OPEN CALL: PUBLIC CULTURE Special Issue on Violence and Policing

What is policing? What are its sites and modes of operation? In Althusser's famous example, it is the policeman’s hailing that transforms the individual into a subject. For Rancière, the police, understood as the naturalization of the social order, is the opposite of politics. As a label, policing has been ascribed to a range of practices: from a liberal ideal of the consent-based preservation of law and order to the maintenance of a certain “distribution of the sensible,” to policing as a practice of empire (e.g., British aerial policing, the US as global policeman). Public Culture seeks a series of essays on the police and policing as concept, practice, discourse, and institution.

In 2003, Public Culture published what has become a seminal article: “Necropolitics,” by Achille Mbembe, in an issue called Violence and Redemption. Authors may think about putting the concepts of policing and necropolitics in conversation (though this is certainly not a requirement): e.g., if politics is the work of death in spaces subjected to a continual state of emergency, as Mbembe has argued, how does policing conceptualize or account for (or not) the work of death across multiple, variously inflected spaces, from Florida to Afghanistan?

We seek essays that will provide accounts of and extract lessons from a range of sites that allow us to better understand the relationship between policing and violence. This might mean studies of municipal police departments, from New York to Palestine, or of movements like Black Lives Matter or No Dakota Access Pipeline and their engagements and resistance to the notion of “the police” and policing. Approaches need not be attached to place alone. We seek insights from the construction of the ideas of dis/order and their material policing: the regulation of borders and mobilities, for example, or the relation of policing to consent, or the policing of language as im/proper. Finally, we also seek (re)conceptualizations of the notion of the police and policing and engagements with them as aspects of disciplinary regimes or control societies, or as the negation of politics, and so on. As this indicates, we hope for an expansive range of empirical sites as well as theoretical articulations that attempt conceptual and comparative border crossings.

Send abstracts of 200–300 words to shamuskhan@gmail.com by August 1.

Editors will review abstracts, comment, and solicit full papers for review.