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reckoned with. To expect the last and final word from such an “accidental” thesis, however, would be contrary to the very spirit of the attempt.

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**Etienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, translated by James Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), xi+291 pages.**

What was important in this choice of terms [‘anti-strategic’] was to make clear how deeply we must locate the inversion of perspectives necessary to *answer the call* that we receive: we must displace the call, we must call in return upon the Americans to think in different terms, we must question the very presuppositions of the demands. We must *start changing the concept of the political.* (233)

Etienne Balibar’s philosophically rigorous and politically topical assemblage of nine translated, revised lectures and two essays delivered or written between 1991 and 2002, will be extremely useful to those in the fields of political philosophy, contemporary history, European history, cultural studies, and sociology, to name only a few, and should indeed top the reading lists of anyone interested in contemporary debates on citizenship, European unification, nationalism, the politics of globalization, and the relationship between national and international law. The collection principally consists of lectures addressed to international audiences in the United States as well as in both central and peripheral “old” Europe. In these pieces, Balibar analyzes a variety of local political struggles and crises in and on the borders of Europe, such as the political struggles of the *sans-papiers* in France, which have significantly contributed to the democratization of national borders and to a reactivation of civil disobedience at the heart of citizenship participation. Such specific issues situate Balibar’s discussion of broader transnational crises (crises of nationalism, as well as transnational forms of mass violence) and his analysis of the dominant conceptual and

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philosophical frameworks (viz., sovereignty, constitutionalism, and human rights) used to represent these crises.

The collection opens with Balibar “speaking of the ‘borders of Europe’ in Greece” before an audience at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, in a lecture arguing for the need to democratize the institution of national borders for reciprocal, multilateral and transnational negotiations for the regulation of migration and commodity flows between nations. The book closes with a critique of the ways that American intellectuals, since the September 11th attacks, have invoked Europe (or, more specifically, European power) as a unitary and powerful entity called upon to alternatively counteract U.S. hegemony or mediate a “clash of civilizations.” The wide range of standpoints the different chapters convey makes the book a formal, and not just substantive, deconstruction of the prevailing conception of European power as a unified supranational identity.

*We, the People of Europe?* moves from its first meditation, “At the Borders of Europe,” to cover a wide range of themes, including the proliferation of intensified nationalist ideologies alongside the globalization of processes of denationalization, the question of access to national and international rights, the current crisis of popular sovereignty in Europe, the politics of human rights discourse and its complicity with forms of mass violence, the reaction of liberal democratic nation-states to the collapse of the communist state and ensuing complications, the task of reconceiving militancy and the democratic right to civil disobedience, and the possibilities of realizing collective protection against the development of “monopolizations of legitimate force” (whether military, economic, ideological, or combinations thereof). Balibar continually deconstructs the conceptual basis of European unification in an age marked by intensified ethnic and national violence and the increasingly transnational scope of political conflicts and responsibilities. He deftly analyzes how attempts to constitute European political and economic power over the last several decades have simultaneously produced new possibilities and impossibilities for democracy. The systematic use of extreme violence and mass insecurity on a rapidly expanding global scale (the biopolitical production of “death zones,” as well as the production of immigrant and refugees through wars, embargoes, no less than through forceful “humanitarian” interventions) has instantiated a European advancement of quasi-apartheid structures. Balibar argues that these developments necessitate a democratization which today inevitably

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implies a transnationalization of contemporary notions of citizenship and national borders.

Balibar suggests that a more realizable form of collective security begins “with the most ‘insecure,’ the nomadic populations who are the source and target of the obsession with law and order that is so closely intertwined with the obsession with identity” (177). His perspective is based on the conviction that the greatest threat to human communities lies in the “fortification,” or alignment, of fundamentalist ideologies. Widespread collective security that protects against such fortifications can be more effectively actualized through translation across the boundaries of social frameworks, collective interests, and communal objectives. In other words, Balibar argues that the greatest collective security will be achieved by pluralizing the modes of translation used to mediate inter-communal objectives, rather than by monopolizing social forces to form a unitary mode of power that must continuously defend itself in often violent ways as much from interior as from exterior pressures that threaten to decompose it.

As Balibar has shown elsewhere (most notably in *Race Nation Class*), the exclusionary politics of national borders are not restricted to the physical boundaries of nation-states. Rather, they shape the modes of sociability in much more pervasive ways: by bolstering the pernicious manifestations of national, ethnic, and racial identity within and across territorial boundaries, but also through the abstraction and suppression of these conflicts within the very structure and function of Western legal norms and regulations. In this collection, he offers critical analyses of a juridical and moral formalism that conceives the solution to representational exclusion as an expanded allocation of international legal rights and representation. Balibar insists that representatives of the liberal formalist position, such as the German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas and others involved in today’s constitutional debates in Europe, fail to address the conditions of possibility for the actualization of these formal rights on the ground. These formalists tend to elide both the fundamental role of popular sovereignty in the constitution of political society and the complicity of international law and human rights discourse in a politics of “preventative counterinsurrection” that violently suppresses the material conditions that enable the evolution of emancipatory political movements. Such analytical gaps lead Balibar to cast serious doubt on juridical cosmopolitan solutions to the massive exclusion of refugees, immigrant laborers, and other anonymous peoples from both nation-

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states and international human rights law. Solutions to the expansion of counterinsurrectional violence cannot afford to morally transcend or legally ignore these antipolitical processes. An effective approach must instead deconstruct their monopoly over the force and legitimacy of political relationships by an “anti-strategic” pluralization of political maneuvers cultivated through transnational initiatives combining activist and intellectual labor.

If democracy is to exist in Europe, Balibar argues, it must open a space for an altogether new *kind* of power based not on fortified boundaries, but on a democratic, inclusive, multilateral collective participation in the negotiations of already existing structures of exclusion. Europe must be reconstituted as a civic space where political efficacy derives from a creative multiplication of the ways power is conceived and exercised—particularly forms of power derived from processes of mediation and translation between diverse political communities. National borders, he urges, must become sites for a continual negotiation from both sides such that the regulation of political boundaries and the flow of goods and people across them becomes a mutual project and gives principal consideration to the forms of economic and political violence and disparity that continually displace and uproot populations.

Far from holding up an idealized image of European sovereignty to an inadequate reality, this collection suggests that popular forces in Europe already generate much of their political power via multilateral, transnational initiatives of pluralized, inter-communitarian mediations. However, Balibar warns that if these forces are to effectively counteract the increasing monopolization of otherwise diverse social foyces by biopolitical, national, religious, and other strategic alignments, the constitutive powers of the people residing in Europe must be strengthened. They must become the priority of economic and social policy, legal reform, and the transfer of the scope and responsibilities of intellectual labor and activist forms of knowledge from academic specialists on the one hand, and anonymous peoples and grassroots organizers on the other, to the heart of an active participatory model of citizenship.

Hence, one of the central difficulties the book explores is the attempt to conceive a form of citizenship through which a new kind of political praxis can emerge that is able to counteract the expansion of extreme violence without becoming subsumed into the logic of such violence. Balibar argues that a democratization of citizenship

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must operate as a collective dynamic at once separate from a nationalist political framework, yet which takes this framework as the site for deconstructive political and intellectual activity. His insistence on a politics of “civility” as just such a new form of political praxis manages to avoid, on the one hand, proclamations of pacifism that must repress the power and significance of ethnic and nationalist conflicts in order to maintain “law and order,” and, on the other hand, a politics of emancipatory “counter-counterinsurrection” that risks becoming symmetrical with the forms of collective violence they combat. The term “civility” is used here to describe a “politics of politics” that “aims at creating, recreating, and conserving the set of conditions within which politics as a collective participation in public affairs is possible, or at least not made absolutely impossible” (115). This term “civility” may seem suspicious and somewhat disturbing to readers cognizant of the term’s deeply embedded associations with a European justificatory rhetoric of colonial expansion, often described as a “civilizing mission,” leaving one to wonder whether Balibar could have simply employed the phrase “a politics of politics” instead. However, Balibar, who has never been one to turn his attention away from the subtleties of contradictory connotations and politically charged etymologies, is not unaware of such “ambiguous” associations and takes pains to differentiate the French usage of *civilité* from that of “civilization” and to trace the term back to its Latin root, *civitas*. This allows him to redeploy its meaning by associating it with the dialectical, conflictual double-meaning of *politeia* (194–95). Balibar’s use of “civility” to describe his materialist vision of transnational democratic citizenship is thus important because it implies that conflict, rather than an idealized notion of harmony or stasis, is the substance from which political praxis ultimately draws its power to transform social relations. Balibar’s analysis of contemporary politics in Europe, which follows the work of Foucault and of Spinoza before him, argues that it is necessary to draw force from existing antagonisms (rather than from transcendental or pacifist norms) in order to creatively transform them into a rich political, dialogic culture that continually reinvents for itself new frameworks for collective agency.

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