



The Decision Between Us: Art and Ethics in the Time of Scenes

John Paul Ricco

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The Decision Between Us combines an inventive reading of Jean-Luc Nancy with queer theoretical concerns to argue that while scenes of intimacy are spaces of sharing, they are also spaces of separation. John Paul Ricco shows that this tension informs our efforts to coexist ethically and politically, an experience of sharing and separation that informs any decision. Using this incongruous relation of intimate separation, Ricco goes on to propose that “decision” is as much an aesthetic as it is an ethical construct, and one that is always defined in terms of our relations to loss, absence, departure, and death.

Laying out this theory of “unbecoming community” in modern and contemporary art, literature, and philosophy, and calling our attention to such things as blank sheets of paper, images of unmade beds, and the spaces around bodies, *The Decision Between Us* opens in 1953, when Robert Rauschenberg famously erased a drawing by Willem de Kooning, and Roland Barthes published *Writing Degree Zero*, then moves to 1980 and the “neutral mourning” of Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*, and ends in the early 1990s with installations by Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Offering surprising new considerations of these and other seminal works of art and theory by Jean Genet, Marguerite Duras, and Catherine Breillat, *The Decision Between Us* is a highly original and unusually imaginative exploration of the spaces between us, arousing and evoking an infinite and profound sense of sharing in scenes of passionate, erotic pleasure as well as deep loss and mourning.

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