

Routledge Innovators in Political Theory

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, hand-drawn loops in red, blue, yellow, and green, creating a complex, organic shape that frames the central text.

MICHAEL J. SHAPIRO

Discourse, culture, violence

EDITED BY

TERRELL CARVER AND SAMUEL A. CHAMBERS



Michael J. Shapiro

Michael J. Shapiro's writings have been innovative with respect to the phenomena he has taken to be political, and the concomitant array of methods that he has brilliantly mastered. This book draws from his vast output of articles, chapters and books to provide a thematic yet integrated account of his boundary-crossing innovations in political theory and masterly contributions to our understanding of methods in the social sciences. The editors have focused on work in three key areas:

Discourse

Shapiro was one of the first theorists to demonstrate convincingly, and in a manner that has had a long-standing impact on the field, that language is not epiphenomenal to politics. Indeed, he shows that *language is constitutive* of politics. From his frequently cited article on metaphor from the early 1980s to recent work on discourse and globalization, Shapiro has shown that politics occurs not only with and through the use of language, but *within discourse as a material practice*.

Culture

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) famous work *The Civic Culture* established a long-held but ultimately counterproductive relationship between culture and politics, one in which culture is an independent variable that has effects on politics. Samuel Huntington's (1998) (in)famous polemic, *The Clash of Civilizations*, only pushes this relationship to its breaking point. Shapiro's rich and numerous writings on culture provide a powerful and important antidote to this approach, as Shapiro consistently shows (across wide-ranging contexts) that politics is in culture and culture is in politics, and no politically salient approach to culture can afford to turn either term into a causal variable.

Violence

While violence is surely not a theme foreign to political studies, no exponent of contemporary political theory has done more to bring violence into play as a central term of political thought or to expand our understanding of violence. By reconceptualizing and reinterpreting this term, Shapiro's work has helped us to rethink the very boundaries between political theory and international relations as putatively separate subfields of political science. And it explains why political theorists interested in International Relations and International Relations scholars concerned with a broader understanding of international politics must start with Shapiro's work as required reading.

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Michael J. Shapiro

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*Edited by
Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers*

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INTRODUCTION

Revealing the interpretations that change the world: the writings of Michael J. Shapiro

Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers

For the past 25 years or so, numerous political theorists have advocated a more interdisciplinary approach to the field. They have argued convincingly that the phenomena of politics and the political can only be grasped by way of a multifaceted approach. Politics is national and international: it is centered on power and on culture; made in markets and classrooms; and appears in literature and film just as it does in wars and parliaments. But it proves much easier to offer meta-level analyses of the superiority of a multidisciplinary approach than it does to actually do multidisciplinary work. While many call for an interdisciplinary approach, few exemplify it. The disciplinary boundaries are too entrenched, the rewards too few, and the disincentives to “stray” too relentless.

The writings of Michael J. Shapiro are therefore extraordinary in their breadth, their range, and their capacity to grasp the workings of the political in such a wide array of contexts and from such a diverse set of phenomena. As the objects of analysis change, so do the methods, and Shapiro has been courageous in schooling himself in new literatures and new techniques so that he can not only pursue those objects, but also discover and create new ones. Shapiro’s writings have proven to be radically innovative within the field of political theory because he has refused to work within any pre-defined or circumscribed area. Indeed, to do this, Shapiro has had to be willing to run the risk of doing work not “within” the field of political theory itself, depending upon one’s definition of it. Unlike most “big names” in the field—even, perhaps, those who have been the subject of previous volumes in this series—Shapiro’s work cannot immediately be confined to one or two “big ideas.” Rather, his reputation as an “innovator in political theory” is connected directly with his genuinely interdisciplinary approach to the field, his consistently novel and experimental work, and his multiple pioneering contributions—all of which have reshaped political theory itself. Thus, like the previous volumes in this series, this book will identify Shapiro as an innovator in political theory along three fronts, in this case, discourse, culture, and violence.

2 Introduction

Discourse: Shapiro was one of the first theorists to demonstrate convincingly, and in a manner that has had a long-standing impact on the field, that language is not epiphenomenal to politics. Indeed, he shows that language is constitutive of politics. From his frequently cited article on metaphor from the early 1980s to recent work on discourse and globalization, Shapiro has shown that politics occurs not only with and through the use of language, but within discourse as a material practice. While some theorists now take this claim as banal, Shapiro continues to show how radical it really is.

Culture: Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) famous work *The Civic Culture* established a long-held but ultimately counterproductive relationship between culture and politics, one in which culture is an independent variable that has effects on politics. Samuel Huntington's (1998) (in)famous polemic, *The Clash of Civilizations*, only pushes this relationship to its breaking point. Shapiro's rich and numerous writings on culture provide a powerful and important antidote to this approach, as Shapiro consistently shows (across wide-ranging contexts) that politics is in culture and culture is in politics, and no politically salient approach to culture can afford to turn either term into a causal variable.

Violence: While violence is surely not a theme foreign to political studies, no exponent of contemporary political theory has done more to bring violence into play as a central term of political thought or to expand our understanding of violence. By reconceptualizing and reinterpreting this term, Shapiro's work has helped us to rethink the very boundaries between political theory and international relations as putatively separate sub-fields of political science. And it explains why political theorists interested in International Relations and International Relations scholars concerned with a broader understanding of international politics must start with Shapiro's work as required reading.

Shapiro is not someone who merely tries to solve pre-given problems in political theory—the ones that have largely been handed down through generations of interpretation and debate—nor is he someone who makes a methodological choice that limits or constrains the events, issues, and objects that he considers. Moreover, he is not one to dabble or make gestures. Shapiro's world is one where power matters, and politics is where that happens—anywhere and in any way. Power certainly comes out of the barrel of a gun, for Shapiro or for anyone else, but maps and movies, music and metaphysics, polemic and poetry, bodies and ideas all feature in what he considers the political to be. Thus they all form potential sites where he chooses to intervene. The quantity, quality and sheer range of his output place him in a class entirely on his own.

Shapiro is a graduate of Tufts University (BA 1962), the University of Hawaii at Manoa (MA 1964), and Northwestern University (PhD 1966). He taught at the University of Hawaii (1966–8), was on leave to teach at the University of California at Berkeley (1968–70), and gained his Associate Professorship at the University of Hawaii in 1970. He was made full Professor in 1974, and in 2010 he received the Regent's Medal for Excellence in Research, the most prestigious research award at the university. Shapiro has held visiting and other distinguished appointments at the University of Bergen in Norway, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Macalester College, New York University, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, and the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland.

Shapiro's intellectual trajectory took an innovative turn in the early 1970s when he encountered Michel Foucault and was transfigured by the post-structuralist movement in Europe, most notably in France. The thinkers involved are now, of course, well known—Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Paul de Man, Gilles Deleuze and others—but they were not well known then. Shapiro was one of the first Americans to promote their radical and counter-intuitive visions. It was a difficult “sell” and no doubt not an easy outlook to acquire, given his training in cognitive psychology, empirical analysis, policy studies and quantitative political science. That “power is everywhere,” that representations are the only reality, that the “free” human subject is an oppressive construction, that language is everything, that science does not establish certainties, and that facts are fictions which we repeat often enough—in those days many found all these ideas distinctly unpleasant. Rather than avoid or resist these notions, Shapiro explored them, probed them, rejected or refined some of them, and embraced others. With characteristic thoroughness he further schooled himself in the thinkers who influenced the post-structuralists or who could be imaginatively brought into the conversation: Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Lacan, and further back Heidegger, Husserl and even Kant. Moreover, he brahshly ignored the political science/International Relations boundary line. Countless theorists have been stimulated by Shapiro's politicization of what could otherwise be a matter of rather abstract contemplation, perhaps reaching the heights of a seminar on “continental philosophy.” For Shapiro “continental philosophy” was never an end in itself.

Shapiro has politicized movies, novels, poetry, music, TV, photography, architecture, cartography and any number of phenomena that challenge the view that ideas are nothing more than words on paper, appropriately framed and edited as objects of study, or that language is “data” on which science can be “done” by those with the appropriate intellectual training. Shapiro takes the notion of text as a repository of and vehicle for meaning with utter seriousness. He views meaning as made (not merely found or discovered), and he thinks the meaning-makers and the effects of meaning-making are the what and where of politics. This approach guarantees that one is not taking the powerful on their own terms but rather finding and recommending terms on which to take them. In itself, this is a critical move, and one which ties Shapiro to political theory as a vocation—his engagement with U.S. and “Western” politics worldwide as a violence machine. Thinking of language as a form of violence, as Derrida suggested, is not for Shapiro a merely intellectual move that thereby displaces an acknowledgement of, and critique of, the violence that is done every day. Rather, it is the reverse.

Discourse: language, power, critique

Shapiro's article in [Chapter 1](#), “Metaphor in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences,” is a classic, and virtually a manifesto for the post-structuralist reading of the “linguistic turn” in philosophy. It has not been reprinted and makes an excellent start to this volume. Astonishingly, in the first two paragraphs Shapiro subverts the objectivity of

empiricist epistemology, inverting its presumptions about perception by arguing that knowing subjects are active in the process of meaning-making and therefore knowledge creation. This claim therefore entails that, as knowing subjects and objects of knowledge are related, the language of analysis is not a merely neutral element of the process, but rather a crucial ingredient that constitutes that process. By the third paragraph Shapiro has textualized sciences as knowledge-making activities, distinguished from one another not by their knowledge-objects but by their “writing practices” (15–16). Pushing on from there, he argues that the distinction between literal and metaphorical language is unstable with respect to different writing practices, and that indeed these practices assume authority by aligning a particular set of codes with the literal and therefore the known. Conversely, other codes denote the fanciful, the non-objective and the irrelevant or the unsayable. In other words sciences are writing practices distinguished by different vocabularies of the literal and vocabularies of the metaphorical. Epistemology is not, then, a correct or incorrect referencing of “the real” but rather a variable and vocabulary-based practice of telling us how we can and cannot talk about “the real” and thus know it (16–19).

Shapiro then examines the vocabularies of various social sciences—Freudianism, empiricism, phenomenology, linguistic philosophy, hermeneutics and post-structuralism itself. He shows how the authoritative exercise of the literal/figurative boundary line is not only the way through which knowledge is (variously) validated but also the way through which some knowers acquire power over others—“others” who do not know, or who know wrongly, or who know less. The article concludes with a reading of Foucault wherein knowledge claims now show us—as post-structuralists do—that they are constructed through reading and writing practices. Some of these practices create the orthodoxies of the present, whereas others—such as Foucault’s—set out to challenge them. As Shapiro says in conclusion, our task is “to learn to read and write politically” (19–31).

Chapter 2, “Politicizing Ulysses: Rationalistic, Critical and Genealogical Commentaries,” takes issue with methodological individualism and rationalism in the social sciences by taking Jon Elster’s “Ulysses” trope literally. Shapiro aligns Elster’s work in *Ulysses and the Sirens* (1979) with the history of *Odyssey* interpretation and criticism. Damning with faint praise and doubling with a pun, Shapiro notes that Elster’s treatment of the epic character is “economical” compared with the reworkings by Dante and Joyce. Elster was at the time the leading methodologist of the social sciences, a figure who promulgated notions of rigor (derived from economics) and certainty (derived from analogies with the sciences). While Shapiro observes that Elster reduces the mythic text to a psychology of individual decision-making (which is either rational or it isn’t), his point is not that great works of literature should not be treated this way. Rather his point is that Elster should not be treating political theory this way by presuming that the discipline is there to help individuals make decisions by using abstract methods that generate “rationality” which can then be acted upon. Such a methodology perpetuates a myth of individual meaning-making within a consciousness that pre-dates the power structures that exist historically and through which individuals—in Shapiro’s view, not Elster’s—derived their being (33–36).

As a further irony Shapiro notes that Elster had previously written *Making Sense of Marx* (1985), an extensive study of the very thinker whose view of power structures should make it impossible for Elster to predicate his theory on Ulysses—or anybody else—as an individual needing to make “rational” decisions. Shapiro stresses that, given Elster’s reading practices, Elster can’t read Marx, or rather Elster’s understanding of language is referential and his exclusive focus on individual action and causal analysis prevents him from grasping what Marx is trying to say. Marx is particularly determined to politicize the everyday so as to reveal class power and exploitative relationships. Elster’s reductionism depoliticizes the world by making this very politicization invisible, and he does this by parsing Marx’s language into the analytically credible (where individual subjects exist) and the merely rhetorical (where power relations are depicted). Elster can of course see power, but by dismissing “rhetoric” as such his methodology cannot cope with the way power accrues and with what power does. Shapiro argues that political theory and analytical methods cannot reduce the world to the actions of subjects who—already “in themselves”—know what there is for them to “do” (36–39).

Elster is of course standing in—very willingly, it must be said—for empiricism and behaviorism in the social sciences, and Shapiro’s critique is particularly telling. The argument proves so significant because it derives from first principles with regard to language, representation, power and politics. Shapiro’s discussion marshals philosophers when they aid his cause, but his exegesis never presumes that Foucault (or anybody else) is some kind of trump card. His presentation of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s meditations on Ulysses makes the masterly point that those two theorists take the mythic hero seriously as a textual construction within a narrative form, and from that representation they reveal a landscape of power-relations through which subjectivities are lived. They are self-conscious as writers and political actors in a way that Elster is not, and—given the “false clarity” of his rationalistic methodology—could never be. As a final bravura touch, Shapiro introduces the figure of Franz Kafka as a kind of anti-Elster, using fiction to reveal the human consciousness as a zone of uncertainty, ambiguity and confusion over how to sustain any relationship—other than textual—between knower and known (39–50).

“Language and Power: The Spaces of Critical Interpretation” comprises [Chapter 3](#), which develops a thorough-going investigation of Foucauldian genealogy. Shapiro describes Foucault’s method with the term “disruptive inscription,” a rather more precise and politicized version of the “re-codings” he described in our earlier chapters. These inscriptions have a “de-familiarizing” effect and a “linguistic impertinence.” However, unlike Marxism, in Foucault’s work there is no parallel project of truth-finding, telling us “what is what” about the self and the social order. Neither the past nor the future is really available to the genealogist as fantasy spaces where ambiguities have not arisen or where they could be resolved. Shapiro then offers a novel figurative move when he suggests that we understand discourses of certainty and time as spatializing strategies through which meanings are produced. Thus we come to understand the past as a space wherein historical accounts arise, and we come to see time as a space that we fill discursively with “events” (52–57).

Following this vision, Shapiro re-describes political theory itself as different kinds of constructed spaces, including the imaginary ones beloved of Plato (his *Republic*), of Strauss (his wisdom of the “ancients” as a lexical space), of Habermas (his “ideal speech situation”). Indeed, this redescription includes the “real” spaces of the nation-state geographies through which political theorists imagine “the world” and which dominate the headline discourses through which we recognize “the news” as “the news.” Following Foucault, Shapiro conceives of “what is” not as an anticipated and peaceful settlement that erases constituent and contingent struggles, but rather as an effect of force and contingency, and thus something more like an accident. Discursive strategies of certainty and objectivity, or of irrationality and fear, are not the only way to make politics; destabilization can be politicization. Even polemic is defused: Shapiro’s Foucault writes in a “documentary” genre, and ultimately, Shapiro says, there are no boundaries between the genres. Or rather all genres are available to the writer who is genre-conscious. In this way Shapiro privileges writers of fiction over social scientists, since the former at least acknowledge that they are writers. Political theory is a literature, but spatially speaking, it makes itself remote from “literature,” where writing is acknowledged. In Shapiro’s terms, this makes it inherently de-politicizing, a stance he deplores (57–66).

This section closes with [Chapter 4](#), “Globalization and the Politics of Discourse.” Shapiro opens his discussion with a series of leaps that would be inconceivable in the writings of any other political theorist. Here he links monetary crises with crises of meaning, touching base with Georg Simmel’s work, and turning immediately to *The Counterfeiters* (by André Gide) for a more fully elaborated analysis. Quilting together these theoretical resources means producing an analysis that takes both language and writing practice seriously, one that digs into anxieties about subjectivity, in particular about whether subjectivity has ever been or could ever be coherent. Shapiro of course understands coherence as a power claim, not an “imaginary” to aspire to. The study of globalization must therefore attend to the way these anxieties are traced out in cultural representations just as much as it concerns the usual economic or material terms through which the concept is articulated—financial flows, time-space compression and the like. The article is thus an analysis of the vast and varied efforts under way to achieve a “comfortable collective presence”; it is this kind of target that makes Shapiro’s theory so political (68–71).

Shapiro invokes Derrida’s (1994) “hauntology” in an effort to spook an interesting collection of discursive political practitioners, including certified public accountants, Christian fundamentalists, and globalization theorists. Shapiro wants both to map and to disrupt their activities, revealing the barely repressed incoherences that haunt their efforts to consolidate certainties in what they perceive as a changing world of unpredictable differences. This “will to power” is what excites Shapiro’s deconstructive efforts, motivated by his engagements with contemporary American politics. No one else researches back numbers of the *Journal of Public Accountancy*, uses Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* (the ethical life) to expose the shallow pretensions of professionalizing discourse, and moves on to Christian ecumenicists and their version of the ethico-political life. Shapiro notes that Christian theologians are at least aware of the role of

language and interpretation in constructing and defending their activities, given that their writing practices include both the production of eternal truths as dogma and apologetics as ongoing interpretations in historical contexts. He is rather more critical, though, of the ecumenical construction of contemporary Christians as a “community” and of the non-Christians, contextualized as an “other” in ethnic or cultural terms. Given the later history of “neo-con” engagement in the current Middle East wars, Shapiro’s analysis was prescient. He closes the piece with a remarkable juxtaposition of Habermasian “discourse theory” with the more profound meditations of Alexander Garcia Duttman (1996) on the “writer with AIDS” and the ways that the “time of AIDS” disrupts narratives of global political and subjectively personal coherence (71–81).

Culture: interpretation, genre, politics

[Chapter 5](#), “‘Manning’ the Frontiers: The Politics of (Human) Nature in *Blade Runner*,” opens this section. Shapiro again connects apparently unrelated entities, in this case, Ridley Scott’s film, *Blade Runner* (1982), based on Philip K. Dick’s science-fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) to Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Situating Smith’s moral geography as spatialized in the everyday, rather than in the transcendent, Shapiro launches a discussion of how the human/animal moral boundary line is politically constructed through, and also challenged within, cultural and intellectual representations. Analytically, this claim opens the field for discussion of animal “nature”—identified with embodiment—and it raises the question of whether some capacity or capacities transcend this so-called nature. Shapiro turns his readers’ attention away from ostensible “truth” towards the politics of these discursive claims (87–88).

The novel, of course, provides Shapiro with a marvelous mélange of “others” that excite human anxieties and human, all-too-human, political responses of marginalization and genocide. He then traces these themes of embodied “otherness” through a rather similarly varied conglomeration of contemporary representations: George Bataille on the cave paintings of Lascaux, Kafka’s story of a captive ape that “apes” humanity, Donna Haraway’s work on simians and science, and a confrontation between Edgar Rice Burroughs’s character Tarzan and Adam Smith’s version of humanity’s common and universal natural sentiments. Scott’s *Blade Runner*, however, proves useful for exploring the more recent human/humanoid or cyborg boundary war, not in a literal way, but rather as a trope for meditating on the politics of claiming—and thus implicitly denying—human coherence. What does it mean to have a “real past” and “real memories”? (89–102).

Romantic imaginaries of coherence are Shapiro’s target in [Chapter 6](#), “Literary and Sovereign Violence: Resisting Tocqueville’s Family Romance.” This is a double iconoclasm. *De la démocratie en Amérique* (*Democracy in America*—Tocqueville 1835, 1840) in English translation is a sacred text in political theory in the USA, and hardly anyone else would categorize it in terms of genre as a “romance,” nor indeed is “family” an interpretative metaphor familiar in its reception by political theorists. Russell Banks’ novel *Cloudsplitter* provides Shapiro with a powerful frame for critique.

From this perspective Tocqueville's linkage between the unique values of American democracy as he saw it and the American family that he experienced on his travels is profoundly racist. This is the case not simply because Tocqueville did not visit black families but because he did not see the missing "black" members of the ones that he did visit. As the novel, much historical research and common sense all indicate, most African-Americans are as much *in* the "white" families (from which they were excluded) as in the "black" families (to which they were consigned). Genetically and experientially (via rape and power-ridden miscegenation) African-Americans belong to "the American family" of—apparently—whites (only) that Tocqueville romanticized, and that "generations of Tocquevilleians" have memorialized (104–107).

Similarly, Shapiro exposes the romanticization of democratic space in America as open and free, a fantasy achieved through the neglect of racialized carceral spaces such as plantations, and, as contemporary readers will know, the vast archipelago of prison spaces built up since the 1990s. Shapiro reads the scholarly map of Tocqueville's travels as a moral geography, constructing a value hierarchy based on race, with only whites as politically qualified to deal with the "problems" posed to them by racialized "others": namely, African-Americans and Native Americans. Cartographic "facts," as Shapiro shows, are driven by romanticized pasts and futures that make themselves unaccountable to "wrongs" that are smoothed over, rather than confronted, or at best nervously noted as political problems (108–113).

Shapiro's alternative politics responds to the wrongs of exclusion with counter-topologies of sovereignty. Sovereignty is as much about bodies as territories, Shapiro writes, and thus about which persons are fully qualified as political actors. The white family space in America was a citizenship space with its own internal hierarchies, and indeed still is in the hortatory representations of civic culture constructed by neo-Tocquevillians such as Robert Putnam. Shapiro inverts Putnam's picture of (white) families distracted by TV from virtuous civic engagement with a "black public sphere." The public sphere, Shapiro argues, exists in and through electronic media in spaces such as South Central Los Angeles (which Putnam views as a "problem"). Black music television, Shapiro writes, provides an effective civic imaginary articulated through rap and movie representations such as *Boyz n the Hood* (1991). Tocqueville and neo-Tocquevillians, he concludes, are "de-pluralizing and politically obtuse" (113–120).

Chapter 7, "Composing America," goes straight for the music, an area vastly neglected in political theory except as a highly marginalized sort of curio. Shapiro has pioneered this further "turn" in social theory. His claim is that two American thought-worlds—a white, Euro-American one of high cultural imitation and neo-colonial acquisition, and a black one of exclusion, suffering and political protest—are tracked contrapuntally in the soundscape of Spike Lee's film *He Got Game* (1998), where the tuneful Aaron Copland is set up against the rhythmic rap of Public Enemy. In Shapiro's hands, nineteenth-century American history becomes a musical history of problematic confrontations: Antonín Dvořák's and Edward MacDowell's appropriations of "Indian" themes, for which they had some genuine appreciation, and an anti-vernacular, Eurocentric nationalism fostered among New England Yankees. American history since then becomes the jazz wars, cross-cut by a culture war (high and European

versus low and African-American), in which these multifaceted struggles help to constitute, rather than merely trace, the complexities of racialized politics in a non-romanticized America (123–130).

This is an America where romantic imaginaries of coherence, purity, redemption and exceptionalism compete. Shapiro's intertextual discussion of Gershwin and Debussy deconstructs the unilinear histories and binary presumptions of conventional aesthetics—Gershwin's classical training was already imbued with some of the ideas and forms through which jazz and blues passed. Shapiro then details a history of musicalized racial “mixing” in the American experience, taking in Jewish-American composers and surveying the notable genres of black and white jazz and popular forms. Musical mixing occurs more easily than physical mixing in cityscapes, he comments, and spatialized and commodified forms of production and distribution create zones of inclusion and exclusion that mirror the larger socio-economic forces that create American lives. In the end, Shapiro settles on a remarkable “blues matrix” as a political epistemology, theorizing democracy as dissonance and democratic encounters as dissensus (130–148).

Violence: bodies, maps, wars

The final section of this volume opens with [Chapter 8](#), “Warring Bodies and Bodies Politic: Tribal versus State Societies,” where Shapiro zeroes in on warfare. Historical and contextual as ever, his thoughts are developed in relation to recent American history, and his experience up to the time of writing. War has two faces, he writes: one a projection of the state outwards using official institutions, the other a less visible but no less potent force in the constitution of subjectivities. Victory in the first Gulf War made war more acceptable and more visible to American society than it had been before, mildly contradicting but still reflecting a dominant historical narrative suggesting that modern nations marginalize warfare and maintain it under civilian control (155–157).

What then were pre-modern nations like? In order to provide a contrast with modern states Shapiro takes us on an ethnographic tour of “tribal” societies, surveying the pre-Conquest Aztecs and contemporary studies of Papua New Guinea. He pairs this with a psychic tour comprising Georg Hegel and Jacques Lacan on the human subject, tracking the development of selfhood through contacts with alterity. Shapiro finds that the modern state is not so different after all from “tribal” societies; the main difference lies in the modern state's “overcoding” of the ontological centrality of war that other societies forthrightly express. In both cases, Shapiro hypothesizes, war reflects a drive for ethical coherence (between individual and collective) within a stable moral cartography that identifies and evaluates “the other.” Shapiro describes the post-Cold War world from the American perspective as one in which the clear moral geography of the “Free World” versus the “Soviet bloc” had given way to instabilities. It is easy to fast forward from there to the events of the new millennium and ultra-violent attempts to stabilize moral judgements in spatial terms—reimagining a “self” and “other,” an “us” and “them.” Shapiro questions the stability of the images through which

politics is apprehended and pursued. What, he asks, generates the “extraordinary demands for coherence”? These demands, he suspects, generate the interpretations of the “state of the nation” and of its enemies and the belligerent demands for order in both (157–169).

In [Chapter 9](#) Shapiro reviews Samuel Huntington’s (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, succinctly deploying the abstract theorizations charted above. Huntington himself links internal and external orders of the nation: universalisms abroad and multiculturalisms at home both deny the uniqueness of Western culture, as he puts it. Shapiro sees Huntington arguing for, and playing on, the state’s role in cultural crafting—projecting itself inwards and outwards as unified and coherent, and defining and claiming that coherence by constructing and defining a world of dangers. In a novel way Shapiro proposes that Huntington’s moral geography generates a new cartography, one that substitutes territorialized “civilizations” for the more usual “Western” trope of nation-states and colonized dependencies.

Moreover, this cartography supplants the geo-political clashes over “culture,” because it replaces a culturally dangerous “other” with a monotonically construed religion, “Islam.” Shapiro, however, exposes the extent to which “American civilization” depends upon what Foucault called governmentality; American civilization thus proves to be a long-term historical construction, rather than the emanation of individualized and unchanging values. Furthermore, this history has taken place non-autonomously; any number of “foreign” elements have been involved, even though they are wished away in Huntington’s account. While hypostatizing abstract principles—such as equality before the law—Huntington has erased those very principles historically with respect to the racialized slavery, genocide and other radical exclusions through which American history and culture actually developed. This is a move that obviously contradicts his own essentializing of culture as a value system. Shapiro concludes that Huntington’s moral geography is actually an initiative, an “enclavisation” of world politics, and is much more the product of the way that he tells the story than of any cultural or civilizational coherence or stability (170–176).

Rounding off this section and the reprinted items in the volume, [Chapter 10](#), “The New Violent Cartography,” opens with a linkage between war history and the history of its representations, particularly in photographs and photojournalism, moving images in the cinema, and more recently in the virtual world of digital images and “infowar.” Shapiro has his eye on what is singular about the contemporary violent cartography created by the “global war on terrorism.” For Shapiro, violent cartographies are “inter-articulations of geographic imaginaries and antagonisms, based on models of identity-difference” (178–180). They are literally and figuratively maps and other spatialized representations of enmity. In their most familiar form these are representations of “external” threats, a dangerous outside to an inside of safety that must be defended. But with the post-9/11 attacks on human bodies construed as “terrorists,” Shapiro notes, terrorism is said to lurk within the supposed safety of the defended “inside,” and to justify new and intensified practices of surveillance both within and without. The *militarized* state, he observes, looks inward as well as outward, affirming its defining practices through performative contradictions (180–184).

Shapiro's analytical axis is thus inside/outside, a trope which he pursues in a novel way by reading Tomas Munita's photograph (see [Figure 1, Chapter 10](#)) from the war in Afghanistan against John Ford's movie *The Searchers* of 1956, the narrative of which is concerned with settler-"Indian" violence in the American West. In both cases the viewer experiences camera positions from an "inside" that constructs a refuge of supposed safety, dark, "womb-like" spaces (184–185). In Shapiro's prose, objects and spaces are characters that tell stories, even in still photographs, where the hermeneutic demand for interpretation is thrown even more heavily back onto the viewer than is often the case in movies, where dialogue helps us along. While it has become rather commonplace in cinema criticism that the wide open spaces of the Western make the story what it is, Shapiro is the critic who pursues this idea through both the abstraction of aesthetics and the misremembered violence of American history. Thus *The Searchers* melds the carnage of the civil war (memorialized as a white-on-white romance with violence) with the genocidal destruction of Native Americans in their "empty" landscapes by violent white colonizers. The latter are—in terms of the film's cinematography—(exclusively) the "future" of household domesticity and commodified property and labor (186–188).

Shapiro reads Munita's image from the post-9/11 Afghanistan war by following Barthes' distinction between the photographer's evident intentions—in this case producing an image of a lone soldier looking outwards from a dark interior into a bright and dangerous war zone—and the interpretive stimulus for the viewer to go outside the frame to read from elsewhere what the photograph evokes. How much of what we already know about wars on terrorism can we find "in" the picture? How much does this reading strategy—working towards a reflective and critical encounter with "securitization"—displace what we saw in the photograph at the outset? In a Foucauldian move, Shapiro aligns the politics of "gazing" on terrorism and thereby constructing terrorist bodies with the medical gaze deployed by nation-states in "securing" the world against pandemic diseases. He thus turns the war photograph inside out—the battle is not out there in a distant land fought by soldiers, and then represented for "us" at "home." Rather, current "foreign" wars are surveillance wars conducted by governments on their own populations (188–190).

Worse still, surveillance—in the form of unarmed "drones" deployed in Afghanistan and Pakistan—swiftly turns to weaponry, remotely controlled death-from-the-skies, accompanied by an official insouciance concerning "collateral" casualties. This is further remarkable for its comprehensive self-righteousness and fervor in constructing a unitary "America" of a single subjectivity. Chillingly, Shapiro notes that the unarmed version patrols the U.S.-Mexican border, spotting "invading" bodies. He is obviously speculating that the armed version will follow as "defense" industries create the cartographies of danger that drive militarization, not least as an economic project (190–194).

Where are the "counterspaces" to the new violent cartographies of the global war on terror? For Shapiro these would be *inter alia* display spaces functioning outside government controls. Historically, he considers the suppression and eventual exhibition of Édouard Manet's dissident painting *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian* alongside contemporary European film festivals and their highly publicized screenings

of “alternative” and critical cinema. As ever with Shapiro’s work, the analytical merges with the aesthetic and the political, and indeed the personal, in an epic cartography of disruptive representational practices. Shapiro explains and pursues these better than anybody else (194–196).

This volume closes with a specially conducted interview (199–206) with Michael J. Shapiro. In it he reflects upon political theory and its relationship to international politics, particularly the continuing conflicts and interventions of the last decade, as well as on his intellectual trajectory over the years. This includes detailed consideration of writing practices, as he has formulated the concept, and of the use—which he has pioneered—of a wide variety of “texts” on doing political theory, notably film and other artistic and representational practices. The editors pressed him on his relationship—as a language-based theorist—to the “new materialism” theorized elsewhere, and on his career in cultural communities outside the U.S., where he links the experiential with the intellectual in characteristically stimulating terms. His is a career still in progress, exactly for that reason.

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