There is no sovereign power jettisoning the subject outside the domain of the political as such; rather, there is a renewal of popular sovereignty outside, and against, the terms of state sovereignty and police power, one that often involves a concerted and corporeal form of exposure and resistance.

Vulnerability can emerge within resistance and direct democracy actions precisely as a deliberate mobilization of bodily exposure. I suggested earlier that we had to deal with two senses of resistance here: resistance to vulnerability that belongs to certain projects of thought and certain formations of politics organized by sovereign mastery, and a resistance to unjust and violent regimes that mobilizes vulnerability as part of its own exercise of power.

In political life, it surely seems that first some injustice happens and then there is a response, but it may be that the response is happening as the injustice occurs, and this gives us another way to think about historical events,

action, passion, and vulnerability in forms of resistance. It would seem that without being able to think about vulnerability, we cannot think about resistance, and that by thinking about resistance, we are already under way, dismantling the resistance to vulnerability in order precisely to resist.

Notes

1 Part of this discussion is adapted from my *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*.
2 See Wendy Brown's work on the privatization of public goods in *Undoing the Demos*.
3 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 194–195.
4 See "On Linguistic Vulnerability" in my *Excitable Speech*, 1–42.
5 See Brezina, *Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" Speech*.
6 See Sedgwick, "Around the Performative."
7 See Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, chap. 5.
8 See Gandhi, "Part I. Satyagraha: The Power of Nonviolence."
9 Davis, "Slavery, Civil Rights, and Abolitionist Perspectives toward Prison."
10 For this double sense of resistance, see Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance*, 17–38.
11 White, "Writing in the Middle Voice," 255–262.