

We are delighted to announce the fourth

Annual Lecture of the Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership

## Professor Adriana Cavarero

Head of the Scientific Board

The Hannah Arendt Center for Political Studies, University of Verona

# 'Political Phonospheres: Plurality and Crowds'

at

5.00pm, Monday 30 April 2018

Lecture Room 1

8 Mill Lane, Cambridge

All welcome

Scholars like Gustav Le Bon, Sigmund Freud and Elias Canetti have convincingly argued that the phenomenology of the masses is structurally characterized by individual drives towards blending into an amorphous collectivity, which often takes the shape of a shouting or chanting crowd. Their works on the psychology of crowds underline that when individuals shout or chant in unison, they express a longing for nullification through the immersion in a single de-individualized voice, a pleasurable blurring into something which *exceeds* their singular, incarnated bodies and hints at a dimension of *ex-stasis*. This is exemplarily described in Emile Zola's novel, *Germinal*, where he calls on the phonosphere of people singing the *Marseillaise*.

Roland Barthes and Canetti himself, in his autobiographical writings, engage instead with 'phonospheres' of a different nature: they both allude to vocal performances of a *plural* kind and are reminiscent of that very plurality which, as Hannah Arendt points out, is made of relational and unique subjectivities. At stake, therefore, are the voice of plurality and the voice of the masses as opposite political soundscapes. Each of these soundscapes relates to two different forms of the political: one hinting at totalitarian regimes, the other at the germinal status of democracy. Does the 'rustle' of democracy-in-the-making sound as 'pluriphony'?



**Adriana Cavarero** is an Italian philosopher and feminist thinker. Her works focus on philosophy, politics and literature. Her books in English include *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy* (Polity, 1995); *Relating Narratives: Storytelling And Selfhood* (Routledge, 2000); *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy And The Question of Gender* (Michigan, 2002); *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy Of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, 2005); *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (Columbia, 2009); *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude* (Stanford, 2016).