

Law, Psychoanalysis, Society: Taking the Unconscious Seriously.
By Maria Aristodemou. Oxon, UK and New York: Routledge,
2014. 189 pp. \$125 cloth, \$48.95 paper.

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In *Law, Psychoanalysis, Society: Taking the Unconscious Seriously*, Maria Aristodemou goes far beyond the usual arguments about the challenges that the psyche poses to the ostensibly sovereign subject of law. Through an exceedingly lucid account of Lacanian theory, illustrated with a light touch through references to the likes of Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*, and Saramago's *Blindness*, Aristodemou shows how the unconscious is itself a law into which the human subject is born when the human enters into language. The book is key for those interested in law and language. It will also resonate with those who are inclined to offer stories of law as accounts of failure. In Aristodemou's provocative book, the aim of psychoanalysis is not so much to offer another theory of law or of its failure, however, as to facilitate the entree of practitioners and scholars of law into ethical critique.

For Lacan, according to Aristodemou, one is constituted as a subject through one's lack or through one's desire and demand for an ostensibly lost object that one never actually possessed. This lack or "hole in the subject" emerges with language, insofar as language introduces a distinction—or cut—between one's needs and the demands one makes in speech. Language, or the symbolic, is inadequate to the "Real." The gap otherwise known as that between signifier and thing signified corresponds to one's alienation from the Real and to one's insatiable demand for more than what one needs. The "Big Other"—God, state, parent, community, law—to which the subject turns for fulfillment is itself an incomplete fantasy that glosses over the subject's own lack.

In modern culture, despite the death of God, Aristodemou continues, citing Žižek, the place of the absent God remains. We have killed God, that is, but not gotten rid of his place, to which we continue to address our demands. The law of this place limits our pleasure and keeps us from a terrifying enjoyment or *jouissance* that would exceed language. Such law gives birth to, sustains, and governs an impossible desire for the beyond of speech, or the Real, which desire it simultaneously prohibits. The subject depends on law to keep from herself the truth: that she needs to keep the object of her desire at bay. As modern law becomes a substance- or content-less imperative for "more" in which anything goes however, systems of administration generate their own obscene *jouissance*, Aristodemou argues, becoming impossible to resist except through

hysteria or perversion. In this context, the task of psychoanalysis is to lead the analysand to come to terms with his or her own particular emptiness or lack and that of big (and small) others, and to thereby stop lying to herself and learn compassion. In grasping the enormity of such lack, the ethical subject acts without need for rules and without guilt (as in Nietzsche), entering for Aristodemou into a full speech in which there is “at last no gap between the subject’s ‘saying’ and ‘the said’, between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the statement; the subject finally assumes responsibility for her own speech” (p. 126).

Language and psychoanalysis are keys to this shattering experience of freedom and loss of the lies that one tells oneself. As Aristodemou points out, there would be no Real, or encounter or truth of the Real, or Real to which language is inadequate, if we did not first enter language. Her argument is thus grounded in a failure of language. Such an emphasis works, along with much of today’s sociolegal scholarship, to correct ideological and naive accounts of law (or language) that would equate them with truth or justice.

While sociolegal scholars ground law in power relations however, Aristodemou grounds truth in lies: lying to oneself is a norm (p.120) and truth is revealed in lies (p. 128). Even the artistic process which, in contrast to the legal process, is “in close alliance” with the psychoanalytic process, “holds the promise that truth can be reached through the medium of metaphor, poetry and fiction; in other words, through lies” (p. 130). Aristodemou’s association of lies with fictions might at first seem to suggest the value of turning to “law and literature,” but attempts to join such disciplines, she argues, are examples of seeking in others what one’s own discipline lacks. Psychoanalysis alone is unique “in offering a respite from the injunction to see more, know more, and be more” (p. 139).

One wonders whether entry into language need be understood so one-sidedly. Is it not equally likely that entry into language, as into law, is as much an imperfect claim as an unmet demand? And if so, are there not *already* in language the possibilities that Aristodemou associates with fiction and in particular poetry? Is not the possibility of truth a precondition of lying? In an epilogue whose tone is quite different from the rest of the book, Aristodemou aligns the possibility of transcendence with the story of a music that harmonizes what is said and the form in which it is said. Does not such possibility emerge precisely with entry into languages that *say*, of which symbolic speech is derivative? Granting that each human being is in some sense traumatized by the cut that marks his or her entry into language and that each must learn to live with the inexpressibility of the truth of the Real and of one’s relation to it as lack, are there not *also* less-pessimistic events of language and law than those of loss, lack and failure? Can the speaking of law in particular ever be

full speech? Is not entry into its imperfect language of claiming, each time, a terrifying pleasure?

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Transitional Justice: Images and Memories. Edited by Chrisje Brants. Antoine Hol and Dina Siegel. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 284 pp. £68.00 cloth.

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Kofi Annan, chair of the Elders group of former world leaders and former UN secretary general, was cited recently to the effect that “climate change would leave the living envying the dead” (Vidal 2015); Annan is echoing a phrase by Nikita Khrushchev talking about nuclear war in 1979. The point he is making is that political and environmental turmoil caused by droughts, floods, and the many other effects of rising temperatures will crucially transform our social life and times. *Transitional Justice* makes a contribution to the discussion of this issue, within the more general context of considering criminology as social theory tasked with analyzing a contemporary world marked by global political, economic, and environmental turmoil.

The book is an edited collection in Ashgate’s series “Advances in Criminology.” It makes a timely, well-organized, and thematically coherent contribution to the field in two ways: via its discussion of transitional justice and via its overarching theme of the role of criminology. Its particular strength lies in its multidisciplinary and international approach: its 13 chapters provide critiques of the various dimensions of transitional justice by criminal lawyers, cultural anthropologists, criminologists, political scientists, and historians. Transitional justice is concerned with the judicial, political, and cultural procedures of dealing with mass atrocity, or “the reckoning afterwards” (p. 2), as the editors articulate it. Such procedures range from international trials to grassroots memory initiatives, and this collection offers a detailed map of the discursive field of transitional justice. Each chapter is a case study of different procedures and landscapes of transitional justice, such as the role of political apology (Chapter Seven) and the emotional landscape of the India/Pakistan partition (Chapter 13). Although all these case studies differ in their disciplinary approach, rigorous research and clear editing results in