



Simulacra of Traumatic Event and its Therapy through Eventual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The violent and painful past has an intrusively haunting character even before they are passed on to the next generation. These memories often return as nightmares, traumatic memories which entrap us in the prison-house of repetition and compulsion seeking healing and relief; Badiou's theory of Event describes how an event is included in a situation but does not belong to it. The event remains undecidable concerning its belonging to the situation. The event presents a break that is unpredictable to the locus of its emergence. This notion of event is modified the way the world and creates another world for the subject, He relies on mathematics to explain to us the character of the subjective act of the subject born out of the (traumatic) event. It is our fidelity to these disruptive events that has produced and is producing politics and violence that afflicts us all.

KEYWORDS: Event, Trauma, Singularity, Subjectivation, Crack, Ding Dang

Introduction

Both victims and villains are trapped in violent legacies. The two sides have their narratives which they pass from generation to generation. These thick narrations become haunting legacies. They hold an unrelenting grip over their minds and memories but are also deemed to be worthy of being repressed or buried in unreachable psychic recesses.

Psychologist Nicolas Abraham¹ envisions a crypt in which people bury the bearable losses and injuries incurred through a violent and hurtful past. It becomes a psychic tomb that harbours an undead ghost. The

¹ Badiou, Alain (2017) Mathematics of the Transcendental. trans.by A. J. Bartlett, Alex King Bloomsbury Revelations.

painful loss is not mourned but is buried in the crypt while keeping it psychically alive. Thus, violent and painful past has an intrusively haunting character even before they are passed on to the next generation. These memories often return as nightmares/ flashbacks in their somatic enactment.² To the extent, we suppress our thoughts and memories we are said to become a body in pain. Thus, traumatic memories entrap us in the prison-house of repetition and compulsion seeking healing and relief.

We shall try to explore the event ontology of Alain Badiou and explore how it can give us the insight to understand the chains of trauma that binds generations to generation. Badiou's ontology of events provides us with a way of exploring what Nicholas Abraham calls the crypt that becomes the repository of trauma. It has the power to manifest how the society in India is trapped in traumatic events like Islamic invasion, colonization, religious conversions, partition etc. We seem to have become faithful subjects of these traumatic past events which have produced our society and continuously affect all that we do, think and feel today as individuals. Badiou's ontology of the subject can provide profound insights into our condition and can open our ways of addressing it. This is why I have chosen his work to understand and trace salubrious healing to our precarious condition. I divest the above traumatic events of their specificities to apply Badiou's theory to individuals and our society at large and understand and address our society as it unfolds in front of us.

Badiou re-proposes the Platonic question- 'how are we to live?'³ This opens up the distance that can enable us to examine how trauma is haunting us. Plato seems to answer this question through the mouth of Socrates in *Phaedo* when Socrates says that to live philosophically here and now is to live based on the world to come. There is a twist. Trauma just wishes for the world that is lost. In this sense, the haunted present is an effort to give a future to the past. For this is reason Badiou's notion of a subject may provide us with a framework to understand a person afflicted by traumatic events and its compulsive transmission to the next generation. In the next part, we try to apply the event ontology of Badiou to the crippling experience of trauma. Badiou's event-based understanding of trauma can open us to 'dynamism' as an excessive event and opens us to its 'compulsive transmission' and also can assist us to carve out a road to its salubrious healing. To enter this road we have to consider the process that Badiou names as 'subjectivization. The process of subjection opens to the act(s) of the subject of trauma and manifest how its transmission produces other subjects who also submit to the event through transference. Finally, we seek therapeutic means to address what we may call the traumatic production of our society in our country.

² Nicolas Abraham and Nicholas Rand (1979) *The Shell and the Kernel Diacritics* Vol. 9, No. 1, *The Tropology of Freud* (Spring, The Johns Hopkins University Press pp. 15-28.

³ Gregory Bistoien, Stijn Vanheule, Stef Craps 2014 Badiou's theory of the event and the politics of trauma recovery. *Theory & Psychology* 24(6):830-851

From Insularity to Eventuality

Badiou proposes that an individual becomes a subject concerning an event. A subject is subjectivized by a happening of an event. A subject is characterized by fidelity to an event. This attention to the ingression of events into the intimate lives of individuals can become illuminating to understand trauma and its intergenerational transmission. Therefore to come to the eventual anthropology of Badiou, we need to discuss the ontology of the event in Badiou so that his philosophy truly becomes fertile ground for the exploration of traumatic events and has an impact on humanity.

Ontology as Mathematics

Badiou thinks together singularity and universality.⁴ He states that singularity is an instant that formalizes universality. He uses the term generic in place of the philosophically loaded term universal. He speaks of generic singularity⁵. Event renders possible the emergence of truth but is itself not ontologized in the sense that it becomes a unit explicable as a metaphysical building block of reality. He is thus, moving away from substantive thinking⁶ but does not do so in flux or fold but through the metaphysical notion of transfinite numbers. Thus, mathematics becomes ontology. Several mathematically oriented thinkers have thought of metaphysics but they have mainly arrived at ontology through an atomistic path⁷. This has been because it has been assumed to think of numbers is to think of the singular and how it enters into the elements and variables of an algebraic argument. We can find such an instance in the work of Alfred North Whitehead⁸. Badiou taking this tradition forward uses set theory and draws his philosophical implication. It is through the set theory⁹ that he can think together singularity and universality.

Though a set theory, we can think of collectively as a single object through belonging and inclusion. We are enabled to think together singularity and universality by thinking of elements as belonging to a specific set. In transfinite set theory, the notion of infinity and set are combined. It is in this context we can think together of a set of infinity and infinity of sets. Thus, Badiou can overcome atomistic thinking and embrace thinking of the multiples as multiples. The question of one and many are settled in favour of many. Therefore, for Badiou, God who is thought of as one cannot exist. We do not think of the many atomistically¹⁰ as one but think of the many as many. Thus many/ multiple does not belong to one but it belongs to another multiple or many. Thus, God can be thought of only as multiple within the multiple, hence cannot be thought onto-theologically. This means Badiou thinks that to exist means to be in a situation. There is an intimate link between the multiple and its situation.

⁴ Wanderley Magno de Carvalho, Oswaldo França Neto (2019) Singular and Universal in Alain Badiou and the psychoanalysis scientificity hypothesis. *Psicol. USP* vol.30 São Paulo Brazil.

⁵ <https://medium.com/@alkindihasiswaan/badiou-philosophy-in-a-nutshell-440a9c7af151> accessed on 7-9-2020.

⁶ Badiou Alain, Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism, Ray Braissier (trans.), Stanford, Stanford UP, 2003.

⁷ Bruno Bosteels (2011) Badiou And Politics Duke University Press Durham & London

⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, (1959) An Introduction to Mathematics Oxford University Press USA

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Theory of Event

Badiou's theory of Event¹¹ teaches that the event is included in a situation but does not belong to it. The event remains undecidable concerning its belonging to the situation. The event presents a break that is unpredictable to the locus of its emergence. This otherness of an event makes it remain undecidable about its belonging to the situation. It is the subject who intervenes into the historical multiple of the situation and discerns in its sign-effects of the event. Hence, Badiou says that the fidelity to an event defines a subject. The subject arrives after the event and persists in discerning its traces within the situation. Thus, an event breaks the ordinariness of casual sequence to introduce novelty and freshness in historical happenings. We are actors who are seized by an event. Badiou's notion of truth¹² is linked to his notion of a subject. Thus, to him, truth is not substantial knowledge but rather is a process that finds its characteristic link in the subject that proclaims it and as such it is universal. This is aligned with Badiou's philosophical project to redefine the ontological character of the subject into that of universal singularity¹³.

There is no specificity to the subject. The subject is void and non-substantive. Its existence can only be discerned from the context of particular processes whose conditions are rigorous. This means there is nothing substantial in the subject rather than becoming the local configuration that it draws from the event. Thus, in some way, Badiou's subject is Lacan's master signifier¹⁴. It means the subjectivation of an individual occurs concerning an event that pulls its being to a radical transformation of self.

The Theory of Truth

Badiou teaches that philosophy is not productive of truth. Truth is not the object of Philosophy¹⁵. Philosophy's task is the understanding of the practice of thought in its four registers: love, art, politics and Science. Thus, truth to him can be amorous, artistic, political and scientific but not philosophical. Philosophy has to discern the com-possibility of truths¹⁶ by manifesting the conditions of its productions that he calls generic procedures in a particular epoch. Therefore, he asserts that what is proper to philosophy is the production of universal truths but the organization of their synthetic reception by a reformulation of the category of truth. The absence of religion is standing out in the registers listed out by Badiou. But it cannot be our limitation to apply his theory of truth to our project of understanding how traumatic events call a subject into being. Besides, the fact that Badiou presents the biblical figure, Paul of Tarsus to exemplify his universal singular subject, he seems to remain open to the truth of religion. Paul is called into being by a singular and original event of an encounter with risen Christ. Paul converts to it and gives it the name, 'Christ has risen' and faithfully starts to proclaim its truth beyond Jewish frontiers. Badiou presents St. Paul as a poet thinker of his times but is a man for times and several thinkers like Slavoj Zizek and

¹¹ Gregory Bistoien, Stijn Vanheule, Stef Craps (2014) Badiou's theory of the event and the politics of trauma recovery. *Theory & Psychology* 24(6):830-851 Sage journals.

¹² On the Truth-Process followed by interventions of S. Zizek and G. Agamben by Alain Badiou European Graduate School August 2002

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *Articulations of the Real: from Lacan to Badiou* Lucy Bell Paragraph Vol. 34, No. 1 (March 2011), pp. 105-120 (16 pages) Published By: Edinburgh University Press

¹⁵ Badiou: A Subject To Truth by Peter Hallward Univ Of Minnesota Press; First edition 2003.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

Georgio Agamben have begun to take interest in him. Badiou portrays him as an example par excellence of the truth of the subject. He thinks that St. Paul can assist us to overcome the temptation of the contemporary world to reduce truth to a linguistic form, a judgement. Thus against these tendencies to reductive truth, Badiou presents the truth of the subject who is constituted by an event. There is no subject before the event. It is the event and fidelity to its truth that constructs a subject.

Framing Trauma as Event

Understanding trauma in the light of Badiou's work can open us to the fact of trauma as an excessive event. It is only through the gap between being, and event that subjectification is possible. Event is always excessive in so far as it carries the potential to transform the situation within which it surfaces.

Event as Excess

Badiou's notion of event is excessive it modifies the way the world and creates another world for the subject. The event is a sudden eruption of the previous inconsistent element in the world with maximal intensity. It thus opens up the possibilities for another world to arise. This means that the manner we order the world is not stable. An event has the power to change the reigning order of things that puts up the mask of stability. This change is brought about through the activities of the subject of the event. Thus, an event announces the possibility of the new world arising. This is why an event cannot be understood within the familiar framework that is in place. It has an intrusive dimension that refuses to be assimilated with the pre-existing semiologies¹⁷. Thus, the event is something other than refuses to be fully understood through the categories of the same. It is this intrusive character that manifests the excessive nature of an event and distinguished it from a fact that can be assimilated from the existing semiologies. This means an event disturbs the axis and coordinates of the life of the person and transform into a subject by shaking the ground on which he or she was standing. Thus, the eventual dimension of subjectification is excessive and therefore political¹⁸. The dynamics of rupture inherent in an event opens us to understand trauma as an excessive event through the lens of Badiou. We can easily trace a parallel between an event in Badiou and trauma theory¹⁹. Being an excessive event, it has a transgressive side to it and hence, a juxtaposition of the event theory of Badiou and trauma theory promises a great harvest of understanding the two.

The event as a Crack

The event in Badiou is a cut or crack²⁰ that is forced on a person to construct him/her into a new subject. The new subject has to live its fidelity to the break that the event has brought about in the order of things. This is why the event has profound psychic dimensions. Something new happens and something old disappears. This way the event is also cut or crack. Badiou teaches that trace of the event that motivates

¹⁷ Bensaïd Daniel, "Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event." in Peter Hallward (Ed.), *Think again, Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, London, Continuum, 2004,

¹⁸ Badiou Alain, *Being and Event*, Oliver Feltham (trans.), London, Continuum, 2006.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, Alberto Toscano (trans.), London, Continuum, 2009.

and dictates the choices one makes. The trace of an event does not form the objective reflection of the true nature of an event but rather something that is coined to express one subjective understanding of the event. Badiou, says that there is always a poetic moment in an event because each subject has to find a new name for the event. Thus, from the Lacanian point of view, we can see trace as a signifier forced on what has happened on by our psychic system as we attempt to cope with its intrusion. This signifier points to as well as obscures the event. This means the signifier that is stamped on the event deforms it in a sense as it marks it within the language and the symbolic. This enigmatic left-over of the event is called symptom, mark or trace²¹. Trace thus comes to designate the event and stands in for it. The trace misses the event and does not capture it objectively but that is the only thing that one is left with to live one's fidelity to the event. There is a forgery in the construction of the trace but is the only excess point to the event.

Badiou thinks that the forging of a trace is a subjective act par excellence as it creates something new ex-nihilo. Thus there is no subject while it is acting or making the trace. It is only that one becomes subject after the making of the trace. Trace is something that lingers after the event.

The Trace of Trauma

Trace is a relation to the event that subsists after the event. Therefore, the trace is not an event. It is something of an event and not an event as such. The event that disrupts the order of things in the world is named through the trace. It is only through the naming of the event (trace) that it subsists for the subject²². It is by naming (trace) that the event gets some degree of efficacy and power to affect the inhabitant of a situation in which the event happens. The event is a mark or symptom of the event. An event affects the entire situation or the order of the world and therefore everyone is affected by the event. There is a persistence of trace of the event that summons the inhabitant to become the subjects of the event. 'What do the inhabitants who are affected by the event do with it?' becomes an important consideration that Badiou sees as an ethical question. It considers how the spectres of the traces left by the disruptive event call us into being. Everyone is called into being differently as the trace of the event affects each one differently. It is the effect triggered by the trace that makes the inhabitant a subject of truth of the event. The trace of an event is like a spectre.²³ It opens us to the present to the haunting of the past and the future. We cannot experience pure time. Time is always haunted by the trace. Maybe here we have drawn our attention to the Hegelian wound. Hegel teaches that the wound (traumatic event) makes us imagine that there was a time that was pure without any blemish and pain of the wound and there can be a time where the wound will heal and we will experience time in all its purity and harmony. This is how the past and the future haunt our present. The name of the event bears the mark of the future anterior when the world will be without the blemish. But we cannot experience any pure time. Time is always karmic. We are trapped in the circularity

²¹ ibid

²² Gregory Bistoien, Stijn Vanheule, Stef Craps (2014) Badiou's theory of the event and the politics of trauma recovery Ghent University

²³ Badiou, A. (2003). Infinite thought: Truth and the return to philosophy (Feltham, O., Clemens, J., Eds. & Trans.). London, UK: Continuum

of the past and the future living into the samsara of our present. This is congruent to the findings of trauma theory that teaches that trauma returns to its place (repeats).

Trauma and the Subjectivation

Badiou teaches that the process of subjectivation is initiated by the event. The affected inhabitants then recognize the event and name it (trace). Badiou teaches that it is not the subject that chooses the name but emerges through the act of naming. Thus, the subject is an ethical act. The subject of the event works to bring about the new world inaugurated by the event.

Subjectivation and the Subject Process

After the emergence of the subject, its fidelity to the event sets it on a long journey through which the trace/name of the event is brought to bear its relation to the multiples in the situations so that road to the new order of the world is made clear. Badiou calls this forcing of the presence of the trace of the event on the prevailing situation is called as the subject process. The faithful subject engages in infidelity/ truth procedures. This means the faithful subject of the event scrutinizes the multiples of the situation from the standpoint of the eventual trace discerning which one of them are affected by the event and which ones are not. It is through this effort the 'truth' is gradually exposed which groups together all the terms of the situation that are positively aligned with the event. It then puts in a new transcendental regime the sees the present in a new way and visualizes things that were not visible previously or render thinkable things that remained unthought-of or unthinkable and the situation begins to look new to the subject.²⁴ Thus, it is not the event that brings in the new world but it is the faithful subject of the event that strives to actualize it. The event is only an abrupt cut that disrupts the inhabitants and the subject that is born out of the naming of un-nameable event that attempts sometimes to the point of death to forces one's circumstances to respond to the breaks that the event is deemed to have affected in the order of things. There is always an unbridgeable gap between the event and the name given to it. The act of naming always run ahead of what is deemed as the new world order and builds what can be called anticipatory certitude in the subject marked by the event. Thus, a traumatic event and its eventual trace move the subject to dream of a new world order that unfortunately leaves its present dislodged and displaced from the old order and with little or no hope of moving to the imagined future one is left uprooted.

The Workings of Anticipated Certainty

Trace becomes the guiding principle of the subjective act of the subject that emerges from the event. This is why the act of the subject brings something new in the world and is manifests a horizon of time that is distinct from normal chronological time. Besides, the act is not directly grounded in anything previous to the eruption of the event. Badiou relies on mathematics to explain to us the character of the subjective act

²⁴ Brewin, C., Holmes, E. (2003). Psychological theories of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 339–376.

of the subject born out of the (traumatic) event. He uses a technique in the set theory²⁵ developed by mathematician Paul Cohen who showed how the undecidable can be decided upon. We know that naming the event is a trace. Trace is an addition to the pre-existing situation and its appropriateness can be settled only in an anterior sense. The mathematical technique is called forcing claims about indiscernible multiples without verifying them but giving them a status that is better described as suspended rather than undecidable. Thus, forcing explains how the faithful subject of an event through the trace invest the pre-eventual (pre-trauma) world with new meaning as it becomes enmeshed in the textures of the new present inaugurated by the irruptive event. This means the faithful subject finds a new biographical narrative. But this act of the faithful subject is not merely intra-psychic but addresses the world order and aims to transform it. This means the subject of the event puts its other on the spot. In some way, the act of the subject, therefore, is always a transgression of the limits set by the community to which it belongs. Thus in a very real way, the act oversteps the symbolic order in which it takes place. This means that the act introduced a new present soaked into the future that is anticipated which implies that the other cannot but react to the novelty that is irrupting in its face. The act thus becomes political by its very nature. It changes the bond with the other. It re-orders the world again where we have others as friends and enemies.

The Inter-Subjective Verification Process

The act of the faithful subject runs ahead of the situation in which it occurs. It anticipates a future and affects its other. The other is order as favourable or unfavourable to the anticipated future. Thus the transmission of trauma occurring through the act of the faithful subject becomes political and others who are favourable suffer the trauma through what may be called transference. Haunted by the future that does not still exist, the subject of the event and its favourable others begin to speak out. The trace of the traumatic event then begins to hold together the subjected subjects of the transmission of trauma. The transmission of trauma is a consciousness-raising event and it produced fidelity to the anticipated certainty that binds the group through the trace(s) that is again collectively forged. It is a collective naming of the traumatic event which then gives birth to several faithful subjects who also suffer the trauma through transference. These bonded subjects organize themselves around the 'truth' of the event. They become motivated to act in a manner that will break the unspoken rules of society in which they find themselves. The social field cannot be the same again. The reaction of others to the act(s) of the faithful subject provides possibilities of verifying the anticipatory certitude that embeds the horizon of the act. This means the subjective acts of one or more individuals trying to deal with their trauma introduce a new present soaked in an anticipatory benevolent future while becoming a way of confirmation of their new convictions impacts the entire society. The 'truth' that is uncovered by the subject of the traumatic event is also picked by others who become subjects of this truth working either towards its production, denial or its occultation.

²⁵ Sahlins, M (1990) The return of the event, again. In: Biersack, A (ed.) *Clio in Oceania*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 37–99.

Seeking Therapeutic Response

The act(s) of the faithful subject of a traumatic event is directed towards a healing integration. It looks for a salubrious future of which the subject and its others moved by the trace(s) of the event already exhibit anticipated certainty. The traumatic moment of rupture produces politics in society. Badiou's ontology of events assists us to understand how series of traumatic events and our fidelity to them is producing us as subjects in our society. Hence, what is introduced (signifier/ trace) into the crack or the cut affected by a traumatic event is important to understand and respond to it.

Mindful Awareness

The subject is an aftereffect of an event and lives its fidelity to the event. Subjectivity and ethicality are interlinked in Badiou. Both subjectivity and ethicality are set into being by the event that disrupts the reigning order of things (symbolic order). This is why every event is traumatic as well as political.

Events produce us individually as well as a society. In the context of our study, we have focused on bringing light with the help of the event ontology of Badiou. His model offer to understand politics induced trauma. In the light of which we have an insight into how our society in our country is produced by the traumatic events of the past like Islamic invasion, conversion to Islam, Christianity and other faiths, colonization, partition etc. These events can be viewed with the help of the event ontology that we have studied. They have introduced a cut into our society and in the cut, we have inserted trace(s) that are producing us as individuals and society. It is our fidelity to these disruptive events that has produced and is producing politics and violence that afflicts us all. Becoming wakefully aware of these traumatic ruptures is the first step to therapy that can set our society free.

Dealing with our Das Ding

The cut or the crack persists through the trace that subjects of the event introduce and bind its fidelity to the event. But such a fidelity born out of traumatic events becomes poison rather than medicine to our society in our country. The born of an event remains estimate to the event through its fidelity sustained by the trace. We may theorize the trace with the help of Lacan's unary trait or partial object of Melanie Klein to indicate how our society is passing through a pathological condition. Badiou becomes insightful in this context because he sees individuals not as subjects of knowledge but as subjects of politics constituted by the event. Hence, it is important to understand how the subject of the effect deems the responses that it gives in fidelity to the event are for its good and good of the society. The subject then lives from the time forward with anticipatory certainty its life and action are at the service of the good of society. We have to come to terms with this psychic relation of the subject with our society. This will reveal that we have become a society that lives with a sense of loss held in common. This is why we seemed to be trapped into our wounds of the past and continue to wound each other. Thus, there is an unconscious fantasy that brings consistency to our desires and is located in a place that Lacan calls, Das Ding²⁶. Lacan teaches

²⁶ In his later work Lacan uses "Object petit" in place of Das Ding. Simon Critchley, Das Ding: Lacan and Levinas, sci-hub.tw/https://www.jstor.org/stable/24659050 accessed on 11/02/2020

that our Das Ding can be falsely nurtured by the desire of someone else. Thus, we may understand that the event of partitions has marked us with a desire to create India theocracy unto the image of Pakistan. We have to understand how the Das Ding of the other is conditioning us and producing us as subjects of our society. The Das Ding of the other (Muslims / other minorities) has replaced the notion of white man's burden in post-colonial India.

Reversing the Simulacra of Trauma

There is widespread unmerited human suffering in our society. The appearance of the Das Ding, the bad object-in-the-form-of-good has taken hold of our society and we seem to find pleasure in wounding the other, the woman, the tribal, the Dalit and the minorities. It constitutes us as subjects and as a society. This is why there is an urgent need for detachment from the fantasy that binds us to the re-enactment of our trauma. The desire to wound the other has become the law of the father and we cannot but Oedipalize²⁷ to it. The closure into repetition that wound us and our society can be opened through a new Badiou's event so that the old eventual site that embodies the trace(s) that produce our fidelity to the event can be re-negotiated and thus, open the possibilities of change. An eventual antidote to the simulacra of wounds appears to be nested in the event ontology of Badiou. This may give us enlightened insights into our servitude to the disruptive events and open paths of salubrious healing for us both individually as well as a society. This exercise can open ways of breaking with the eventual trace(s) only to reclaim them with new semiologies that will produce peace and harmony for all in our society. Perhaps, an eventual analysis (following the path) of Badiou, promises healing and therapy to society.

Conclusion

Our study has revealed that we are produced by disruptive events and remain faithful to them. An event can never be fully captured and exhausted of its meaning. We relate to the event through trace which remains spectral to us. Within this eventual analysis of Badiou, we can understand our society in our country as well as find a therapy that may enable us to transform the simulacra of wounds with simulacra of peace and harmony. The eventual analysis that we have tried to undertake in this study can give us an insight into our society and simultaneously open the way for the retrace of the trace(s) in our eventual sites so that we find new ways of being subjects of peace and harmony.

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²⁷ Badiou, A (2009) *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*. Trans. Toscano A, London, UK: Bloomsbury

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