

naked PUNCH

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NAKED PUNCH → ISSUE 08

ISSUE 08

→ CONTENTS ←

FRAGMENTS OF A PROLOGUE

p.7 Qalandar Bux Memon → The Wolves Must no Longer Find Isolated Lambs to Prey Upon

p.9 Nadim Samman → On Work Experience

p.12 Simon Critchley → Ruminative Fragments from a Book I will Never Finish

ESSAYS

p.16 Marcus Rediker → Thomas Clarkson and History from Below

p.24 Naomi Greene → Criticism as Autobiography: Pasolini on Forster's Maurice

DIALOGUES

p.34 → Gayatri Spivak in Conversation with Oscar Guardiola-Rivera

p.100 → Ernesto Laclau in Conversation with Oscar Guardiola-Rivera

POETRY SECTION

p.46 Qalandar Bux Memon
Bruce Bond
Stuart Dischell
Graham Foust
Ed Skoog



DOSSIER: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM LEBANON



p.56 Walid Sadek --> **From Image to Corpse**

p.12 Walid Sadek --> **From Image to Corpse**

p.66 Abdullah, Khbeiz, Sadek --> **Excerpts from File: Public Time**

p.72 Jalal Toufic --> **The Writing is on the Wall**

p.78 --> **Michel Hayek's Forebodings 2006**

p.81 **Lebanese Contemporary Art Colour Section**

p.92 Featured Artist --> **Gilbert Hage**



THE LATIN AMERICAN TURN

p.100 → Ernesto Laclau in Conversation with Oscar Guardiola-Rivera

SITUATIONS

p.112 Fernando Garcés → Territorial Order, Natural Resources and the Constituent Assembly in Bolivia: Towards a Plurinational State?

p.122 Fernando Coronil → State and Nation During the Coup Against Hugo Chávez

p.132 Orlando Fals Borda → Reinforcing Colombia's New Alternative Pole

p.138 Ramon Grosfoguel → Latinos(as) Migrants and the Decolonisation of the US Empire

POTENTIALITIES

p.152 Enrique Dussel → The People, the Popular, and "Populism"

p.158 Oscar Guardiola-Rivera → The Most Sublime of Fetishists

p.174 Cover Artist: Guillermo Gomez-Peña

< Fragments of a prologue >



→ Part of Series *Tout Un Chacun*, ©Gilbert Hage, exhibited at the Modern Art Oxford as part of "Out Of Beirut"

QALANDAR BUX MEMON

'THE WOLVES MUST NO LONGER FIND ISOLATED LAMBS TO PREY UPON'

'The Third World today faces Europe like a colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers.'
 Franz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*.

Fanon was writing in 1961. And after the Bandung conference, and with the famous Tricontinental conference to follow in Havana in 1966, Fanon's comment, though hopeful, was not hyperbolic. Today our governments, on the whole, face US imperialism like stooges. The ineffectual support for Lebanon is indicative but let me take the ongoing Palestinian conflict as illustrative.

Take the 25th of June, the day on which Cpl. Gilad Shalit was captured by Hamas operatives as a water-shed. What has happened since? Let me tell you: 260 Palestinians, including 64 children and 26 women have been killed; 1, 200 Palestinians have been injured, including 60 amputations; there have been more than 270 warplane raids on Gaza striking, among other things, at power stations and the Foreign and

Information ministries. Israeli bombing has caused \$1.8bn in damages to the electricity grid (UN figure) and left more than a million people without regular access to clean drinking water (The Independent - 8th September 2006). This is to say nothing of the injudicious kidnapping of over 30 elected Palestinian Parliamentarians (Hamas) and the humiliating and economically crippling blockade of Gaza.

Figures convey little of the experience of humiliation and desperate poverty (the World Bank estimates that two thirds of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will be living in poverty in the near future, poverty here being defined as under \$ 2 a day - contrast this to Israeli GDP per capita in 2005 of \$24,600) that the Palestinian people experience daily. Edward Said had predicted that the Oslo accords would lead to the Bantustanisation of

the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and sadly this is indeed the colonial reality that has been bombed, gunned, and with other forms of brute force and coercion and with the silence if not complicity of the 'international community', has been shaped for the Palestinian people - defiant and resistant though they remain.

The situation is exacerbated by continued Israeli settlement building (let us call it what it is: COLONIZATION) in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Israeli government on the 4th of September arrogantly (in so far as it comes even before the debris of the attacks on Lebanon have to be cleared) announced — with the unanimous silence of the 'international community' - that it plans to build 700 new homes in two settlements blocs in the occupied West Bank. It is important to remember that seventy-seven per cent of the land has already been taken from the Palestinians and forms what today is Israel (though, of course, its borders are not declared!) and that there are now 400,000 plus settlers on the remaining twenty three per cent of the Post-1967 Palestinian land. This is one of the substantial obstacles to peace. In fact, continued settlement building was a key factor in the failure of the Oslo peace process and with this failure came the increasing support for Hamas. Ahd Al-Shafi, a prominent Palestinian diplomat, explains: 'my main criticism of Oslo is that it did not address the settlement issue. Israel's settlement building was a clear violation of the very terms of reference of the peace process, it made the process meaningless'.

Let me turn again to one of the ideas behind Tricontinental Third Worldism and again to Fanon. He writes, 'the future of every woman (man) today has relations of close dependency on the rest of the universe. That is why the colonial peoples must redouble their vigilance and their vigor. A new humanism can be achieved only at this price. The wolves must no longer find isolated lambs to prey upon'. These are perceptive remarks. Whether we buy the new Humanism or not, what is important is the notion of strategic solidarity against Imperial power - this is as relevant today as it was in the 1960's. Our history is littered with the dehumanizing effect of colonial power and today we see it in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Palestine and, lately, in Lebanon. To combat this, democratically, and make sure that 'The wolves no longer find isolated lambs to prey upon' we must demand our governments (those in Africa, in Asia, and in Latin American, and why not, even in Britain and the US) to not tolerate Imperial and Colonial expansion. And if they fail to respond, we must indeed ask some crucial questions - what constitutional reforms in governmental structures can we work towards so that the popular will can be effective?

In this regard the Naked Punch Editors declare that they stand in Solidarity with the people of Lebanon as they rebuilt their country and support the right of the Palestinian people to a viable State.

NADIM SAMMAN

ON WORK EXPERIENCE

We sometimes rub our ears after the event and ask ourselves, astonished and at a loss, "What have we really experienced?".
— Nietzsche

The Intern, to appropriate the words of Frederick Nietzsche, 'is expert in silence, in long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-deprecation, and in self-humiliation' - he is weak. Some call his actions pragmatic, however, this is only to acknowledge that a burden has been accepted — a burden of suffering. How does he suffer, and for what?

INTERMENT

An intern is someone who is undergoing internment. That is to say, he or she is a detainee. But how, exactly, is such an individual detained or confined? This is a fair question, given that the intern's role is voluntary.

'[A]ll pragmatic purposes are simply symbols of the fact that a will to power has implanted its own sense of function in

those less powerful' — states Nietzsche. The 'pragmatic purpose' is voluntary internment. The 'sense of function' manifest in the edifice of work experience may be thus described: The intern - or potential intern - occupies the position of debtor, in relation to the pseudo-employer's position as creditor. The latter extracts time, energy and 'enthusiasm' from the former, which he harnesses to further his own ends. What is to the pseudo-employer's credit? Simply, his establishment / foothold in the professional firmament; his professional status is deployed as collateral, underpinning - and concealing - woolly exhortations that imply benefit. These suggestions are calculated to stoke the naked flames of the Intern's burning ambition while, at the same time, quietly neutralizing the potential threat they pose to the status quo. The snake-oil ranges from the vague 'It'll be good experience' to the

specific 'It'll be good for your CV'.

This state of affairs is sometimes justified on the grounds that internment/work experience is a sort of initiation process — as much can be gleaned from pseudo-employment advertisements that require candidates to demonstrate 'commitment'. The truth of the matter is, however, that unpaid work-experience amounts to unregulated private taxation of persons wishing to begin careers in the creative sector. Indeed, the Intern pays 'tribute' to the professional mafiosi, and their institutions, through indentured labour. Without a contract — an all too typical predicament — servitude is indefinite. It is not unheard of for companies to ask for six months of unpaid work without promising a thing. Remember, an exhortation is not a promise.

JUSTIFYING SUFFERING

Nietzsche rightly points out that 'what makes people rebel against suffering is not suffering itself, but the senselessness of suffering'. If suffering is given a 'sense', or justification, then it is easier to bear — and may even sought out — provided that the justification is powerful enough. Our mustachioed friend claimed that 'early man' invented gods to perform this function. The gods acted as a 'divine audience' or witnesses to the spectacle of mankind's torments, redeeming them through their regard. What is the Curriculum Vitae if not a secular god, bearing witness to the misery of the Intern? Instead of undergoing privations for

the sake of a deity the Intern does so for a list of accomplishments - a list that is inscribed with suffering. The pseudo-employer appoints himself priest, mediating between the Intern and this god, demanding pious observance of the rituals that he proscribes. He is, I venture to suggest, an unwanted middle-man. Find new priests! Better yet, be your own!

The invention of divine witnesses was the first intimation of the 'ascetic ideal', whose apogee - Nietzsche claimed - is Judeo-Christian morality, which calls suffering and those who suffer, 'good'. This credo was charged with locating good outside the realm of 'mortal existence' - that realm of the 'affective urges', of 'beauty and sensuality'. Whether or not Nietzsche was right about Judeo-Christian morality, there is still value in trepidation and suspicion of a good elsewhere. The exhortation 'It will be good for your CV' disregards the good where you are.

LIVING AD INTERIM

Often, the 'good' of work experience is located in the future. Such is the underlying premise of statements of the sort 'It will be good for your career', which suggest that you aren't even working! Well then, what are you doing in an office? Despite the millennial mantra 'live for the moment', it would seem that many people choose to ignore the fact that the future lies beyond our power — and frequently turns out contrary to expectations. Such people, Seneca asserted, 'hustle [their] life along' and

are 'troubled by a longing for the future and weariness of the present'. This, young pup, is living ad interim. They would do well to attend to the words of Schopenhauer - '[t]he present alone is true and actual; it is the only time which possesses full reality, and our existence lies in it exclusively'. The good elsewhere is none other than 'life loathing itself' — Nietzsche echoes. Hume, before them, also appeals to you — 'Oh deluded mortals, thus to lose your youth, thus to throw away so invaluable a present, to trifle with so perishing a blessing. Contemplate well your recompense'.

ANTI-EGALITARIANISM

It would be remiss not to reiterate a common criticism of unpaid work experience: that it is socially exclusive; that pseudo-employment is biased in favour of those with the economic power to work for free. This should be an uncomfortable truth, given the fact that many institutions - such as Tate - claim to be committed to inclusive hiring practices. All the more reason, then, for these organizations not to eventually hire their unpaid staff!

CONCLUSION

I plead with you, recognize the will to power - the pseudo-employer's 'sense of function' - in the exhortations 'It'll be good for

your career', 'It'll be good for your CV', and 'It'll be good experience'. Remember that an exhortation is not the same as a promise, or a contract. Beware! Such exhortations are calculated appeals to vanity.

The 'pragmatic' aspect of work experience is at odds with its apparently voluntary nature: The Intern should be characterized as someone undergoing internment — detention. By detention I mean separation from 'good' where you are. In the realm of pseudo-employment 'good' is elsewhere; deferred. Such is the ascetic - life-denying, career-denying - principle of work experience. The pseudo-employer's is aware of the intern's suffering but formally refuses to bear witness. Instead he invokes the Curriculum Vitae as 'divine audience', while appearing to supervise rituals that exalt this god. These rituals amount to private taxation, at best, and may even amount to extortion. The Intern's ability to perform such acts of devotion is conditional upon his financial means. Consequently, if one accepts the principle of pseudo-employment as the 'first step' on the career ladder, then one accepts hiring practices that exclude those with limited means. At bottom, this is a deeply conservative, anti-egalitarian, state of affairs.

If you must suffer, let your 'good' elsewhere be something other than a list — mere sheets of paper. Let your 'divine audience' reflect your deepest sense of function.

'Consider [...] that if life be frail, if youth be transitory, we should well employ the present moment, and lose no part of so perishable an existence'. — David Hume.

SIMON CRITCHLEY

RUMINATIVE FRAGMENTS FROM A BOOK I WILL NEVER FINISH

HAPPINESS

The most elusive of concepts, and yet...

What is happiness? For the philosophers of Antiquity, notably Aristotle, it was assumed that the goal of the philosophical life, the good life moreover, was happiness and that the latter can be defined in terms of the *bios theoretikos*, the solitary life of contemplation.

Few people and even relatively fewer philosophers today would seem to subscribe to this view. The idea of an ethical life, a good life, is more than ever clouded in ambiguity and subject to death by a thousand critical cuts. But is the idea of happiness as a form of contemplation really so ridiculous? Might there not be something in it? I am reminded of the following extraordinary passage from Rousseau's final text, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*,

'If there is a state where the soul can find a resting-place secure enough to establish itself and concentrate its entire being there, with no need to remember the past or reach into the future, where time is nothing to it, where the present runs on indefinitely but this duration goes unnoticed, with no sign of the passing of time, and no other feeling of deprivation or enjoyment, pleasure or pain, desire or fear than the simple feeling of existence, a feeling that fills our soul entirely, as long as this state lasts, we can call ourselves happy, not with a poor, incomplete and relative happiness such as we find in the pleasures of life, but with a sufficient, complete and perfect happiness which leaves no emptiness to be filled in the soul.'

This is as close to a description of the experience of happiness as I can imagine. Rousseau is describing the experience of floating in a little rowing boat on the Lake of Bièvre close to Neuchâtel in Switzerland. He particularly loved visiting the Île Saint Pierre, where he used to enjoy going for exploratory walks when the weather was fine and he could indulge in the great passion of his last years: botany. He would walk with a copy of

Linnaeus's *Systemae Naturae* under his arm, happily identifying plants in areas of this deserted island that he had divided for this purpose into small squares. On the way to the island, he would pull in the oars and just let the boat drift where it wished, for hours at a time. Rousseau would lie down in the boat and plunge into a deep reverie. How does one describe the experience of reverie: one is awake, but half asleep, thinking, but not in an instrumental, calculative or ordered way, simply letting the thoughts happen, as the will.

Happiness is not quantitative or measurable and it is not the object of any science, old or new. It cannot be gleaned from empirical surveys or programmed into individuals through a combination of behavioural therapy and antidepressants. If it consists in anything, then I think that happiness is this feeling of existence, this sentiment of momentary self-sufficiency that is bound up with the experience of time. Look at what Rousseau writes above: floating in a boat in fine weather, lying down with one's eye open to the clouds and birds or closed in reverie, one feels neither the pull of the past nor does one reach into the future. Time is nothing, or rather time is nothing but the experience of the present through which one passes without hurry, but without regret. As Wittgenstein writes in what must be the strangest remark in the *Tractatus*, 'the eternal life is given to those who live in the present'. Rousseau asks, 'what is the source of our happiness in such a state?' He answers

that it is nothing external to us and nothing apart from our own existence. He goes on, 'as long as this state lasts we are self-sufficient like God'.

God-like, then. If anyone is happy, then one imagines that God is happy, and to be happy is to be like God. But consider what this means, for it might not be as ludicrous or as hybriatic as one might imagine. To be like God is to be without time, or rather in time with no concern for time, free of the passions and troubles of the soul, experiencing something like calm in the face of things and of oneself.

EMPTINESS

What is it about the experience of emptiness, about turning your back on the world and facing nothing? For me, this always happens in front of the sea, each time I face the brightness over the ocean.

One looks at the sea and feels an emptiness. Facing the sea is absence regarded. It evokes a feeling that I want to call calm. The body slows and the mind lays by its trouble and adapts itself to the rhythm of the waves, where time is tide, and tide is endless to and fro, coming and going. Time becomes a circle rather than a line, a cycle endlessly renewed rather than a movement of decline.

At times like this, I begin to think. To be honest, I don't know what goes on in my head

much of the rest of the time, or what to call what goes on in my head, but it is not thinking. Facing the emptiness of the sea, one begins to think: slowly and with a deliberate carelessness.

Cities sometimes slip into the sea, eaten alive by their thoughtfulness, like Dunwich on the Suffolk coast in East Anglia. Or the sea slips away from them, in some act of historical thoughtlessness, where tides' time thickens into silt. Harbours get blocked with silt and clogged with mud, becoming unnavigable. The land seems to rise like a wooded table-top and the cities slip back into obscurity, like Ephesus and Miletos on the Ionian coast in Turkey. Other cities are destroyed by a vindictive violence that is the enemy of thought like Carthage, ravaged brick by brick with godless Roman arrogance. Silt sometimes slows the water, allowing malarial swamps to form, like Torcello in the Venetian lagoon, the proto-Venice where all that remains are some stunning Byzantine mosaics. I sometimes dream of writing a volume on the role of silt in

determining the shape of world history and I imagine whole chapters on lagoons and blocked harbours. Maybe I lived for too long close to the Essex coast and its endless mud estuaries and brown, bracken water.

I have, for as long as I can remember, been obsessed with cities prior to their settlement, or often at the moment of settlement, I think of what eyes were seeing and minds thinking as white sails were spotted on the horizon at what would become Jamestown or Botany Bay or off the coast of the treed vastness that would become Brazil. I think of vicious settlers, happily decimating the local populations and of the Jesuits who landed in Brazil with a text of a Papal bull that said they should save the souls of the natives. I think, repeatedly, of the first European feet to tread on Manhattan, on this hilly, rocky island handsomely situated on a huge river with a spacious natural harbour. I try and think about the places I know at a point approaching emptiness and therefore, I suppose, thoughtfulness.

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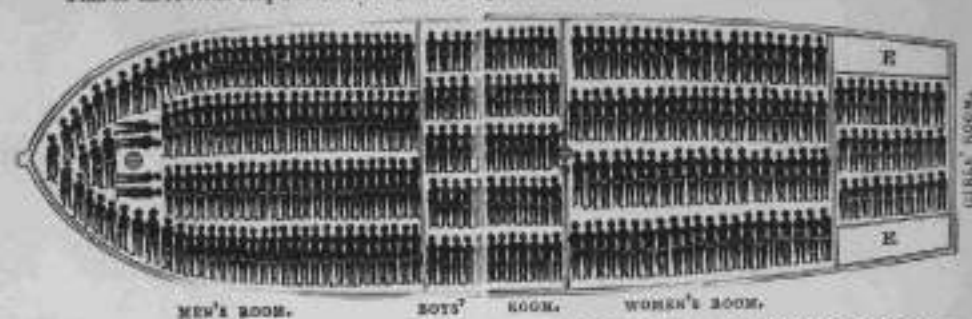
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Plan of an African Ship's lower Deck, with Negroes in the proportion of not quite one to a Ton.



REMARKS ON THE SLAVE-TRADE.

IT must afford great pleasure to every true friend to liberty, to find that the case of the unhappy Africans expresses the general situation of the human race, in many parts of Europe; but we do not recollect to have met with a more striking illustration of the barbarity of the slave-trade, than in a small pamphlet lately published by a society at Plymouth, in Great-Britain, from which, the Philadelphia Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery have taken the following extracts, and have added a copy of the plan, which accompanied it. Perhaps a more powerful mode of conviction could not have been adopted, than is displayed in this small piece. Here is presented to our view, one of the most horrid spectacles—a number of human creatures, packed, side by side, almost like herring in a barrel, and confined nearly to the state of being buried alive, with just air enough to preserve a degree of life sufficient to make them sensible of all the horrors of their situation. To every person, who has ever been at sea, it must present a scene of wretchedness in the extreme; for, with every comfort, which nature, any variety of nourishment, and careful cleanliness can yield, it is still a wearisome and tedious state. What then must it be to those, who are not only deprived of the necessities of life, but confined down, the greater part of the voyage, in the same position, with scarcely the privilege of having their unjointed sides to the other, and subjected to all the numerous consequences arising from confinement, and other disorders, insupportable amongst such a number of fallen wretches! Where is the human being that can picture to himself this scene of woe, without, at the same time, entreating a trade, which spreads misery and desolation wherever it appears? Where is the man of real benevolence, who will not join heart and hand, in opposing this barbarous, (the legislation traffic!

"THE above plate represents the lower deck of an African ship, of two hundred and twenty-seven tons burden, with the slaves stowed in it, in the proportion of not quite one to a ton.

"In the men's apartment, the space allowed to each is six feet in length, by sixteen inches in breadth. The boys are each allowed five feet by fourteen inches; the women five feet ten inches, by sixteen inches; and the girls four feet by twelve inches. The perpendicular height between the decks is five feet eight inches.

"The men are fastened together, two and two, by handcuffs to their wrists, and by irons fastened on their legs. They are brought up on the main deck every day, about eight o'clock, and, as each pair succeeds, a strong chain, fastened by a hook to the deck, is passed through their shackles; a precaution absolutely necessary to prevent insurrection. In this state, if the weather is favourable, they are permitted to remain about one third part of the twenty-four hours; and, during this interval, they are fed, and these apartments below is cleaned; but when the weather is bad, even these indulgences cannot be granted them, and they are only permitted to come up in small companies, of about six at a time, to be fed, where, after remaining a quarter of an hour, each man is obliged to give place in the bulk, in succession.

"It may perhaps be conceived, from the crowded state in which the slaves appear in this plate, that an unusual and exaggerated number has been produced; this, however, is so far from being the case, that no ship, of less than one hundred tons, can be procured, ever capable of carrying more than one to a ton, and the usual practice has been to carry nearly double that number. The bill which has passed this last session of parliament (1793), only restricts the carriage to five slaves to three tons; and the House, of Liverpool, a free-trading ship, from which the above sketch was procured, that, in one voyage, actually carry six hundred and nine slaves, which is more than double the number that appear in the plate. The mode of stowing them was as follows:

below: phylloxera, in white shales, were inserted between the decks, extending as far from the sides towards the middle of the vessel, as to be capable of containing four additional rows of slaves, by which means, the perpendicular height above each tier, after allowing for the beams and platforms, was reduced to two feet six inches, so that they could not even sit in an erect posture; besides which, in the men's apartment, instead of four rows, five were stowed, by placing the head of one between the thighs of another. All the horrors of this situation are still multiplied in the smaller vessels. The fifty, of one hundred and thirty-seven tons, had only one foot ten inches; and the Venus, of one hundred and thirty-six tons, only one foot nine inches perpendicular height, above each tier.

"The above mode of carrying the slaves, however, is only one, among a thousand other instances which those unhappy and devoted creatures suffer, from this degrading traffic of the human species, which, in every part of its progress, exhibits scenes that strike us with horror and indignation. If we regard the first stage of it, on the continent of Africa, we find, that a hundred thousand slaves are annually produced there for exportation, the greatest part of whom consist of innocent persons, torn from their dearest friends and connections, sometimes by force, and sometimes by treachery. Of these, experience has shewn, that fifty-five thousand perish, either in the dreadful mode of conveyance before described, or within two years after their arrival at the plantations, before they are assumed to the climate. Those who unhappily survive these hardships, are distressed, like herds of brutes, to exhaust their lives in the unrelenting labour of slavery, without recompense, and without hope.

"It is said by the well-wishers to this trade, that the suppression of it will destroy a great history for science, and annihilate a very considerable source of commercial profit. In answer to these objections, Mr. Clarkson, in his admirable treatise on the impolicy of the trade, lays down two positions, which he has proved from the most incontrovertible authority—First, that so far from being a necessary, it has been constantly and rigidly a grievance for our country; for, that in this traffick, more lives perish in one year, than in all the other trafficks of Great-Britain in two years.

"And, Secondly, that the balance of the trade, from its extreme precariousness and uncertainty, is so notoriously against the merchants, that if all the vessels employed in it, were the property of one man, he would readily, at the end of their voyage, find himself a loser.

"As then the utility and expediency of this trade must be universally admitted and allowed, and as the policy or impolicy of its abolition is a question, which the wisdom of the legislatures must ultimately decide upon, and which it was only he enabled to form a just estimate of, by the most thorough investigation of all its relations and dependencies; it becomes the indispensable duty of every friend to humanity, however his speculations may have led him to conclude on the political expediency of the measure, to stand forward, and raise the objections, either by producing such facts as he may himself be acquainted with, or by submitting, to enable them to procure and transmit to the legislature, such evidence as will tend to show the necessary light on the subject. And people would do well to consider, that it does not often fall to the lot of individuals, to have an opportunity of performing so important a moral and religious duty, as that of educating a just and useful practice, which may, without exaggeration, be styled one of the greatest evils at this day existing upon the earth.

"By the Plymouth Committee,

"W. ELFORD, Chairman."

E. L.—New Haven.

Thomas Clarkson and History from Below

An Essay by Marcus Rediker

THE MOVEMENT to abolish the slave trade has long occupied an uneasy place in the anti-capitalist traditions of Britain. Abolition was a progressive movement, but it has been seen largely as an affair of a self-righteous bourgeoisie, and why not? The small band of gentlemen who gathered in May 1787 to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave trade were all of them earnest clergymen, respectable Quakers, and sober businessmen, middle-class to a man. The Parliamentary voice of the movement, the unctuous evangelical William Wilberforce, was no friend to working people; he supported Pitt's repression of the nascent trade union movement in the 1790s and even suggested the Combination Act of 1799. Eric Williams told us long ago in *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) that the abolitionists were simply doing the bidding of industrial capital. In Edward Thompson's classic "history from below," *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), the abolitionist movement rates hardly a mention. Abolition must have happened "from above."

As if to prove the point, the official celebration of the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007 will no doubt feature history from above in full reactionary bloom. The moral superiority of the British state will be flaunted, no doubt with insufficient acknowledgment of the dominant British role in the slave trade before abolition. And the gentlemen-saints will be cast as heroes in the national morality play. Indeed they will serve as a useful hedge against the other hero celebrated last year: Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson, who strongly supported both the slave trade and slavery, calling abolition a "damnable doctrine."

Yet increasingly we learn, from more recently written history from below, that the left has more to celebrate in abolition than it once realized. After Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (1984), the black community of London began to be recognized for its contributions to abolitionism. Movement intellectuals such Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah

Cugoano were left out of David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (1975), but they cannot be left out anymore. Abolition's history from below has been extended in another direction by my colleague Seymour Drescher, who in an article entitled "Whose Abolition?" and other work has emphasized the crucial role of thousands of artisans and workers, especially in Manchester, who refused to consume sugar, signed anti-slave trade petitions furiously, and essentially built a national grassroots abolitionist movement between 1788 and 1792.

I wish to carry this argument further by suggesting that at the very heart of the movement lay yet another powerful proletarian presence: sailors, whose contributions to abolition have not yet been appreciated. I also wish to suggest that the abolitionists, Thomas Clarkson in particular, were among the first to recognize the power of "history from below" to a social movement. In this sense, Thompson and indeed many of us are in a literal sense the heirs of Clarkson, although we have never realized it.

* * *

In June 1787, less than a month after the London abolition committee had been formed, Clarkson and his fellow members found themselves in a bind. They had resolved to abolish the slave trade, but they did not know much about it. Clarkson had written an M.A. thesis on slavery at Cambridge but its sources were limited and it was not enough to educate either the public or members of Parliament, whose already-rumored hearings "could not proceed without evidence." The committee resolved on June 12 that Clarkson should go to Bristol, Liverpool, and elsewhere to "collect

1- Meeting of June 12, 1787, Minutes of the Abolition Committee, Add. Ms. 21254, British Library.

Information on the Subject of the Slave Trade." How would he do it?¹

Clarkson devised a strategy for gathering evidence. He would, we can see in retrospect, act the part of historian, a social historian at that. He would go to the merchants' halls and the customs houses of Bristol and Liverpool, where he would immerse himself in historical records such as ship muster rolls, from which he would compute mortality rates. He would gather the names of 20,000 sailors to see what became of them. He would collect documents such as articles of agreement, wage contracts both printed and unprinted, through which to explore the conditions of seafaring employment. Most importantly he would search the waterfront for people to interview. He took an approach based on oral history, which would, unexpectedly, become a history from below.

Clarkson began his tour of the ports on June 25, 1787; he journeyed first to Bristol. He suffered a moment of despair on entering the city, when he suddenly realized what he was up against.

He feared the power of the wealthy, self-interested people he knew he would have to challenge. He anticipated persecution as he attempted to gather evidence. He even dared to wonder "whether I should ever get out of it alive." Some of his fellow activists in London must have had the same fear, for over the next few weeks they wrote their friends in Bristol to ask whether Clarkson was still among the living.²

2. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London, 1808), vol. 1, 293-294, 367. Most of the quotes in the remainder of this essay come from this two-volume history.

Clarkson initially sought out Quakers and other allies, who would sustain him through the visit. But the people he really wanted to talk to were credible, "respectable" witnesses, merchants and ship captains who knew the slave trade first-hand. But when these people learned his intentions, they shunned him. Passing him in the street, they crossed to the other side, as if, Clarkson recalled, "I had been a wolf, or tiger, or some other dangerous beast of prey." Shipowners and merchants forbade anyone in their employ to speak to Clarkson. He was soon "obliged to give up all hope of getting any evidence from this quarter." He would be forced to turn to the only others who had concrete experience and knowledge: common sailors.

Clarkson soon met his first informant, John Dean, a black sailor whose mutilated back was gruesome evidence of his torture while working aboard a slaver. He met an Irish publican named Thompson who between midnight and 3:00 am led him up and down Marsh Street and into the sailors' dives, which were full of "music, dancing, rioting, drunkenness, and profane swearing." He met seamen who were lame, blind, ulcerated, and fevered. He heard the slave ship Alfred had just returned to port with a man named Thomas, who had suffered severe injury at the hands of Captain Edward Robe. After a long search, he found the man in a boarding house, in bad shape. His legs and body were wrapped in flannel as a comfort to his wounds. Delirious, Thomas could not figure out who Clarkson was. He grew frightened and agitated by the stranger's presence. Was he a lawyer? He repeatedly asked, Clarkson wrote, "if I was come with an Intent to take Captain Robe's Part." Was he come to kill him? Clarkson "answered no, [and said] that I was come to take his [part] & punish Captain Robe." Thomas could not understand — perhaps because he was in such a disordered state, perhaps because he could not imagine a gentleman taking his side. Unable to interview the man, Clarkson pieced together what he could from his shipmates. Robe had beaten Thomas so often that he tried to commit suicide by leaping overboard into shark-infested waters. Saved by his mates, he was chained to the deck, where the beatings continued. Thomas died a short time after the visit, but the image of the abused, deranged surgeon's mate haunted Clarkson "day and night." Such encounters, Clarkson wrote, created a "fire of indignation within me."³

3. Clarkson's *Journal of his Trip to the West Country*, June 25 - July 25, 1787, in the Correspondence and Papers of Thomas Clarkson, St. John's College Library, Cambridge University.

Liverpool would prove even rougher, as one might expect of a

port that had four times as many slave ships as Bristol. When word got out that a man who sought to abolish the slave trade — and hence destroy the "glory" of the city — was in town and could, moreover, be found dining in public each night at the King's Arms, curious people turned up to see and converse with him. These were mostly slave-trading merchants and captains. They engaged Clarkson in debate, which rapidly degenerated into insults and threats. Clarkson was happy to have at his side the abolitionist Dr. Alexander Falconbridge, "an athletic and resolute-looking man" who had made four voyages to in slave trade and could add muscle to the argument in more ways than one. Whenever Clarkson went out at night, Falconbridge went with him, "well armed." Anonymous adversaries sent letters threatening death if Clarkson did not leave town immediately. Not only did he refuse to leave, he refused to change lodgings as this would betray "an unmanly fear of my visitors" and reflect badly on the cause.

Most of Liverpool's slave-trading merchants and captains now began to shun Clarkson, and the ones who did not shun him tried to kill him. One stormy afternoon a gang of eight or nine men (two or three of whom he had seen at the King's Arms) tried to throw him off a pier-head. He was undeterred, or rather more determined than ever. Clarkson soon gathered what he thought was enough evidence to prosecute the merchant, captain, and mate responsible for the murder of seaman Peter Green, but his friends in Liverpool panicked at the prospect, swearing that he would be "torn to pieces, and the house where I lodged burnt down." The abolitionist Dr. James Currie criticized Clarkson for preferring the testimony of the "lowest class of seamen" over that of virtuous citizens. The problem was, "respectable" people who opposed slavery, like Currie, lived in terror of the powerful slave merchants and would not speak out. The same had been true in Bristol.

Meanwhile, word of Clarkson's presence and purposes spread along the waterfront, and sailors began to show up in twos and threes at the King's Arms to tell their tales of brutal mistreatment. Clarkson wrote: "though no one else would come near me, to give me any information about the trade, these [seamen] were always forward to speak to me, and to tell me their grievances, if it were only with the hope of being able to get redress." In the end Clarkson helped the sailors bring prosecutions in nine cases in Bristol and Liverpool. None of the cases came to court, but Clarkson managed in each instance to win monetary settlements for the abused seamen or their families. He made these small victories possible by keeping nineteen witnesses, all sailors, at his own expense in order to make sure the evidence for conviction would be at hand, rather than on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic.

Writing about himself in the third person in *An Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave Trade*, he summed up his experience with the sailors in Bristol and Liverpool: "A certain person, total-

ly unconnected with the law, had no less than sixty-three applications made to him in three months, to obtain redress for such seamen, as had experienced the fury of the officers of their respective ships." All but two had labored on slave ships. Clarkson was affected not only by the tales, but by the physical condition of the tellers. Explaining in the preface of the pamphlet the evidence he had gathered among John Dean and the other sailors, he wrote, "I have also had ocular demonstration, as far as a sight of their mangled bodies will be admitted as a proof."

Almost everything Clarkson would do in the abolitionist movement in the coming years was shaped by his dealings with these sailors. The knowledge he gained from and about them loomed large in *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*, published in July 1788, and in *An Essay on the Comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition as applied to the Slave Trade*, which appeared in April 1789. But perhaps most important in this regard was a collection of twenty-two interviews with seafaring people, entitled *The Substance of the Evidence of Sundry Persons on the Slave-Trade Collected in the Course of a Tour made in the Autumn of the Year 1788*, published in April 1789. Sixteen of the people interviewed had worked in the slave trade, and the other six had observed it at close range, most of them by African tours of duty in the Royal Navy. Half (eight) of those who had worked on slavers did so at the lowest level of the ship's hierarchy, as "foremastmen" (common seamen) or "boys" (young apprentices to the trade). Two had been captains in the trade and six had been mates or skilled workers (although three of these had risen from the lower ranks).

Sailors also helped to make possible the movement's most famous piece of visual propaganda, the broadside of the slave ship *Brookes*, both in its original form, published by the abolition committee in Plymouth in December 1788, and in its redrawn, "improved" form, produced by Clarkson and the committee in London four months later. It is important to remember that both images were in their first editions accompanied by substantial text explaining the sordid social reality of the slave ship. Both the images and the text were based in large measure on Clarkson's experience among the sailors. Clarkson had suggested to William Elford and his fellow abolitionists in Plymouth that they too should talk to sailors along the waterfront. One of the men they credited for providing intelligence, Thomas Bell, had been interviewed by Clarkson for *Substance of the Evidence*, which was published by the London committee at the same time as the "Plan and Sections of the Slave Ship." Both were then distributed to all MPs in advance of the vote on the slave trade scheduled to take place in May.

Most of the facts in the text accompanying the image of the *Brookes* can be found in the interviews Clarkson conducted with sailors. Sailor after sailor had explained to him the arrangement of decks on a slave ship: the hold, the lower deck, the main deck; how male slaves were chained

together; how the enslaved were stowed below decks; how they were fed, guarded, and forced to "dance" for exercise; how sickness, disease, and high mortality were the lot of both slave and sailor. Sailors told Clarkson that the slave trade was not a "nursery" for sailors, as its advocates insisted, but rather a cemetery. This would become a leading argument for abolition.

There is, of course, a cruel irony in the emergence of the sailor as an object of sympathy within the growing abolitionist movement. As Emma Christopher makes clear in her excellent new book, *Slave Trade Sailors and the Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (2006), sailors perpetrated many of the horrors of the trade. To be sure, Clarkson and the members of the London committee also stressed the plight of the "injur'd Africans," but they were not gathering their stories of the slave ship and the middle passage, as they might easily have done in London, Liverpool, and Bristol at this time. Theirs was, after all, the most profound history from below (literally, from below decks), and indeed it would seem that Olaudah Equiano understood very well both the exclusion and the consequent need for an African voice when he published his influential autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789). By emphasizing the dismal lot of sailors, Clarkson and his fellow abolitionists were wagering that the British government and public would respond to an appeal based on race and nation. Still, it was a risky bet, for the use of lowly sailors as sources did not pass without class ridicule. When seaman Isaac Parker was introduced during the House of Commons hearings in March 1790, an observer wrote that the "whole Committee was in a laugh." The pro-slavery members then taunted Wilberforce, "will you bring your ship-keepers,

ship-sweepers, and deck cleaners in competition with our admirals and men of honor? It is now high time to close your evidence, indeed!" Undaunted and speaking in short, simple sentences, Parker described, among other things, the flogging, torture, and death of an enslaved child (who would not eat) by Captain Joseph Pollard aboard the *Black Joke* in 1764. Like dozens of other seamen, Parker spoke truth to power; his detailed testimony damned the trade in ways that abstract moral denunciation could never have done.⁴

* * *

Thomas Clarkson, a young, somewhat naive, middle-class, Cambridge-educated Church of England minister, came face to face with the class struggle that raged on the ships and along the waterfront in the slave-trading ports. He joined it, fearlessly, on the side of the sailors. He thereby gained credibility among seamen and knowledge that would be invaluable to the abolitionist movement. He found the deserters, the cripples, the rebels, the dropouts, the guilty of conscience — in short, the dissidents who knew the slave trade from the inside and had chilling stories to tell about it.

Like Equiano, Clarkson served as an organizer, connecting the unconnected, and a translator, converting one form of knowledge to others. He made possible a new circulation of proletarian experience. He linked the slave-trade seaman to members of Parliament who were conducting an investigation of the human commerce, and to a metropolitan reading public hungry for information about dreadful things that for the most part happened beyond the shores of their own experience. By publicizing seaman's stories, Clarkson allowed them to appear in new oral and printed forms around the Atlantic, in lectures (remember Coleridge), sermons, testimony, statistical tables, illustrations, poems, articles, pamphlets, and books. He used these stories to make the slave trade, which to most people was an abstract proposition, into something concrete, personal, human, and real. The history as lived from below would thereby shape the history as made from above and the middle. Clarkson had brought what he called "first-rate nautical knowledge" into the movement, with great and far-reaching agitational effect. It was a foundational achievement, and it would help to make him abolition's greatest organizer.⁵

It should be remembered that Clarkson routinely praised the French Revolution in his lectures and organizing — which annoyed Wilberforce immensely — and also wrote a defense of the Haitian Revolution entitled *The True State of the Case, respecting the Insurrection at St. Domingo* (Ipswich, 1792).



Tucked away on Thomas Lane in Bristol is the Seven Stars tavern. It is a small establishment with a big history. World-changing conversations took place between Clarkson and sailors within its walls. A blue plaque above the main entrance announces, "Thomas Clarkson, 1760-1845, stayed here in 1787 to research the condition of slaves being transported." Mindful of the "history from below" of the abolitionist movement, it should instead say, "This is where sailors educated Thomas Clarkson about the slave trade in 1787."

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CRITICISM AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

Pier Paolo Pasolini on E.M. Forster's *Maurice*

By Naomi Greene

If Pier Paolo Pasolini had not created novels and films—if he had not been a 'scandalous' intellectual or a polemical journalist—then, perhaps, he might be known as a literary critic. But, as it is, his literary criticism has long been eclipsed by other facets of his work and life. In Italy, his literary reviews and essays are usually seen as a minor component of his work; outside Italy, they are barely known. Yet, the highly controversial filmmaker and journalist, the man whose private life brought down the wrath of the establishment, was also a prodigious literary critic—surely one of the most important critics of his time.

Bringing his enormous cultural and historical background, as well as a freshness of personal vision, to every review, Pasolini shed new light on both classical and contemporary works. But if these reviews say much about other writers and poets, they also say a great deal about Pasolini himself. For he was that rare reviewer—that is, someone who brought an intensely personal dimension to works by others. The interplay between his own life and ideas, and the works he discussed, took two important forms. On the one hand, he brought an ever-present matrix of personal obsessions and beliefs to his literary reviews; on the other he used literature (as he did psychoanalysis) to explore and define aspects of his own being. Underscoring the inseparability of culture and autobiography at work in Pasolini, Stefano Casi observes that Pasolini's work bears witness to 'a constant and painful operation of appropriation, of enrichment of his own existence by the literary and artistic world. From the beginning this [operation] constitutes the...moment of confrontation and verification peculiar to his own existence'.

No review better illustrates this process of 'appropriation' better, I think, than

1. Stefano Casi, 'Introduction' to 'Cupo d'amore': L'omosessualità dans l'oeuvre de Pier Pasolini Pasolini. Ed. Stefano Casi (Bologna: Il Cassero, 1977) 2.

Pasolini's 1972 discussion—placed, prominently, at the beginning of *Descrizioni di descrizioni*—of British novelist's E.M. Forster's homosexual *bildungsroman*, *Maurice*. Written in 1913-1914, *Maurice* was published, at Forster's request, after his death—i.e. in 1971. Pasolini's evident interest in Forster's novel was hardly surprising. For the same operation of 'appropriation' that led him to use literature to confront and verify aspects of his own self also prompted him to accord a privileged place to writers who, like himself, were homosexual. This process apparently began at a very early age. Pasolini's cousin, Nico Naldini, remembers that the poet's first reference to his own homosexuality was filtered through a literary allusion. "We never used the word homosexuality", recalls Naldini, 'until Pier Paolo...told me that he had discovered it a few years earlier. One of his classmates at school had told him about reading a love letter to a boy by Oscar Wilde that had him sent to prison'. As the young Pasolini came of age, it was clear that he devoured homosexual writers—Rimbaud and Wilde, Proust and Gide—with a particular passion. That passion came into very sharp focus in the wake of the first (and, in some ways, the most defining) homosexual 'scandal' that engulfed his life. As a beginning teacher he was discovered having sex with a young student; brought up on morals charges, he was interrogated by the police. In his defense, he blamed his behavior on nothing other than the unhealthy influence of writer André Gide. He had engaged, he said, in an 'erotic experience of literary origins accentuated by reading a novel by Gide in favor of homosexuality'.³ To a modern ear, Pasolini's statement may seem quaint or heart-breakingly innocent. But there is little question but that he was very much in earnest. For letters written soon after the scandal—when Pasolini had fled his native Friuli and established himself in Rome—contain revealing references to Gide as well as to other homosexual writers.

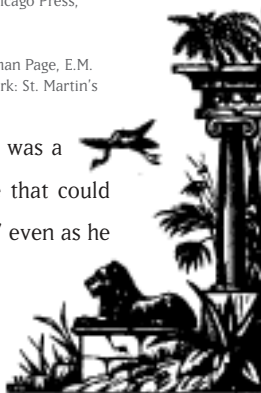
Pasolini undoubtedly felt far closer to a rebellious outcast like Rimbaud—the incarnation of a *poète maudit*—than he did to the quiet and timid Forster. In fact, from a temperamental and existential point of view, Pasolini and Forster offer a study in contrasts. Quietly hiding his homosexuality, Forster—whom Virginia Woolf deemed 'limp and damp and milder than the breath of a cow'⁴—held a respected post at Cambridge for much of his life. From this refuge, he saw honors heaped upon him as he aged; the last twenty years of his life, observes biographer P. N. Furbank, were 'a period of idolization. [Forster] had come to be honoured for personal goodness and sanctity, to an extent that perhaps few writers have known'.⁵ In contrast with the highly respected (and respectable) Forster, Pasolini was a rebellious and outspoken—some would say, exhibitionistic—figure. Playing a role that could hardly have been more public, he defiantly proclaimed and exhibited his 'difference' even as he

2. Nico Naldini, *Nei campi dei Friuli* (Milan: Vanni Scheiwiller: 1984), 23.

3. See Dario Trento, 'Métamorphoses des garçons pasolinien' in 'Cupo d'Amore', 72.

4. Cited in Robert Martin and George Piggford, eds., *Queer Forster* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 75.

5. Cited by Norman Page, E.M. Forster (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987) 15.





lived a life hounded by persecution and scandal.

The temperamental gulf between Forster and Pasolini, however, only makes the affinities shared by the two authors all the more suggestive and striking. For if cultural and existential factors accentuated their differences, their experience of homosexuality, instead, created common ground. For example, in the case of both men, a sense of fundamental social exclusion sharpened their perceptions of the absurdity and hypocrisy, the essential cruelty, of reigning social conventions and practices. And these perceptions, in turn, led to a shared disdain for the bourgeoisie or middle-class—with its unthinking support of conventional virtues—of their respective countries. If Forster consistently satirized the English middle-class for its complacency and intolerance as well as its inability to 'feel'—'It is not that the Englishman can't feel', he observed in a 1920 essay on the 'character' of his countrymen, 'it is that he is afraid to feel'—in Pasolini satire assumed a ferocious edge. The man who declared (around the time of *Porcile*) that the 'bourgeoisie always devours its own sons' was also the man who confessed to a 'visceral hatred' of the bourgeoisie. 'I nourish', he told one interviewer, 'a visceral, profound, immutable

6. Pasolini, *Il Sogno del Centauro*, Ed. Jean Dufлот (Rome: Riuniti, 1983), 22.

hatred against the bourgeoisie—against its complacency and its vulgarity. A mythic hatred or, if you prefer, a religious one'⁶.

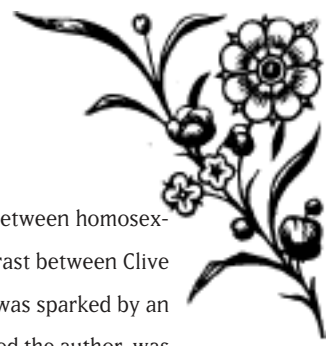
In the case of both Forster and Pasolini, moreover, this profound scorn for the world(s) that surrounded them was accompanied by a pronounced attraction to 'other' civilizations—in particular, to the non-Christian, non-European worlds of India, the Middle East, and North Africa. In these lands, they found a sexual and religious openness—a spirituality unmarked by the narrowness and intolerance of a certain tradition of Christianity (which condemned homosexuality in no uncertain terms). In this respect, it is noteworthy that the love of India that pervades Forster's masterpiece, *Passage to India*, finds a striking latter-day echo in Pasolini. A 1961 trip to India taken in the company of novelists Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante—later recounted in the travel diary *Odore dell'India*—marked the beginning of the poet's quest for the 'sacredness' that, in his view, marked 'pre-industrial' or 'archaic' civilizations. Speaking of the physical sensations that the realization of Indian spirituality evoked in him, Pasolini calls to mind, perhaps, the dizzying blend of sensuality and mysticism that assails the European visitors when, in a key passage of *Passage to India*, they find themselves in the Malabar caves. 'For the first time', writes Pasolini in *Odore dell'India*, 'I had the impression that Catholicism did not coincide with the world...the separation of [these] two entities was so unexpected and violent that it constituted a kind of trauma....Religious liberty was a kind of void that created a sense of vertigo in me'.

The attraction to 'other' civilizations experienced by Pasolini and Forster, as well as the profound scorn they felt for the social conventions of their respective countries, set the

stage, as it were, for a still deeper affinity between the British novelist and the Italian poet. For these sentiments reflected, and fueled, a shared vision of homosexuality in which the homosexual 'other' is inevitably someone of another world whose very being calls into question social conventions. It is here, finally, that we come back to *Maurice*. For, at the most profound level, Forster's novel embodies, gives life to, this vision. And if Pasolini welcomed the novel with such poetic insight and passionate enthusiasm—if, in fact, he was the only contemporary critic to do so—it may well be because this vision struck such a resonant chord within him. While other critics dismissed *Maurice* as an irrelevant period piece, Pasolini, instead, saw in this work of imagination the confirmation of his deepest beliefs and impulses. In teasing out these impulses, Pasolini went to the heart of the novel even as articulated issues that would not be voiced by Anglo-Saxon critics for at least a decade.

In *Maurice*, Forster gives flesh to this vision of homosexuality through the evolution, the sentimental education, of its title character. At the beginning of the novel, Maurice is the most ordinary of middle-class Englishmen living the most ordinary of lives. Raised by his mother in the suburbs, he is not particularly bright, or gifted, or insightful. Without thinking he endorses the social prejudices and intolerance of his class. But in one critical respect Maurice is different: that is, although he is unaware of what this difference implies, he is attracted to men rather than women. As an undergraduate at Cambridge, however, he begins to understand what this attraction means. In the rarified atmosphere of the university, he falls in love with a young esthete named Clive. The two young men pursue an intense friendship for a number of years; but, at Clive's urging, the friendship remains 'spiritual' and 'idealized'—that is, platonic. Ultimately, though, Clive has a conversion of sorts; while in Greece, becomes convinced that he is fundamentally heterosexual and decides to marry. A devastated Maurice must endure a long period of suffering and loneliness. But finally his intense longing for a 'friend' to rescue him from his solitude is answered. In the course of a visit to Clive and his new wife, the young gamekeeper of their estate, Alec, appears at the window of Maurice's room. For the first time in his life, Maurice enjoys a night of passion. But after this momentous event, Maurice—terrified, perhaps, of everything this encounter represents—flees from Alec. Still, after days of anguish, he agrees to meet Alec one more time and the two young men once again make love. It is at this point that Maurice finally acknowledges his deepest desires. Not only does he accept the physical side of his nature—that is, his passion for Alec—but, also, something else that is almost as scandalous: that is, the fact that his partner comes from another class. After telling Clive about his new life, he disappears with Alec. Clive is left to the shallow marriage and conventional existence he has so deliberately chosen.





Predictably, as a posthumous novel by one of the acknowledged masters of modern British fiction, the publication of *Maurice* evoked enormous interest in literary circles. Pasolini was by no means the only reviewer drawn to Forster's novel. But the many reviews that greeted its publication only underscore, I think, the originality and bravery that characterizes his discussion of the novel. To begin with, his admiration for *Maurice* offered the sharpest of contrasts with the general air of condemnation that greeted Forster's novel. Again and again, *Maurice* was compared to Forster's acknowledged masterpieces—that is, *Passage to India* and *Howard's End*—and found wanting. 'What a gulf of maturity and discipline lies between the tenuousness of this book and the expansive wisdom of the great work which was to follow it a decade later', mused John Cronin in the *Irish Press*. *Maurice*, said Water Allen, was not only the 'least of Forster' but a 'painful demonstration of his limitations as a novelist'. Deeming the novel 'ill-written, humorless and deeply embarrassing', Philip Toynbee went so far as to declare that *Maurice* should never have been published: 'this depressing work', he insisted, 'isolates and concentrates the worst of Forster's faults and is almost totally devoid of his great virtues'.

It is difficult to say if, or to what extent, the generally harsh reception accorded *Maurice* reflected a homophobic unease with the subject of the novel. It is true that a number of reviewers could not resist a telling, homophobic, pun: that is, they called the novel a 'fairy tale'. And a similar sense of homophobic unease and prejudice seemed to pervade the oft-voiced suggestion that—as if every novelist did not have his/her ups and downs—*Maurice* would actually diminish Forster's reputation. In fact, American novelist Cythia Ozick made the homophobia behind this strange judgment crystal clear. Deeming *Maurice* an 'infantile' and 'make-believe' novel 'about what the universe does not intend', she confidently predicted that *Maurice* would devalue Forster's humanism by revealing that its sources were 'narrowly personal'—i.e., homosexual.

It was not until the 1980s, in fact, that, under the pressure of Gay Liberation and the advent of gay studies, Forster's reputation began to revive from the blow it had received a decade earlier. As it did so, his homosexuality moved from the periphery of his *oeuvre*—where earlier critics had confined it—to the center. Instead of marginalizing his homosexuality, critics now tried to analyze the particular cast it conferred upon all his work. (The culmination of this tendency was probably the publication, in 1997, of an anthology of essays—entitled, significantly,

Queer Forster—devoted to what the editors described as a 'revised understanding of Forster's fiction'.) These changing evaluations of Forster's work inevitably involved new attitudes and interpretations concerning *Maurice*. An important example of this change was Robert K. Martin's 1983 essay entitled 'Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*'. Breaking ranks sharply with earlier critics, in his

essay Martin suggested that *Maurice* was less concerned with the dichotomy between homosexuality and heterosexuality than with competing visions—embodied in the contrast between Clive and Alec—of homosexuality. As Martin himself made clear, his interpretation was sparked by an observation made by Forster in his terminal note to the novel: Maurice, observed the author, was the 'direct result' of a visit to Edward Carpenter—a nineteenth century thinker whom Forster described as 'a socialist who ignored industrialism and a simple-lifer with an independent income and a Whitmannic poet...[and] a believer in the Love of Comrades'.⁷ Elaborating upon Carpenter's influence upon *Maurice*, Martin argued that Alec embodies the kind of direct, simple, and egalitarian 'love of comrades' espoused by the Whitman-like homosexual and socialist. For Alec, as for Carpenter, homosexuality is primarily instinctively physical, natural, and free of class distinctions. It is no accident that in contrast to Clive—who, like Forster, is at home in the cloistered atmosphere of Cambridge—Alec belongs to the world of nature, to the untrammelled spaces (what Forster calls the 'greenwood') on the margins of civilization.

The changing interpretations of *Maurice* exemplified in Martin's essay are, of course, interesting in their own right as well as for what they indicate about an evolving cultural context. But, like the initial reception generated by *Maurice*, they also serve to underscore both the literary acumen, as well as the moral bravery, that Pasolini brought to his review in 1972.

The distance that separates Pasolini from other contemporary reviewers of *Maurice* is evident from the outset of his 1972 essay. For, unlike virtually all other critics, he is intent on discussing *Maurice* in its own right and not in the context of Forster's oeuvre. His literary frame of reference does not consist of Forster's other novels but, rather, bears on the work of major poets and writers of the early twentieth century: Osip Mandelstam, Marcel Proust, Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau. Unequivocally placing *Maurice* in this august company, Pasolini declares the novel to be nothing less than a 'masterpiece'. And, he continues, if we do not recognize *Maurice* as such, it is not because of the novel itself but, rather, because of the fact that a 'puritan society' delayed its publication. 'Masterpieces discovered or published with delays', he reflects, 'never manage to "act" as such in our consciousnesses'.

Pasolini considers *Maurice* a 'masterpiece' for several reasons. One of these, certainly, comes from the novel's literary qualities. Indeed, there is a certain irony in the fact that, unlike Forster's many Anglo-Saxon critics, Pasolini—who came from a very different linguistic and literary tradition—is concerned with the literary stratagems at work in *Maurice*. He is especially concerned with an issue that had long preoccupied him in both literary and cinematic terms: that is, the ways in which the representation of subjectivity conditions how we see, and





interpret, the world. He points out, for example, that while the first part of the novel reflects the world as seen through Maurice's eyes, once Clive enters the picture Forster manages to keep us poised 'midway' between the viewpoint(s) of the two friends. So, too, does he explore the way(s) in which Maurice's psychological evolution changes perceptions of the world surrounding him. In other words, Forster's portrait of the bourgeoisie becomes ever more damning as Maurice slowly realizes that the people around him, whose values he once automatically endorsed, are truly 'monsters'. While the first two thirds of the novel describe 'the Puritanism and hypocrisy of [Maurice's] perfect society almost with love, suddenly, *without changing style*, [Forster] describes this same society with a scorn laced with a definitive and total condemnation'.

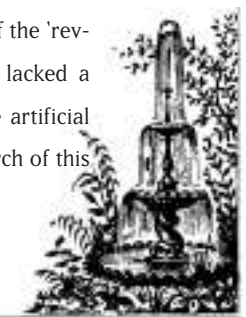
This 'condemnation' brings us to the core of the novel: that is, its portrait of a young homosexual coming of age in a homophobic society. It is this core that evokes Pasolini's greatest enthusiasm; and it is also here that his views differ most sharply from those of other contemporary critics of *Maurice*. To begin with, unlike those who felt the story was no longer relevant in the relatively liberal climate of the 1970s, Pasolini deemed its tale absolutely contemporary. Declaring that the story of Maurice 'could be repeated identically in the England of today', he insisted that it could also take place 'even in nations where the Napoleonic code (that doesn't consider homosexuality as such as a crime) is in force. The petite bourgeoisie can be nothing other than racist: it will always hate Jews, gypsies, homosexuals or people who (as the non English Himmler put it) "live lives unworthy of being lived".' Nor is it only the relevance of the novel that evokes Pasolini's enthusiasm. Above all, he is taken with Forster's implicit endorsement of the relationship between Alec and Maurice. Pointing ahead to the main thesis of Martin's essay, Pasolini, too, places two contrasting views of homosexuality at the heart of the novel. Unlike Martin, however, he approaches this question less as a literary critic than as a poet. That is, he does not merely analyze the contrasting views of homosexuality embedded in *Maurice*. Rather, he denounces, with a poet's intuition and passion, the supposedly spiritual and platonic relationship between Clive and Maurice. Scornfully dismissing their relationship as 'dull and repressed', he tells his readers that it evokes in him the anguished 'sense of a youth thrown away without enjoying what is best in it: sexual relations'.

In contrast to the 'repressed' love of Clive and Maurice stands, of course, the fully realized physical love of Clive and Alec. Welcoming this relationship with an enthusiasm and courage not found in any other reviewer, Pasolini also places it in a political framework not found elsewhere. Thus, for example, while other reviewers complained about Maurice's 'ordinary' nature, Pasolini maintains that Maurice had to begin by being a 'conservative'—what Pasolini deems a 'Fascist in the English manner'—precisely because Forster wanted to demon-

strate the change that occurs in him when he meets Alec and realizes the hollowness of the class values that had formerly ruled his life. For similar reasons, Pasolini also takes issue with those critics who suggested that Alec's inferior social status was 'irrelevant'. Insisting that the fact that Alex comes from another class was, instead, absolutely necessary, Pasolini maintains that in loving Alec's body—in accepting his 'otherness'—Maurice undergoes a political conversion of sorts. 'Because', he says, 'it is the first time that [Maurice] accepts and admits loving a body, the social class in which this body is lived is accepted and admitted as a revelation'. This 'revelation' is one in which the values of the dominant class are 'routed and desecrated to the point of dissolution'. Nor does Pasolini's political reading of Maurice end there. Placing Forster's novel into the kind of broad historical context associated with, say, Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, Pasolini suggests that Alec implicitly embodies the 'phantasm' of socialism, soon to erupt in Russia, that terrorized the English bourgeoisie at the time Forster wrote *Maurice*. Revealing the 'unreality' of the class conventions formerly accepted by Maurice, Alec, says Pasolini, enters his lover's life not only as a 'mysterious wind of love...but as a revolutionary force'.

Viewing *Maurice* from a literary, sexual and political perspective, Pasolini arguably went more deeply into the novel than any other reviewer or critic. At the same time, his review suggested some of his own deeply-felt impulses: his scorn for the 'spiritual' relationship of Maurice and Clive pointed to his life-long wariness in the face of sexual repression and hypocrisy just as his enthusiasm for the passion experienced by Maurice and Clive revealed the defiant courage he had always exhibited where his own homosexuality was concerned. For, in the end, of course, Pasolini's review was not only about Forster's novel but, also, about himself. His discussion of *Maurice* reveals not only the passion that he brought to his literary reviews but also the deeply personal—and in this case thinly veiled autobiographical—impulses that run throughout them. Indeed, if Pasolini waxed so enthusiastic about *Maurice*, if he uncovered threads hidden to other eyes, it is at least in part because Forster's novel echoed, reinforced, some of his most deeply felt sentiments.

In terms of such sentiments, the nexus between (homo)sexuality and politics that Pasolini discerns in the background of *Maurice* is of particular importance. For it points to one of Pasolini's deepest—and, perhaps, most disturbing—impulses. That is, throughout his life, he not only sought young men who, like Alec, came from another 'class' but, also, he explained and justified this quest in ideological terms. By the 1960s and 1970s, the virtual collapse of Marxist hopes ensured that the bodies of these young men could no longer be seen in terms of the 'revolutionary' force that Pasolini ascribes to Alec. But, in his view, if such bodies lacked a 'revolutionary' force, they still possessed an 'authenticity' that had been lost in the artificial world of contemporary consumer capitalism that prevailed in modern Europe. In search of this





'authenticity' Pasolini ventured ever farther going from the peasants of Friuli to the sub-proletarian slums of Rome and, finally, to 'primitive' lands of the Middle East and North Africa. But, in the year before his death, the poet bitterly acknowledged that his search for 'authentic' bodies, for a world untouched by the 'false' values of the present, was doomed to failure. No place, he declared, was exempt from the relentless tide of consumer capitalism that destroyed all 'joy' even as it turned everything, including bodies, into merchandise. It was at this point, of course, that he made his last film, *Salò*. Based on a novel by the marquis de Sade, *Salò* makes clear the death of the dream that Pasolini had nourished for years: it portrays a ferocious and totally unreal world where even the most beautiful and innocent bodies are reduced to merchandise to be used and discarded at will.

Long before Pasolini acknowledged the failure of his quest for authenticity, it had become clear that the nexus of sexuality and ideology that he posited throughout his life—a nexus that he locates, as if seen through a palimpsest, in *Maurice*—was deeply problematical. The quest for the homosexual 'other' pursued by Pasolini—as it had been pursued by Gide and Forster before him—was itself challenged by changing political and sexual perspectives. Even leftists sympathetic to the poet felt that the poet's insistence on 'primitive' or 'archaic' societies had a 'reactionary' and 'regressive' cast. For their part, women—and this was at a time of an emerging feminist movement—were frequently disturbed by a view of sexuality that seemed to exclude them and to confine them to their traditional role as mothers.

Perhaps the most telling challenge to Pasolini's view of homosexuality, however, came from a gay perspective. For example, in an important 1977 essay entitled, significantly, 'Against Pasolini', Giovanni Dall'Orto implicitly suggests that Pasolini's quest for 'authenticity'—seen in terms of male bodies—masked a widely-shared, and deeply negative, homosexual fantasy. At the heart of this fantasy stands an idealized and virile 'other' who—like Alec in *Maurice* or the many attractive male figures in Pasolini's films—comes from another class, another world, another civilization. Describing this fantasy, Dall'Orto goes so far as to suggest that the 'desire' of an adult bourgeois male for a younger person of inferior social status is tantamount to what he calls a 'racist' desire for an 'instinctive animalism stripped of intelligence, for a brutal (and hence powerfully virile) action—for a force of nature which is pure and male'.⁸ Chosen solely

for his body and his masculinity, the 'other' is usually denied not only the powers of speech but even the contours of a real self. In embodying this paradigm, says Dall'Orto, Pasolini's entire work can be seen as a 'monument to the homosexual imaginary'. In his view, the poet 'dared to speak about what millions of homosexuals do in silence. He gave a voice (and, in his work, a life) to wide-spread erotic fantasies'.

The 'erotic fantasy' described in terms of Pasolini takes us back, of course, to

Maurice even as it points to the deepest layers of the affinities linking the British novelist to the Italian poet. For the novel that elicits such praise and enthusiasm from Pasolini is, above all, a particularly British version of the erotic fantasy that Dall'Orto locates at the heart of Pasolini's work. Alec may have slightly more personality or depth than many of the male figures of desire that populate Pasolini's cinema. Still, he too is a being of another 'class' marked, above all, by a 'splendid and virile body'. Appearing, as if in a dream, at Maurice's window, he resembles a desired phantom evoked by the force of Maurice's longing and solitude. A man of few words, his only wish is to 'share' (i.e., to make love) with the young bourgeois.

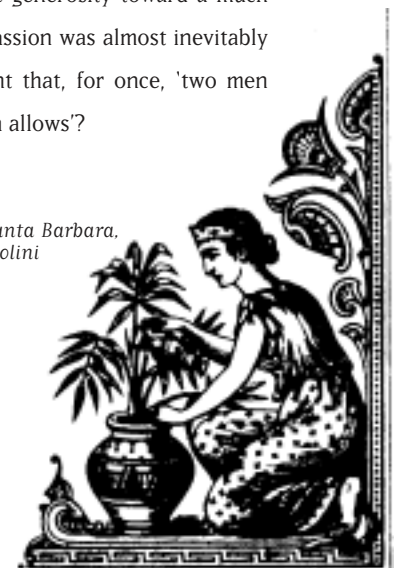
Like many fantasies, *Maurice* ends, of course, on a happy note as Maurice and Alec vanish into the bosom of nature where, one supposes, they will 'live happily ever after'. And, indeed, Foster—who had given violent and disturbing endings to some of his most notable short stories about homosexual love (like *Maurice*, such stories were published posthumously)—felt it imperative that the lovers of *Maurice* meet a happy end. He was determined, he wrote in the terminal note added to his novel, 'that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood'.⁹ One can well understand Forster's desire that, for once,

⁹ E.M. Forster, *Maurice*, 250.

homosexual love triumph over all obstacles. But the happy end he so desired has rarely satisfied others. It is not only recent critics who find it lacks credibility. Forster's friend and contemporary, Lytton Strachey, also thought the end unconvincing. In an oft-cited letter to Forster dated March 12, 1914 Strachey remarked that he found Forster's 'Sherwood Forest' ending 'mythical'.

And what of Pasolini? In this respect, as in so many others, his discussion of *Maurice* seems to stand alone. For if other reviewers made a point of criticizing or even mocking the novel's conclusion, he remains silent on this issue. How are we to interpret this curious silence? Was it possible that he thought the conclusion of the novel of little moment? Did he find it unconvincing—and remained silent out of his characteristic generosity toward a much admired author? Or, could it be that the poet—a man for whom passion was almost inevitably shadowed by transgression and death—was moved by the thought that, for once, 'two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows'?

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→ ILLUSTRATION BY EUNKYUNG KANG

GAYATRI SPIVAK, INTERVIEWED BY OSCAR GUARDIOLA-RIVERA (Oxford, June 2006)

Oscar Guardiola-Rivera: At this point in your life, in your career, how would you cast yourself?

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: I have always had great difficulty casting myself, surely it is others who cast me. I think what I really do is teach. I don't ever have a sense that I do anything other than teach. I think it's very important to teach, to try to change minds. Rearrangement of desires, as I say, you know, at the two ends of the spectrum. At one end, it's a very hard thing, trying to develop habits and rituals of democracy, in the largest sector of the electorate, which is the poorest of the rural poor, whose votes are bought, in what is called the world's largest democracy, India. So I'm a teacher there, and I'm a teacher at the other end of the spectrum, in the most powerful university in the most powerful city in the world. And there I think it's extremely necessary to dislodge, again rearrangement of desires, you don't change minds so easily, to dislodge the conviction that one can help, to dislodge the conviction that lasting help is so easy. The American habit of helping which leads only to a reputation of generosity on the part of the helper, you know this is a scary thing. The help involves political and economic transformations of kinds which are not very salutary. And in Columbia University students do not always know this. They are eager to step into the "International Civil Society". I'm just going to Bangalore to talk about Law and Social movements, and I see, like you, a very good person who has prepared some questions for me, and I'm interested. This is an Indian city, I've written about this city in a piece called *Megacity*. Bangalore is one of the software capitals of India, it's hardly India anymore, its face is turned towards elsewhere. So I'm

interested in saying something there. As it is, I'm amused that they brought me, because I'm a "non-resident Indian", which is the Indian shortening for people of my sort. Why have they asked me to come I can't take myself seriously there. But on the other hand, what I was thinking was, these social movements, they are out of touch, because these social movements that began wonderfully, you know the "new social movements" from the end of the sixties, really in the seventies, they were taken over, they have become the "International Civil Society", a completely different kind of thing. And you know social movements were in the old days defined as extra-state collective actions. What is called "terrorism" is armed social movements, extra state collective action. So I'm going to tackle the question of "social movements" which is a totally absurd expression today given the "International Civil Society". Given the definition of social movements, I'm going to tackle the question of the War on Terror. Now how would you cast me? One does what one can. I don't know how I would cast myself.

OGR: Well let me try two possible representations of you in that context. Some people say that you are just a *provocateur*, that you are trying to provoke a certain reaction. Much in the same way in which people think about philosophers like Nietzsche or others ...

GS: That's not bad is it? To be compared to Nietzsche

Both laugh...

OGR: But then others would say that the intellectual is acceptable only as a provocateur. These argue that whenever the intellectual succeeds, when her words are taken seriously and become, so to speak, a guideline for practice, then there is trouble because if the intellectual succeeds in her call to action she would be bringing catastrophe and/or tyranny, and if not is just another frustration. So there are nowadays these two ideas about the public intellectual, either she is too out of touch, too theoretical, too playful, or else, if taken seriously she is the underlabourer of tyranny...

GS: As I said I'm a teacher. What I try to do, my work, is long term. But in the field of ecological agriculture, trafficking women, living with HIV/Aids, there I'm a short term activist. I join in changing laws and I move people from one place to another so they can now learn not to use chemical fertilisers. So there is a large part of what I do which would not fall into what you are talking about, but in the arena of thinking, my work is long term. I use the shorthand "change minds". But I prefer the phrase "rearranging desires" because "changing minds", my god, I

haven't seen anyone who has changed anyone's mind, and so, there what I want is that these people wouldn't follow. My activities in the classroom would not follow some guidelines given by me, I agree there, I'm like Kant writing to the Jacobins, saying you don't follow... I mean this is some of the problem with international communism, you don't take Marx and bring it in as a system of government, so to an extent, my role as I said in the case of the young Indians, the children, is to produce a different kind of mind. I think that is a very important thing to do. I said, didn't I, that I'm not a leader: you said don't they want you to become a political leader and I explained why not, and I remain... I get the results in unexpected ways and I feel if change really takes hold, then there will be change in general practice. It's a very different kind of work from giving formulas, giving Leninist Universalisms like my friend Zizek, that's not my way.

OGR: Let us move onto your work as a theorist, as an intellectual. Your work seems to move between European-oriented theory (you're well-known as a translator of Jacques Derrida, indeed as a deconstructivist of sorts, but also because of your interest in the work of Karl Marx) and the sort of non-Eurocentric position that some identify with the stance of, say, the South-East Asian Subalternist Group, Latin American Subalternists or Post-colonial Critique in general. People in both camps find this 'trans-cultural' position disorienting, even untenable. They say you either take the side of European (or Euro-American) thinking or else, you denounce it from the position of the global southern subaltern. How does your work relate to this sort of criticism?

GS: You see the thing is I like European stuff. I find Europe interesting, and I chose Europe as an object of investigation. My mother had a masters degree in Bengali literature, I chose to study English. You know, I don't see what the problem is with having Europe as an object of investigation, as you were saying before, why are we, non-Europeans, not allowed to do that? I found that in the 80s, and everybody has forgotten this statement of mine, I found in the very early eighties that in order to study Europe, since I'm basically a modernist, one must also study Europe's colonial adventures very carefully. So I'm just being a good Europeanist in looking at all this colonial stuff.

OGR: But in that sense, if you allow me to intervene, I would say you have been a better European than most Europe-based theorists ...

GS: I would hope so.

OGR: Because the case is that actually very few European theorists, you just mentioned Slavoj Žižek who many of us consider a friend, very few of them actually engage with this other point/countepoint of European history.

GS: No, they don't, except colonial historians. I was once and I won't mention names, but... because I have friends all over the world, but I was somewhere at a very famous centre and I had been invited as a fellow and there were colonial historians. Now, they know everything about colonialism, that's not a problem. The problem with me was that although they know all about colonial history, they really, in spite of the fact that they had many friends in many of those colonies, they could not imagine those folks as really subjects of knowledge, they had some colleagues who were almost as good, indistinguishable from the whites, you know at Oxford and all that, that's a very different thing, but in terms of and if I started naming names I would name names who have become quite famous in anti-colonial war, you know they are close friends, and this is a problem. So you know they were the colonial historians and so I would at once stand for high theory and I would say: "look, think of these people as producers of knowledge and not just as objects of study". In my case Europe is my object of study but I certainly do think of them as subjects of knowledge as well. I don't see that as a huge problem, that doesn't make me Eurocentric, what I don't particularly want to do is sort of anthropologise myself, you know, give little, I mean I could if I wanted to be in bad faith. I could very easily, You don't need an awful lot of learning to persuade a group of European foreigners who want me to be really culturally authentic, to persuade them that I'm culturally authentic, because they are not specialists in the material of India. I talk, or give talks in Bengali on Indian material in India where I can be and I am questioned and judged, where I can be rejected, so that it doesn't just become a union ticket to authenticity. To say in front of whites, "look, look no hands, I'm an Indian!" that's disgraceful. And then I come to Karl Marx. Who told you Karl Marx is a European? I come from West Bengal, so I should know. It is amusing, I once refused to go to a German meeting, they were doing some kind of "What is communism in the future?" type thing and they had all the usual suspects: Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser, you name it, Balibar, they are all in the central section, with nobody from Cuba or China, I would have been the only person from an actually existing left-front government, right, but I was put in a session with one of my former students, an immigrant in Germany of Spanish origin who is in fact doing work interviewing migrant women. I have nothing against her, I like her very much but I really minded that they didn't think I was good enough to be with the big people talking about new communisms.

OGR: Why do you think that is the case?

GS: Because they didn't think I would have anything to say except like you have asked me, about immigrant experience. I'm not an immigrant, as I said before, my postcolonial work is not about that, although I think its good to look at issues like non-access to citizenship, this business about undocumented immigrants, domestic violence ... these are issues that I'm very interested in, but I myself don't identify as a minority in the metropolis. They were actually defining me as only that, and so I thought I'm not going to go, because they don't have anybody there. They forget about knowing about Marxist theory, where it actually comes from. Bengali communism is actually pre-Bolshevik, you know in fact it was a Bengali communist who established the first communist party of Mexico, so in what way would this be considered? And of course there is Mao who is a different thing, and of course Mao has influenced the... and Michael Hardt thinks I must be a Maoist because I am interested in the rural area. Nonetheless, you know, it is important to see that the various traditions, despite what Benedict Anderson has written, and it is a fine book, in *Imagined Communities*, for instance the tradition of Asian communism has worked very hard at wrenching Marx from his European provenance. I grew up in this place with a very strong intellectual left tradition, so am I supposed to think I am being Eurocentric if I apply Marxist analysis?

OGR: I can think of similar experiences, obviously being Latin American and being brought up at the time when liberation theology and sociology were at their peak, of course, one becomes very familiar with a certain leftist tradition. But then, when one comes here, here being Britain, Europe, America, it's as if that experience of Marxism, of leftism or emancipatory thought never actually existed. If one tries to find a good book on it, that would be very difficult, here in Britain perhaps Young's *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction* or Aricó and Lowith and that's that. There is no consideration that this practice and thought of Marxism and Leftism is part of the tradition of worldwide struggle, much less that it could have something to teach to the mainstream tradition of liberatory struggle, why is that?

GS: Well, Why, because Europe has always been in power. In the detritus of the Soviet experiment, the entire Balkan area wants to be European. I moderated a session called 'Are We Postcolonial?' set up by the teachers of Slavic and East-European literatures and so on, and I was just in Bulgaria: post communism and post colonialism, post socialism and post colonialism so that particular stuff is actually a longing. I on the other hand have never been taken seriously within the tradition of western Marxism, the only person who has at all taken me seriously is Antonio Negri, but Negri's own work is very different from mine, so in fact I speak as a certain kind of Marxist, I come *from* that intellectual left tradition. It's an old tradition. I was first handed *Das Kapital* by my mother's brother, a member of the legislative assembly

from the old Communist Party of India. So, I speak as a Marxist. I'll tell you a funny story which many people have heard but never gotten into print. When I published the translation of *De La Grammatologie*, my mother read the introduction because I had written it, and although she was an MA in Bengali, and obviously found it difficult to read, she never complained of the fact that it was difficult, she tried to understand as much as she could. But then she asks me a very difficult question: "but dear, how are you going to reconcile your communism with this?" and of course the word in our part of the world is not Marxism but communism, and so I told Derrida this story and Derrida says to me, "Gayatri, you should listen to your mother".

Both Laugh...

GS: To an extent this exchange between mother and daughter tells you something about how we think we are being Eurocentric or doing European theory, when we actually are within communism. I'm not a kind of romantically bedazzled person from the communist party at home, that's not what I'm talking about, that's another story which I'll tell another day. On the other hand, you have the feminist impulse. I have learnt that it has to interrupt Marxism not because of these sterile fights between men and women on both the British and the US New Left. That has left me quite cold, because it's really true that in spite of all their victories, the Euro-US is not the whole world, even New York is not the whole world! (*laughter...*)

OGR: The ethical common sense these days seems to be a thinking of relation as embrace, an act of love in which one learns from the other. But, as you have pointed out, that is not at all the same thing as wanting to speak for an oppressed community. Ethics is not a problem of knowledge but something like a call of relationship without relationship. This means that the goal of ethics is not to step into the other's shoes, to become the spokesperson for the oppressed, nor worse yet, to pretend to let them speak for themselves. Rather, the goal of ethics and politics is that the subaltern, the universal exception as such, might cease to exist. This entails a revolutionary change, but apparently not the kind of change that will be brought about by traditional means. If so, what kind of revolution are we talking about? Does it make any sense at all to keep talking about revolution in this context?

GS: Ethics is a big word. I have learned to think that ethics is not just the name of doing the right thing, or being good to others. Now, there is one kind of ethical thinking which actually thinks that, I mean very developed theories, which think that's what ethics is: doing the correct thing, telling the truth, thinking of the greatest good for the greatest number, all of this kind of stuff. Then you get into "virtue", which has an idea of the mental theatre which is uncomplicated, so that's certainly a

good way of thinking, and that's certainly the stronger way of thinking. Folks who think like that sometimes take the pedagogical part of ethical training for granted, they believe that what they have as a result of their liberal educational gains, is more or less what everybody has, so they are obliged to cut corners. Especially today. In the old days you could always talk about "savages" and "raw men" but today, you know that's not politically correct, so you have to cut corners, you have to talk about political liberalism rather than philosophical liberalism. Take Charles Taylor; in a horrifying essay called "Rationality" he in fact gives Europe "rationality" and says everyone else has "consistency". But that's not what I'm talking about. Another way of thinking would say that what we call the ethical, that is to say, being slanted toward the other, is just a description of being human. In that area if one says that, that is just the "event of the ethical". "Event" is perhaps not the best word but I haven't thought of another one so let's just use it as a bad word that's filling in the place for some word. So let's just say that I am using this stop-gap word. If we think of this as event, there is no guarantee that it will be directed towards doing right doing the good thing, etc, some kind of result. It can even be, that you know, literature sometimes gives us a sense, and remember I'm a literary critic, it can be the relationship between Capt. Ahab and Moby Dick, to kill the other person, to the extent that you can completely identify with it/her/him... Carl Schmitt... but you know I would rather go to Herman Melville ... it can be all kinds of relationships, not necessarily vectored towards truth telling, good doing, like virtuous, utilitarian or consequentialist versions of the ethical situation. In that situation, in that event, there is a second step which is ethics as task, so that, in fact, you can only think the ethical because the other thing is almost like, its not ontological but its almost like, what happens. You can only think the ethical in terms of accountability, responsibility, task. Let me explain that in relation to the work I do with some schools in India. That's an intellectual challenge, because after reading a good deal of Rawls I said to myself one day, will I be able to, because I was disaffected from that kind of stuff, and I mean although Levinas has deep political problems, and very poor gender politics, but nonetheless that's the stuff that appealed to me, so with all of these provisos, but they were so confined to their own community, I mean, in terms of Levinas' support of Israel on the one hand, and this Eros... whatever its called, the chapter which I know very well... it is clear that I am not saying anything insulting by saying that Levinas' sexual experience was probably confined to a very affectionate and fine exercise of sexuality called the missionary position, I can't learn anything about sexuality from such a persons' lucubrations about the role of woman in the household. I found myself in these tribal areas, it wasn't so clear, but I'm just narrativising it. A thought came: would I recognise the ethical subject if indeed they were shitting under the trees, if they were killing people, because the parents and elder brothers of my students are murderers, bus looters? I'm with them. If I started telling you these grizzly stories you would be appalled, so

they have so little confidence in the whole vote business or even education, So what happens is that they are Nietzscheans in a sense. Remember Nietzsche's description of academic freedom: a whole room where everyone is moving their right hands mostly, and one person is doing the talking, and that is called academic freedom, they are like pre-critical Nietzscheans. What the hell happens: they say let's loot a bus, there's at least some money in that. So I asked myself: will I be able to recognise the ethical subject if it didn't come dressed like you and me? So from that point of view I would say ethics as task is a very different kind of thing because what happens is, you know this, this is why you have formed this question in such a way, like who killed who at what battle, you know and what century is part of which war, but your question is exactly that, its very nice, because I can see you know exactly what it is and so you are just turning it into questions, so I will give you back your question in answer form. What happens here is that you prepare, like I was saying, habits and rituals of democracy, you prepare the subject to respond to the reflex which is the interruption of the ethical in a situation where knowing and knowing about the problem is not going to lead necessarily to the ethical decision. It may lead you to the correct decision, the sustainable decision, the prudent decision, even the decision that maximises the possibilities of peace, but those are very different kinds of things, they don't lead to a lastingly just situation, nothing lasts, but nonetheless some things last longer than others. Changes have taken place, I mean the fact that you and I are sitting here talking to each other is the result of extraordinary changes, and not just technological changes. I quite often think of my village grandmother who was quite a managerial person, she could read a little but not write, or write a little, but not read, or whichever, I often think, what she would think of her granddaughter, dressed in these kinds of foreign clothes, speaking to a foreign man to whom she is not married, with everything in view (*gesturing to her head and neck*), what kind of sinful situation this would be coded as. Changes have taken place, we have to have this in our heads, some changes do take place and those are the kind of changes one thinks of and prepares for in response to the reflex, that's the ethical interruption. Ethical things are not like the proposition "how are we going to solve the problem of Iraq?" That's not the ethical situation. The ethical problems are "what trouble shall we take in order for us to be able to enter the space of those who produce the reflex?" If the reflex is not produced, then its not really worth doing. You know, I'm just going to my schools in India and there is someone going with me who is a white Englishman, who, he is still not going to go to the actual schools but some of these children have graduated and they are in high-school where this guy is, the former landlord, and so they need to be coached constantly, now how did this happen? He came to study at Columbia and he didn't tell me anything about his plans, that was also part of the project, he had taken seriously what I had written about needing to learn the language if you want, to study the colonial adventure, so

he had decided, OK I want to do 19th century Britain, I need to learn Bengali, this is very unusual, because the British came in through Bengal, so he was learning Bengali, so he got fellowships in Bengali as the historians or anthropologists sometimes do, but literature critics hardly ever do. He went to the American Academy of Indian Studies and got fellowships, and did very well, etc, etc, etc, and since I won't direct a dissertation if a person is not reading the texts in the original, I'm in comparative literature, right, he wrote one chapter on a Bengali novel, interesting stuff, communism and the agrarian problem, so I know the ways in which the reflex came to him although we had not discussed it, I picked up the signs, OK, the Bengali which is good enough to write a chapter is not good enough to teach these Bengali children who are completely disenfranchised, alright, but I'm taking a chance. I said you are going to have to insert yourself into that normality. There is no way you are going to come, and this is not like American students being taken and having a good experience, there is no way they are going to think of you as someone who is constantly going to talk about his home country, that's not why you are going there. No gadgets, no nothing, either you insert yourself into that normality and become just a teacher, or it won't work, and you know we were talking, and I had earned the right to become a little racist, see because they have never seen white people these kids and not necessarily going to like many of the teachers. And I said to him, later I thought this was a racist remark, its good that you're not blonde because it would have created a very bad kind of distance situation. He has to be completely not noticeable to succeed there because its not like international civil society with interpreters and...

OGR: And Flags...

GS: ...and smilingly wearing hijabs because you need to cover your head if you go to Afghanistan, and the next week they are going to Kosovo. It's not like that. It's that long term change for the ethical reflex and while they are a student, they may be Indian tribals it's a different kind of thing, so that's how much trouble you have to take in order to enter that sort of space. I'm not talking about the political, the juridical, the economic, those are crucially important, and we are involved in that, that's why I talked about the agriculture stuff and trafficking in women stuff, but without this one no change will last. That's what Can the subaltern speak was about: that neither the British nor the Hindus involved themselves with the actual subjectship of the women, though the British were unquestionably good in criminalising the widow burning, it became class dependant, so a certain class of women became colonial subjects.

OGR: So, what you are saying is that ethics has a lot to do with unlearning one's own privilege?

GS: Not only that "Unlearning one's own privilege" was a phrase I used before I knew any of this. Unlearning one's own privilege is a narcissistic undertaking. I would now say, "learning to learn from below". Forget about the other one. I mean, you can't unlearn privilege. Back then I had an inadequate concept of the mental theatre. You know this privilege has become millenary, how am I going to unlearn it? On the other hand, I am so different from these other Indian citizens, these tribals, for me to be able to enter into the space where I can, as a teacher, not as a psychoanalyst, that's a very different thing, I'm not talking about transference, I don't know how to do such a thing, and there your friend Žižek should halt a little before he talks so much about psychoanalysis. You can see he hasn't a clue about the extraordinary struggle of transference. We all think that transference is like an analyst/analysand, but in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the way Freud describes transference is like wrestling with an angel. I'm not talking about psychoanalysis, I'm talking about rough and ready, not in the area of the psyche or the metapsychological but in the classroom. In a general way, in order to teach, becoming acquainted with the mental furniture which I am calling desires in the folks you are teaching, that is an excruciating labour, when the cultural class and historical difference and even religious difference (remember they are animists) although I'm an atheist it doesn't matter, produced culture in a certain way. So that is a much harder labour than remaining focused on oneself and unlearning privilege, that was before I knew anything. The tempo of ethics is extremely slow. Remember how much importance I assign to politics, to law, to ecology, all of these I want to be involved in as much as a contentious citizen is, I join in things as much as I can, but this project, and moving towards a relatively lasting just world, that tempo is excruciatingly slow. I mean I'm as practical as I can be. If I want anything that's what I want, you see.

OGR: That's beautiful.

GS: Let me say about deconstruction one thing. See you quoted before *The post-colonial Critic* which came out in '87 or '90 or something. And those are interviews, and you know what I have said about interviews at the beginning of *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and also you know that most of those interviews are given after lectures and things like that when people have found me in various kinds of places, and after lectures is a moment of incredible excitement. I mean you must have given enough lectures to know, incredible lowering of tension, so I wouldn't actually take the statements uttered in *Postcolonial Critic* as those which describe what I think of deconstruction. Deconstruction can't found a programme, that's what I said in there. I think what is more interesting is this, which I found out much later. I'm talking about the book *Voyous* a much later work of Derrida's. I have the picture of the page in front of me,

but I certainly don't have the page number, it's in the second section, where he is talking about how you can do constative definitions of democracy, because he is interested in democracy. I am interested in socialism. His interest, since he was not interested in Marxist analysis of industrial capitalism but rather commercial capital and communism as messianic and so on, his interest was more in democracy, my interest is more in a welfare state model of socialism, in other words when I was talking about ethics, the way you plug in this stuff is the generation of the redistributive impulse. I was talking about other kinds of things, the habits and rituals of democracy but if you shift the focus and you think about generating a redistributive impulse, the impulse to change the politics of one's economics: Everybody talks about immigration, but if you change the politics of the economics of globalisation just slightly so many people wouldn't leave, think of that. Who would think of that, first of all, it's too complicated for those interviewers' brains to think, and, in order for such a change to take place, a change in desires has to take place, and that's not happening. And I remain at work to make that change through the ethical; I'm not uninterested in democracy but I'm more interested in socialism.

On that page, Derrida is talking about the way you can make constative definitions of democracy, where you would look at all the different theories that have come forth and see what would apply or what would not apply, and then he comments, and I know this page well, and he comments, 'as I have been doing in this book. Or, he says you can give the definition and say 'Hey you must really do this, you must really sign up, I'm going to really do this, etc' In other words, and he is not going to say performative, because this is not performative. This one is given in this way, like "sign up!". It's all 'We', there, in the second statement. And then he says "and also have the patience to", and his word is "messianic": have the patience for a messianic waiting. So first of all short term, must do the: sign up!, join!, do it!. I didn't come to what I just told you before by reading this, but I'm influenced by him, I don't know how these things happen, but you can see the similarity there, so then the idea of doing the double bind of the short term and the long term, the waiting, the unexpected, as well as "sign up!, join up!, we must do this!", that's much more the model, the double bind of the short term juridical-political, and the long term waiting.

POETRY

Selected by Artemy Kalinovsky



→ Illustration by Qalandar Memon

POETRY

Qalandar Bux Memon

On late night trains and Yellow Roses.

'A pastoral Utopian', you say!
Is that what I am,
what I am supposedly being,

how I am to bear and carry,
is that the unbeknown
ideal of movement,
my self beginning?

Drunken on late railways
travelling uncomposed,
expanded into hurt
by conceptions of betrayal

moving in on paper,
trying to get close to it,
the hurt, the experience
- it is nearly always beyond.

Hopeless, no?

And the heart,
non-catholic, unconfessing,
yet unable to profess,
a move untenable and unlimited -
divine and unveiled,

it beckons to two kingdoms,
promiscuously, maybe more,
whole worlds,
unnervingly, believe it!

i find it - it is nearly always beyond.

beyond as it pounds in the breast,
revealing,
announcing itself,
becoming.

Is that What I really am,

variegated and disclosed,

to the smell of you yellow roses.

And you - What of you...

'Curls that lark in dooms,
sights that impel movement and
abandon'

what compels you?

Bruce Bond

Two Dreams with a Brief Waking in the Middle

And I saw my mother as she was before, shivering, alive, gilded by our fire in the woods, come to break her history like bread, for now it was my turn to see her through—healthy as she was I knew the greater story, both of us knew—now my turn to puzzle out the ruined language of the dying, while all about me the foliage exhaled its summer flies down the rock path to the Susquehanna. At dusk the earth released a craze of bats above the water where the fish too rose in their hunger, striking air. Illegible, the never repeating cursive, the speed of the river nicked with stars, the stationary stars.

Then I was walking into town and heard familiar voices: a feast with a large bird at the center, a childhood friend igniting with hello. But the others like the night remained aloof, cold even, and I pulled away. Which is when my friend explained the old among us had all decided to die, and I took the black wine of that idea to my mother who said gently it's true: she decided as well. And the blue in her eye dissolved until she was all pupil, entering mine. I too dissolved inconsolable, though strangely held like a cloud dragged over the night it dims, hemmed only in the sparks behind it.



→ Illustration by Marianna Freydlin

Stuart Dischell

Well Till He Too, Fell Ill

Relatives gave him a tortoise shell kitten
 So his days alone would seem less so
 And give his place a girlish presence
 When he returned from work and visits
 With friends who said little until he left.
 Poor man. The fur made him sneeze.
 Strands of it clung to his suits, the house
 Took on a sharpish smell, and his eyes
 Acquired the color red. All agreed
 He seemed run-down. But he never
 Drank. But he never smoked.
 And strayed but once with a holiday kiss.
 Days of ritual and small gestures
 With the added expense of cat food.

Graham Foust

Why I love Country Music

What I wanted to say—the wind ripping up
 and into everywhere—was "Don't say nothing."
 This was not allowed. What I said was "Don't say
 anything." This, too, was not allowed. The wind
 again, ripping up and into everywhere.
 The truth, I knew it: Breath and heaven—one thing.
 A thing for shrieky talk and fearless error.
 A thing about to happen to anyone.

Ed Skoog

All Aboard

Waiting for us to understand, she hides
 before us on the train and names a town
 we lurched through hours ago. Ciudad
 for city. Nothing to be done for now,
 the conductor tells the prostitute trying
 to help. Ma'am, we cannot stop this train.
 Reading in the narrow Amtrak stairway,
 our luggage clerk's white beard drags his pages
 until the lounge attendant gets off work
 to share a joint beside the suitcase rack.
 I sleep upstairs. The trestles shake the stars.
 Outside, the baseball fields stay lit all night,
 and fresh cement is drying on a wall.
 Inside, in blue reflection, our young Marine
 exposes his tattoo, a skull, a rose,
 then tapes back up the bandages they gave him.
 The prostitute is heading home to Newton;
 her mother needs a ride to Wichita;
 which mother caught the Hantavirus sweeping
 empty houses, and, now its oldest survivor,
 the hospital won't charge her, but the ride
 is long and someone has to drive her there.
 When we stop an hour in Albuquerque,
 I walk around and say my morning prayers
 past the blankets on their folding table.
 In all the days that I've been on this train
 speaking to no one, not being spoken to,
 I've listened to the desert's depositions,
 its silent arguments from jealous places.
 The train, seen wholly from an overpass,
 stays silver in its servicing. Downtown
 the people wander in and out of doors.
 Their bank clock spins too fast and makes me late.
 I run the last block waving to the clerk,
 who holds the yellow stoop up to his vest.

BIOGRAPHIES

→ BRUCE BOND's collections of poetry include *Cinder*, *The Throats of Narcissus*, *Radiography*, *The Anteroom of Paradise*, *Independence Days*, and a new volume entitled *Blind Rain* forthcoming from LSU Press. Presently he is Professor of English at the University of North Texas and Poetry Editor for *American Literary Review*.

→ STUART DISCHELL is the author of three collections of poems, *Good Hope Road*, (Viking, 1993), a *National Poetry Series Selection*, *Evenings & Avenues*, (Penguin, 1996) and *2Dig Safe*, (Penguin, 2003).

→ GRAHAM FOUST's third book of poems, *Necessary Stranger*, will be published by Flood Editions in October. He lives in Oakland, California with his wife and son.

→ ED SKOOG was born in Topeka, Kansas, USA, in 1971. His poems have appeared in many U.S. literary journals, including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *New Orleans Review*, and current affairs magazines *The New Republic* and *Slate*. He lives in Southern California.

→ MARIANNA FREYDLIN is an illustrator and costume designer based in New York.

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Dossier:

Contemporary Art from Lebanon

Curated by Walid Sadek

Graphic Design by Rasha Kahil
(inspired by the work of Raed Yassin)



BUILDING WITH

--> By Walid Sadek

This is July 2006. We see destruction. We look at ruins and practice naming. This is Haret Hreik. Or at least, this must be Haret Hreik. This is Hey Al Sillum or at least this must be it. To name a neighborhood in Beirut's southern suburb today requires an act of faith. A ruin cannot carry a name. What was a neighborhood with addresses becomes corpse-like when ruined. And corpses do not have names even if they remain poignantly tangible. In this devastation that is our city, names have become the uttered sounds of our surmising. One may say that the brutality of the Israeli army is a fact we have experienced before. One may also say that the complexity and instability of local Lebanese politics is a fact we have lived with and often died for. One may say that this is part and parcel of our knowledge - with teeth grinding it is our knowledge indeed. And yet what we do not know or at least can never claim as part of our gumption is the act of naming. For naming is always an investment in the future even if we know quite well that names are fated to be abandoned by us as we are fated to be abandoned by places. We name because we cannot but love the future. And although the current war on Lebanon is devastating, it must be said that we have been surmising when naming for quite some time, at least since the early 1990's. Rebuilt from ruins or ruined again, this Lebanon seems like a country

OBSTACLES

where names never seem to linger long enough to become a source of knowledge. The living of names here is often violently interrupted. One may say that Beirut is twofold: A receptacle of abandoned names and an excess of tangibility. It is names afloat over neighborhoods and apartment buildings constructed out of previous rubble, a mix of fragments. Beirut is a city built with impedimenta, namely with obstacles carried like the heavy luggage some of us drag in airports as we envy those who pass us by carrying nothing but a light handbag.

It is told that Ishtar, queen of the heavens, descended into the world of the dead in search of her handsome husband Tammouz (July) taken captive in a world without light, where the dead don robes made of feathers, fly with bat-wings, eat clay and drink mud'. It is also told that Ishtar is finally reunited with her husband under the radiant sun. This is myth. But from the point of view of the older writers and younger image makers grouped in this dossier, it is myth read unevenly. For all write and picture without hope for a resolution, without hope for a future with stable places and referential names. What they do is persist in writing and picturing within proximity, even if not within view, of that supposedly gaping orifice that leads into the under world.

1. From "Nouzoul Ishtar Ila Al A'alam Al Sufl" (Ishtar's descent into the under world) in *Malahem Wa Asateer Min Al Adab Al Sami* (Epics and Myths from Semitic Literature), Translated by Anis Freiha, Dar Annahar, Beirut, 1967, p. 207.

FROM IMAGE TO CORPSE; a short story about 15 years of the 1990's

--> By Walid Sadek



1. The Age of Fascination

A few years ago and already an epoch away, there stood, stretched across a billboard at the far end of Martyr's Square in downtown Beirut, a large image showing the future of that square. In its location the image appeared as a terminal statement: A destination, constructed according to the conventions of pictorial perspective, into whose visual pyramid precipitated what was then an ambiguous terrain that began somewhere beneath the Fouad Chehab bridge and tended toward the sea, hesitantly and without purpose. Landed, that image did more than simply announce a promising future for an arrested terrain: It inhaled the actuality of the terrain through the funnel of its converging lines and into the future of its own visual depth. Rather than promise a picture of a feasible development out of current conditions, that image stood as an accomplished future looking down upon a protracted and derelict present turned dumb and tangible because reduced to a primary materiality of dust and asphalt. The radical disjunction between the visible present and the visual future promoted that image to the rank of a vision wholly unrelated to the promise of representation. For although perspectively constructed, that image did not provide an adequate

1. The operative word here is 'adequate' and is used in the sense of a reproduction of a 'possible' world. See Panofsky, Erwin, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Zone Books, 1926, p. 29.

2. Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p.16.

reproduction of the visible world'. Nor did it address a supposedly monocular observer grounded at the center of that visible world and unto whose eye everything is expected to converge as to the vanishing point of infinity¹. Rather, it was an image that hovered above the ground and was unconcerned with the visible world around it. And although it pretended to visualize a future, it did so without concern for an observer abandoned and without a clue on how to bridge the obvious but un-addressed lack of kinship between the viewing ground and the vision it offered.

If such an image may be said to hover it is because it appeared irreferential. An image of a future city rid of secrets. A transparent city schematically arranged for the free circulation of notations. A city radically oblivious to that specifically urban nourishment called secrets: Nourishment that prods mistakes, solicits misunderstandings and thus offers one the possibility to speak, divulge and so perhaps be redeemed.

Yet the reason for the forceful impression left by that image is elsewhere. Its irreferentiality to the actuality of the city was an index of the exorbitant but unavoidable cost of Beirut's inevitable subscription to a global economy capable of liquefying cities into exchangeable currency. In deploying an emblematic visual totality, that image announced, unequivocally, that the city ought to enter into this economy if it is to edge away from the brink of conflict and crisis. A rather haughty statement: For while the city is called upon to pay the costly dues of that subscription, that image stood untouched, in itself the fruit of an immaculate conception with an already accomplished future.

Exorbitant as it may be, the annunciation of that image could not be ignored. For it may be said that it afforded the viewer a rather perverse pleasure. In its irreferentiality it appeared like a divinity, an event inspiring awe and dread, both enviable and fearsome. It was even embarrassing because so radically in disjunction with the tangible present: A resurrection before which any inquiry about the provenance of the resurrected is overwhelmed by the spectacle and collapses thereafter. For it mattered not whence it came. What mattered was that it managed to appear untaxed by the gateways of past, present and future. Resurrected, it stood, visible but persistently unintelligible: An image

that folded the accumulated past underneath a purely visual preface, a prologue without a speech, an event without consequences, divorced and unbetrothed.

That image, one may add, was malefic. Not only because unconcerned with the passions of redemption and indifferent to the binary structures of authenticity and superficiality but also, and more importantly, because it fascinated. And when fascinated, we the viewers, slip into a temporal suspension and feel as if bathing in the plenitude of an object-less perception. If one may speak here of a near death, then a painless death it is, without corporeal protest and therefore ecstatic, in the etymological sense of being out of place. When fascinated, as when facing that image, we are in the presence of a figure without a ground, an apparition with no background. The experience of the durability of the world and the concomitant experience of an elastic temporality, which usually allow us to speak of a past and of a future turn, when ek-static, compact and immediate. The blissful and a-corporeal pleasure that this image affords is precisely one of eliding the bipolar pull of time. It is then of no accident that when removed, that image left no crumbs behind on the floor of the actual terrain. Having promised nothing, it left nothing behind. When it appeared it did so immaculately, never addressing our expectations. And when it passed away, it did so imperceptibly. Yet if a trace it did leave behind, then it must be all the walking dead, once enamored by the fascination of this unannounced visitor, surviving now in the midst of a disappointment.

To theorize this image as a vision is to propose that it stood for more than just an emblem of a discourse on reconstruction. Much more than a mere visual concoction, this image staged a moment of fascination in which the future claims of reconstruction and the recollected past of common heritage collapse. But how is it that an image can stage a presence so forceful that an accomplished future is taken for granted and a past is presumed and overlooked. In other words, what is the structure of fascination?

Now a certain man named Lazarus fell sick and died. He was the brother of Mary and her sister Martha of Beit A'anya. Upon hearing of the death, Jesus said unto his disciples: *“Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awake him out of his sleep.”*³ Upon arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already. Jesus therefore *“groaning in himself”*⁴ came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, take away the stone. But Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Jesus, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days.⁵ Jesus insisted. They took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth⁶. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, loose him and let him go⁷.

This story is unique in the Christian New Testament for unlike the resurrecting of Widow Na'een's son⁸ and of Ya'eer's daughter⁹, it tells of a resurrection wherein Jesus calls back a dead from behind the veil of the visible, from the moonless depth of a grave. The raising of Lazarus from the dead is told in the Gospel according to St. John. Little else is told of him except for what I consider to be a telling note, a coda, in the chapter that follows informing the reader that he who was dead sat at the table for supper along with Jesus, his disciples, Mary and Martha¹⁰. It is precisely this added information, this coda which allows us to think and theorize accordingly the structure of fascination. Let us recapitulate:

He who was dead came forth. But none asked whether he who is now alive is the same he who once was living. Lazarus returns. That is all. Resurrected, he re-surges into the familiar and familial seat he once occupied before his temporary death. With his sisters, Jesus and disciples, he sits at the table for supper. It is only with this coda, this supper with the resurgent Lazarus now in the familial seat that the resurrection is made complete. With this coda, continuity is reinstated in the place of rupture where grief laid heavily for four days. The object of grief re-surges to dispel the traces of that grief. What is remarkable in this story of a resurrection is that it stages the appearance of the radically other in the place of the familial and the guise of the familiar. Instead of

mourning and remembrance, both of which are activities that involve temporal layering and hybrid chronologies, a presence is reinstated. Returning from the invisibility of the grave, Lazarus sits visible supposedly fulfilling the promise that a return is not only possible but that it can also measure the distance back home. He returns to occupy his place seemingly unhindered by the passage in time through the gate of death, namely across the threshold of radical otherness. The resurrected Lazarus is fascinating because he returns unhindered, or in more precise terms, because he appears.

The image that stood stretched at the far end of Martyr's Square also appears. Moreover, it appears in downtown Beirut, in the centre of the city. The feast that it announces is open to all and without entrance fee if not that of fascination. And yet what is this figure appearing in the place of Lazarus, what is this returnee unto the seat of the familial? In parallel we ask, what is this Lazarian image, this appearance in Beirut's city centre? And is it possible for us to approach and live with it while maintaining still our belief in the veracity of the relationship between figure and ground?

2. The Ways of the Corpse

Concerning Lazarus, the gospel according to St. John provides no further mention. Nor do the other three gospels. Rather, it is in the work of novelist Nikos Kazantzakis, in his *The Last Temptation of Christ*¹¹ that the story of Lazarus is given a poignant and disturbing extension. In the novel, Lazarus does not vanish behind that posthumous supper. Rather, he is described and given corporeality. In other words, the fascinating appearance of the radically other in the place of the familial and familiar is approached and pursued. In the novel we read that the people of Beit A'anya congregated in and around the house of Mary and Martha to see and touch this man returned to life, this revenant: *“Lazarus was sitting tired, leaning against the darkest corner in his home. Light bothered him. His legs, arms and belly were swollen and greenish like a four day old corpse.*

11. Kazantzakis, Nikos, (1951) *The Last Temptation of Christ*, translated by Osama Manzalgi as الإغواء الأخير للمسيح, Al Mada, Syria, 1995.

His bloated face was chapped, oozing a white slightly yellowish liquid staining the shroud that clung tight to his skin and wrapped around him. At first he exuded a foul stench. Those approaching him had to shut close their nostrils. Gradually the stench subsided leaving only the smell of earth and incense. Every once in a while, he would move his hand and undo some of the grass entangled in his hair and beard while his sisters washed the dirt and worms still stuck to his body.”¹² Moreover, upon receiving Jesus come to visit,

12. Ibid. p. 516

“Lazarus attempted to stand but quickly gave up fearing that his creaking pelvis might break. He extended his arm and touched the hand of Jesus with the tip of his fingers. Jesus trembled. The hand of Lazarus was cold, black and smelled of earth.” Jesus said unto himself: “This resurrected man teeters still on the edge of life and death. The Lord is yet to conquer the stench that hides in him. Never has death shown its true power as it has in this man. And Jesus was seized with fear and sadness.”¹³ Later in the novel, the end of Lazarus comes at the hand of Barabas the zealot who lurks in the furze waiting in ambush. He attacks the frail Lazarus and “grabs him by the throat but quickly recoils in fear. For he felt as if he had taken hold of something extremely soft, like cotton, no – rather like air. His nails and fingers passed through it causing not one drop of blood.”¹⁴ Barabas then grabbed him by the hair.

13. Ibid. p. 539

“But both the hair and his scalp fell in his hand. And the skull shone in the yellowish light of the sun. Then he grabbed his arm and shook it violently “Say you are a ghost and I will let you go”. But the arm broke off and fell into his hand. He then grabbed him by the back of the neck pressed his throat against a stone, drew his knife and cut. But the knife did nothing as if incising a bundle of wool. The blood ran cold in the veins of Barabas and he wondered could it be that I am slaughtering a corpse? ... Finally, overcoming his fear, he grabbed him from both extremities, just like one does when wringing a damp cloth before hanging it to dry, wrung and shook him hard. Lazarus’ vertebrae came undone and he broke in two at the middle. Barabas hid the parts under a furze shrub and ran away.”¹⁵

14. Ibid. p. 569

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15. Ibid. p. 570

For Kazantzakis the corpse endures. Within the logic of his novel the corpse functions as a corollary to the human suffering and corporeal doubt that is Jesus. But if read against the grain, the novel proposes that the return of Lazarus is not quite a resurrection. Or rather that a resurrection cannot be complete unless the resurrected graduates

hurriedly unto the realm of the divine. It is as if the road that leads the resurrected away from the darkness of the grave better head directly toward the ambient light of the eternal. For when the resurrected is brought back into the light of the sun, he returns and with him an accelerated corpse. Lazarus is such an accelerated corpse. He returns not from the past but from the future with time elapsed clinging to his withering flesh. In this sense, Lazarus is time condensed. He returns with excess time, the weight of which gnaws at his joints and eats his flesh.

This reading of Kazantzakis’ novel allows for an uncovering of history’s materiality. It brings us within view of the open grave that is the history of our civil war. Far from being inhumed, the unfinished and perhaps irresolvable feuds of civil war float on the surface of this city’s quotidian living. The corpse with which we cohabit is not the past recovered. It is not a recollected, or exhumed, common heritage. Nor is it the object of a consensual future project. Rather, the corpse is time condensed because unregulated and un-spent. It is an excess of non-sequential time accumulating into a present lived in extreme contiguity. The corpse is where we live even if sporadically distracted by fascinating appearances.

It is perhaps resonant to remark that the recognition of the corpse as our companion, our mess-mate, became unavoidable following the assassination of ex-prime minister Rafic Hariri on the on the 14th of February 2005 and his burial in Martyr’s square in Beirut. It is therefore none too soon that we desist from claiming resurrections and staging fascination and apply ourselves instead in learning the ways of an allegorical future wherein the corpse is often near and always ours.



Excerpts from FILE: PUBLIC TIME

--> The following are translated excerpts from *File: Public Time*, a collection of short essays and aphorisms written by **Bilal Khbeiz**, **Fadi Abdullah** and **Walid Sadek**, presented first in Beirut as part of *Home Works III*, a forum for cultural practices organized by Ashkal Alwan, November 2005.

These texts were written between the Fall of 2004 and Summer of 2005, a time when the Lebanese were living the momentous consequences of several assassinations of major political figures, the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops and a renewed involvement of U.S foreign policy in influencing the future of the country.

PAGE 01:

Upon that event, the city entered a time that was not its own. Rising each morning with the world watching, the inhabitants realized, with the bitter belatedness of the deceived, that entering such a time was more oppressive than the event itself. What befell them was a public time they could not claim as theirs. A public time that set their waking hour to the clock of the world and lit their mornings with the exploding flash bulbs of a million cameras. The inhabitants, once struggling to become citizens in their own city were suddenly hurled as props into a ceremony conducted by international media rather than interpolated as subjects.

It is not that the inhabitants found themselves running out of time. Rather, they duly took leave of their daily jobs and quotidian worries and huddled together manufacturing a time that would not accumulate as theirs: A people turned into a crowd reduced into living a single instance. An instant extended indefinitely by lamentation, wailing and grief enslaving thus the place of their living to this public time; An exorbitant time beyond anyone's capacity to shoulder and excessive because unforeseeable.

Now they live, these inhabitants, dragging what remains of their disparate futures behind what had already come to pass. Inducted into the time of a world watching they saw their many temporalities suspended. For when the unforeseeable occurs, time can no longer be claimed as one's own.

PAGE 05:

Upon hearing the news, students gathered in a small apartment in Paris and sat mesmerised facing the TV screen. They filled the room with the smoke of cigarettes and the moisture of apprehension. On the screen the charred corpse was vivid: An image not only instant and live but also persistent and singular. (*In images there is a sort of carving: A frame and in it a focal point that captivates an eye.*)

Among the talking heads of politicians, journalists and analysts, one voice was missing: that of the assassinated. It was not until the next day that one television station began to broadcast excerpts from his latest statement and interviews. Could not the media tolerate his voice on the day of his assassination? And when they did recall that calm, slightly nasal voice why only in purified bits, in edited fragments?

What makes a voice is modulation and vacillation. Without essence, it is always becoming, never present. And unlike an image it eludes fixity. The live images from the scene of the crime were not only clear, denoting a death complete, they also signalled the inevitable approach of one particular tomorrow. Accordingly, the image when resolute cannot but shun a voice that quivered still, a voice modulated by doubt and resonant with hope.

Those who filled the streets on the day of the assassination and on the day of the funeral would not have responded to the appeal of the deceased had he been the one to call upon them. In all likelihood they mobilised because of his silence. His deafening silence initiated the advent of a new public time. A time that would replace the vivid image of death with chosen excerpts and edited fragments of a voice now turned into sound bites: didactic and repetitive.

And yet shall we keep in mind that speech can travel forth as it can also hurry back and that the dumbness of the one murdered and his distant voice are but a call to undo all zealousness.

PAGE 07:

Sharing the pain of others is metaphorical. Having experienced loss, pain and panic, I can perhaps empathise with a weeping child and shed a tear. But these tears I shed

are without their concomitant crippling physical pain.

Among the living, few can tell of the horrible sensation of a fire that devours. Few have experienced its intensity, its relentless bite on the skin and its suffocating heat once extinguished. Our knowledge of burning is partial at best. And sharing in such pain can strain the imagination. For how can one imagine a total pain, one that permeates simultaneously the entire body? Could it be that the pain of burning is like the constant and total presence of skin; the suffocating feeling of being locked in one's own sensing-skin. If so, then such would be a moment when skin turns against the person, when a responsive cloak turns into an executioner. This of course is not an instance of regression into barbarity as in the 'snuff videos' of El-Zarqawi but rather of facing the horror of a body devouring itself.

PAGE 06:

Borges writes that the lottery did not prevail in the city of Babylon until it developed into a total system that interpolates equally all male citizens as a pool of suspended faculties which can, according to the logic of the lottery, be distributed over various jobs, duties and labors. According to that logic, it was then possible for the Babylonians to examine and test these faculties with various forms of incentives and penalties. And so the storyteller begins by saying: "*Like all men in Babylon, I have been proconsul; like all, a slave. I have also known omnipotence, opprobrium, imprisonment*". He continues to say that like all, he was declared invisible for a lunar year and stole bread with impunity. Thus appear the men in Borges' Babylon a collection of faculties and attributes. Or in more precise terms, they appear as physical bodies regularly migrating from one capacity to another and from one attribute to another in all confidence that this logic of alternation applies equally to all. Hence the lottery came to stand justified once it prevailed as a complete system that organizes and manages the relation between all the men and their bodies. It also stood as a just system once it prevailed as a law that provides an encompassing framework for exchange and a punctual system for alternation. Within such a system, physical bodies in Babylon's lottery, become malleable matter capable of assuming equally the weight of penalties and the privileges of gains. And so the narrator is not unmindful of implicating himself when clearly indicating a missing index finger on his right hand and a vermilion tattoo of the second symbol Beth on his stomach which, "*on nights when the moon is full, gives [him] power over men whose mark is Gimme*" but subordinates him "*to the men of Aleph, who*

on moonless nights owe obedience to those marked with Gimmel."

The body in Borges' story is ambivalent: It is malleable without being materially dumb. Rather, it intimates. The missing index finger is an articulate absence. Visibly subtracted, it documents knowledge born of experience. The body in Borges' fable is matter made of impressionable bodies: It is currency. A mischievous compression of information and corporeal matter into an economy *"where the accent is placed on a loss that must be as great as possible in order for it to take on its true meaning."* Furthermore, this economy is one of a protracted expenditure. It thrives on the manipulation and degradation of the physical and organic according to an extended spectrum of additions and subtractions. Here, freakishness is capital and productivity is self-consumption.

In Borges' lottery bodies are kneaded with additions and subtractions. They are talkative and always in excess. They prod and call to be acknowledged. With no use for pity, they churn the carnivorous machination of the material world.

PAGE 11:

When assassinating, a man impersonates a god. He claims the ability to interfere from the outside in the course of history and announces a last event, a sudden act to conclude all narratives. The violence of assassination lies in that its perpetrator is confident that his act is without consequences.

Assassination among mortals is a reversal, a primitive act wherein the body is magical matter. Assassination confounds for it hurls at us the bodies of persons we knew as words. It is thus a crushing gift difficult to reciprocate unless we renounce on our desire to be words and retreat to the stage of mere flesh. Assassination aims not at the destruction of a stature or the erasure of a person. Rather it seeks to stuff a stature with the corpse of a person.

Assassination is always sudden. It lands from where we know not and leaves us little but slow living. It seems that assassination is capable of harming any leader or notable. It also seems that it allows no shelter except for that of lowliness. The violence of assassination lies also in that it makes all covet lowliness.

Assassination enters through the back door. Not to drag the head of this world down towards its black luciferous orifice but rather to denude our backs and scorch it with

fear. Entering from the back, assassination is faceless, looks not at its victim. Assassination is persistent in ignoring the invitations of cameras. And in doing so it is pure violence.

PAGE 15:

We often intuited contrary to popular opinion, that screens abrogate the public realm. At most they beautify it and in doing so strive to dominate it expunging any image that may falter or digress from a seamless didactic visuality. This we intuited. But we also knew quite well that the public realm cannot be formed by the media. It cannot take shape nor crystallize around the media that insists on inhabiting it as it claims to guard it.

Yet, following the event, gleeful faces on screens assured us that in keeping with the process of the investigation one could actually find a rather enjoyable occupation wherein even the bereaved can shed their grief and enter into the lighter space of rumours. This space is what happens when the public realm is lived by proxy. When the media turns the exchange of opinions between citizens into conjectures caught in a web of dubiousness.

Living in the space of rumours may not be a local invention. Nevertheless it did oblige us to abandon fact for conjecture. And although conjecture calls upon the intricacies of rhetoric and wily stratagems, it certainly does suppress all emotions. The only permissible display of emotion is that of glee at guessing right. Guessing and conjecturing ourselves and our futures to death.

Living in the space of rumours undoes our last remaining and precious ambiguity: that one can still have opinions and be citizen. Without this ambiguity we risk the following: Firstly, we may no longer construct opinions or take stands. We may merely read and compare the headlines. Events may no longer be made in cafes, pubs, streets and job places. They may retire to closed rooms fit for weaving conspiracies.

Secondly, we may find ourselves having entered public time unprepared, as stuff for experimentation: As mice in the laboratories of conjectures caught between accidental death and disfiguration.

Translated by Karl Sharro and Walid Sadek.

THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL

--> **By Jalal Toufic**, 'Âshûrâ': *This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (Beirut, Lebanon: Forthcoming Books, 2005), pp. 64-68



14. On the break of the sensory-motor link, see Chapter 1 of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

2. The one really beautiful shot in Mel Gibson's excruciating *The Passion of the Christ*, 2004, occurs in the film's last scene: suddenly, the crucified Christ is filmed from a heavenly perspective, with the sort of detachment, colors, rocks, haze, and, most importantly, ("third fullness, two-thirds") emptiness that one encounters most characteristically in traditional Chinese painting, so that we move from a Semitic to a Chinese atmosphere and culture. It would seem that high up, there is no God but a sort of Taoist Way of Heaven.

Given the many unjust and humiliating conditions that are the daily experience of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, what is the moment that suddenly felt unbearable for one or more Palestinians, that stopped the interior monologue, that broke the sensory-motor link?' From June 2002, he, a Palestinian living in the West Bank, followed with apprehension the news about the construction by the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon of a "Security Fence" ostensibly to block terrorist attacks. He saw the "Security Fence" progress day after day, discovering that it was actually an 8-meter-tall wall with razor-fringed fencing, watchtowers every few hundred meters, and buffer zones on either side, and that it encroached on substantial areas of the West Bank. Remembering Nietzsche's characterization of Jesus of Nazareth as "the peaceful preacher of the mount, the sea-shore and the fields, who appears like a new Buddha on a soil very unlike India's..." (*The Antichrist*), he wondered whether one could be a Taoist on a soil very unlike China's, namely the West Bank; and whether, as in Taoism, where "the movements of the painter's brush must be interrupted [without interruption of the breath that is animating them]" (Li Jih-Hua)³, a Palestinian could maintain

3. François Cheng, *Empty and Full: The Language of Chinese Painting*, trans. Michael H. Kohn (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), pp. 76-77.

4. Actually in 213 BC, in the China of Shih Huang-ti, "all books not dealing with agriculture, medicine, or prognostication were burned, except historical records of Ch'in and books in the imperial library" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

5. Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, ed. Eliot Weinberger; trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine and Eliot Weinberger (London; New York: Penguin, 2001), pp. 344-345.

the *chi* (vital breath/original energy) without a break despite some 700 checkpoints operational in the West Bank and Gaza in December 2003, which often closed for good for weeks, and which even when open often took hours to cross—and now despite the Wall of Separation. For a period of several weeks, he was obsessed by Borges' "The Wall and the Books": "I read, a few days ago, that the man who ordered the building of the almost infinite Chinese Wall was that first Emperor, Shih Huang Ti, who also decreed the burning of all the books that had been written before his time⁴. That these two vast undertakings—the five or six hundred leagues of stone against the barbarians, and the rigorous abolition of history, that is, of the past—were the work of the same person and were, in a sense, his attributes, inexplicably satisfied and, at the same time, disturbed me.... Herbert Allen Giles recounts that anyone who concealed books was... condemned to work on the endless wall until the day of his death."⁵ He thought that one could paraphrase Borges' words thus within the context of Israeli politics: the man who ordered the building of the Wall of Separation was that Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, who also decreed the burning of all the books relating to the Palestinians: during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, when Sharon was Israel's defense minister, the Israeli army seized and possibly destroyed the archives of the Palestine Research Center in Beirut, and during the Israeli reoccupation of the Gaza strip beginning in late March 2002, Israeli military forces destroyed or seized the computers, books, audio recordings, videos, institutional archives and records housed in many Palestinian cultural resources. That these two vast undertakings—the 788 kilometers of stone against "the barbarians," and the rigorous abolition of history, that is, of the past of the Palestinian people—were the work of the same person and were, in a sense, his attributes inexplicably satisfied and, at the same time, disturbed him. He thought that sooner or later the destruction of books in an Israel that was turning increasingly right-wing, militaristic, and chauvinistic, and whose initial racism was becoming even more

exacerbated, would apply not only to those that refer to and/or document the Palestinian past but also to those, archaeological or otherwise, that contradict the Bible, and then to all books other than the Bible, its orthodox interpretation("s") and the scientific and technological publications presenting the latest advances in certain cutting edge fields where Israeli scientists are making a significant contribution, for example nanotechnology.⁶ At that point any Israeli who concealed books other than the aforementioned allowed ones would be condemned to work, until the day of his or her death, on the Wall of Separation, which would be constantly in need of repair since repeatedly sabotaged at various points by its victims, the Palestinians. Elsewhere in the same text, Borges writes: "Perhaps Shih Huang Ti condemned those who adored the past to a work as vast as the past, as stupid and as useless."⁷ Similarly, perhaps Ariel Sharon is unwittingly condemning those in Israel who adore the past, namely the settlers in the Occupied Territories, who base their territorial claims on the Bible, to "a work as vast as the past, as stupid and as useless." He wondered whether, as with the Great Wall of China (aka 10,000 Li Long Wall), which was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987, the Security Wall (aka the Security Fence) will, if completed, be added one day to the same list. It may in the short term become a wailing wall for the Palestinians, but it is likely in the long term to become another Wailing Wall for the Israeli Jews, coming to rival and possibly to supplant the 50 meters long Wailing Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem (aka the Western Wall), the only remains of the Second Temple destroyed in 70, and which dates back to about the 2nd century BC (its upper sections were added later). On 23 February 2004, as the International Court of Justice in The Hague began hearings on the legality of Israel's Wall of Separation, he along with thousands of other Palestinians as well as international peace activists marched in protest against this Wall of Separation in various towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁸ In rare cases, one's disconnecting of the Wall of Separation from the

6. "A functional electronic nano-device has been manufactured using biological self-assembly for the first time.... A team of Israeli scientists [at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology] harnessed the construction capabilities of DNA and the electronic properties of carbon nanotubes to create the self-assembling nano-transistor." *New Scientist*, 20 November 2003.

7. Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, p. 345.

8. I encourage the readers of this book to sign the online petition "Stop the Wall Immediately" initiated by French philosopher Etienne Balibar: <http://www.petitiononline.com/stw/petition.html>

9. The unbearable can be borne by a Muslim not by committing a veiled suicide, which is prohibited in Islam and which anyway will lead him or her to death, where one has piercing sight, but by reaching a stage of *fanā'* (obliteration in God), in which it is God who is “his sight through which he sees,” and God, Who created the universe in which such a thing can occur, can certainly bear it.

It is only God (the Father) Who, in his infinite compassion, magnanimity, etc., can withstand to be insulted, tortured and then crucified (in the person of the Son). A (great) human should not be able to withstand that this should happen to God. The ordeal on the cross could have lasted much longer, indeed until the end of the world, had not Jesus of Nazareth succumbed, and he succumbed so quickly not because of the torture he suffered and the flagellation and the crucifixion, but from not being able to tolerate that (the Son of) God, who had incarnated in him, should be treated thus by low-lives (it is reported that on viewing an advanced screening of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* [2004], the Pope said: “It is as it was”); I would like to believe that he meant by that not that Gibson's film shows the events as they happened then, but that the film itself is a reenactment, by a low-life, of the torture and crucifixion of Christ). It is with the resurrection that Jesus partook of God. Had they tried to crucify the resurrected body of Jesus Christ, then he would not have succumbed until the end of the world. So along with being the becoming human of God (Jesus Christ), Christianity could not but be the becoming God of men and women so that they would not perish from considering what happened to God on the cross.

In films dealing with monotheistic religions, the filmmaker has no right, unless he wants to assume the status of God, to film

mendacious justifications for its construction leads to the disconnection of the sensory functions from the motor ones in a breakdown of the sensory-motor link; more frequently, it is the breakdown of the sensory-motor link that leads to a concomitant disconnection of the Wall of Separation from not only the mendacious and mystifying justifications for its construction, but also from all the real reasons for its presence (encroaching on Palestinian territories; contributing toward rendering a viable Palestinian state on the Occupied Territories impossible; minimizing terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians; gaining political votes, since, according to many polls, over 70% of Israelis are in favor of the Wall of Separation, etc.). The Wall of Separation was so unbearable to him that it broke his sensory-motor link⁹, i.e. disconnected the sensory functions from the motor ones, and suspended his interior monologue, with voices and hallucinations coming to insert themselves in the gap between the sensory functions and the motor ones. Indeed, one not so fine day, while going to visit a friend, something anomalous obstructed his vision. It seemed to have suddenly appeared from one day to the next. He approached it with much trepidation. Was it a wall (for certainly it was not a fence)? Yes! It seemed never to end! Did it reach China and envelope its Great Wall? Did it circle the Earth? Was he losing his mind and hallucinating it? Or was he still sleeping and dreaming it? And if he was dreaming even when he thought he was awake, then how to wake up? He thought that this could be achieved only by death, for didn't the prophet Muhammad say: “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake”? A few days later, like others before him, he recorded a video testimony¹⁰—the task in the prerecorded video testimony of the one soon to embark on a bombing operation is to tell or intimate to his or her addressees what he or she has seen. Later that day, he blew himself up in a crowded bus, killing along with himself a number of Israelis (did the scene of the horrifying carnage in turn produce a breakdown of the sensory-motor link of some Israeli who happened to be passing there?)¹¹. It is both incum-

the events from an “objective” point of view, but has to show the events from the subjective points of view of various “historical” witnesses, with the consequence that he will end up showing only certain parts of what happened, a fragmentary rendering. For a filmmaker to narrate his film's events from a perspective that is both omnipresent (through parallel montage) and omniscient is to implicitly assume the point of view of God. We see this explicitly and naively in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* in a symptomatic shot in the scene of the crucifixion: when Jesus gives up his spirit, the scene is suddenly filmed from a heavenly perspective, from God's view. A filmmaker can legitimately do so only if he has progressed so far on the spiritual path as to have attained the mystical station of obliteration in God (the Sūfis' *fanā'*), for then his camera shows events from the perspective of God not because the filmmaker knows what God is seeing but because he is absent and God has become “his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees” (“My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I love him. Then, when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks” [a *hadith qudsi*]).

bent upon, and relevant for an Arab to condemn in no uncertain terms the indiscriminate killing by Palestinian suicide bombers of Israeli civilians living within Israel's 1967 borders (as well as both the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians and the targeted mass killings of Shi'ites in Iraq by suicide bombers from other Arab countries, many of whom are Wahhābīs)¹² as long as these bombings are still *reactions*, whether political or revengeful or mimetic, or all of these conjointly. It is irrelevant to condemn such bombings—but not the unbearable conditions that give rise to them in the case of the Palestinians—when they are no longer reactions but an unpredictable by-product of the breakdown of the sensory-motor link, since while one can prevent a reaction, one cannot prevent an event.

10. The statement “I am the *shahid(a)* [martyr] (name of speaker),” with which, starting with the Lebanese Sanā' Yūsif Muḥaydlī, a number of guerrilla fighters introduced their prerecorded video testimonies, is paradoxical whether said by a secular person or by a Muslim. For when a secular resistance fighter, for instance a communist, says it, he or she is telling us that he or she is dead! (See my essay “I Am the Martyr Sanā' Yūsif Muḥaydlī” in the revised and expanded edition of my book (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* [Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003]). And when a Muslim resistance fighter says it, he or she is telling us that past the bombing operation in which he or she died physically he or she is a living witness!

11. If martyrdom, whether secular or Islamic, is related to death, it is because being a witness, the primary sense of both *martyr* and *shahid*, is related to death: Islamic martyrdom is related to death because it is through death that one has piercing sight; and secular martyrdom is related to death because it is through some sort of breakdown of the sensory-motor link that one has a visionary view of reality, which vision may in unfortunate cases be so unbearable that the one who undergoes it attempts or at least entertains suicide.

12. In the first half of 2005, at least 213 suicide attacks—172 by vehicle and 41 by bombers on foot—took place in Iraq, according to an Associated Press count. It is estimated that less than 10% of the more than 500 suicide attacks that have taken place in Iraq since 2003 have been carried out by Iraqis.

What ever happened to 2006: The astrologer Michel Hayek's Forebodings for 2006

--> Surprises in June will change entirely the course of the probe into Hariri's assassination

--> In July, the investigation into Samir Qassar's assassination will implicate members of Hizbullah, splintering the party's leadership into a Syrian and Iranian following.

--> The summer of 2006 will witness the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah by Israeli helicopter gunship on the Lebanese-Syrian border as he flees Haret Hreik.

--> In late September, one of Emile Lahoud's sons will be apprehended and charged with money laundering in a Europe principality. Lahoud will resign from presidency.

--> In early fall 2006, violent skirmishes between factions in the Palestinian camps will lead to war between Sunnis and Shiites in Sidon.

--> In Fall, Walid Jumblatt will be sentenced and hastily executed in an Arab capital, leaving the leadership of the Progressive Socialist Party to his son Taymour.

--> At the end of fall 2006 and sparked by the outcome of the international probe into Hariri's assassination, Syria will undergo a coup d'état. Bashar Assad will disappear and a majority of Syria's leaders will be handed to the international tribunal.

--> In September, the court processions into Hariri's assassination will begin with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri as star witness.

--> At winter's start, there will be a mass resignation from the Free Patriotic Movement in protest of the political arrest of General Michel Aoun. In early legislative elections, the Movement will lose all its parliamentary seats while Aoun will have a nervous breakdown and be transported for treatment to a European capital, leaving the Movement's leadership to Jibran Bassil.

--> In October, Charles Rizk will be unanimously voted President of the Republic.

--> As the year draws to a close and following disputes within the Hariri family, the family will lose much of its investment in Europe and Turkey. Saad Hariri will return to Saudi Arabia to run the company there while Bahia Hariri will take charge of the Future Movement becoming the first woman Prime Minister.

- توقعات ميشال حايك لعام 2006- والتي لم تنشر بسبب ما تحتويه
- في حزيران 2006 مفاجات تقليب التحقيقات في اغتيال الحريري رأسا على عقب
- في تموز 2006 تظهر التحقيقات في اغتيال سمير قصير تورط افراد في حزب الله وتنقسم قيادة الحزب الى موالين لسوريا و أخرى لايران
- في صيف 2006 اغتيال السيد حسن نصرالله على الحدود السورية بعروحيات اسرائيلية عدد هروبه من حارة حريك بسبب هجوم اسرائيلي على المضاحية الجنوبية في بيروت
- في اواخر ايلول 2006 القبض على احد ابناء الرئيس اميل لحود في تهمة تبييض اموال في امارة في اوروبا واستقالة اميل لحود من منصبه كرئيس للجمهورية
- في اول خريف 2006 مناوشات عسكرية في المخيمات الفلسطينية بين الفصائل تتحول الى حروب بين السنة والشيعة في صيدا
- في خريف 2006 يتم القبض على وليد جنبلاط في عاصمة عربية يحاكم ويعدم في فترة قصيرة جدا ويتسلم زعامة الحزب التقدمي الاشتراكي ابنه تيمور.
- في نهاية خريف 2006 انقلاب عسكري في سوريا على اثر نتائج التحقيقات الدولية باغتيال الحريري و اختفاء بشار الأسد و تسليم معظم القيادات السياسية الى المحكمة الدولية.
- في ايلول 2006 تبدأ المحاكمات الدولية باغتيال الحريري والرئيس نبيه بري هو الشاهد النجم.
- في اول شتاء 2006 استقالات جماعية من التيار الوطني الحر احتجاجا على موقف سياسي للجنرال عون انتخابات نيابية مبكرة يخسر فيها التيار الوطني الحر كل المقاعد في المجلس ويصاب الجنرال ميشال عون بانهيار عصبي ينقل على اثره الى عاصمة اوروبية وينتسلم جبران باسيل قيادة التيار
- في تشرين 2006 ينتخب شارل رزق رئيسا للجمهورية بالاجماع
- في نهاية السنة وعلى اثر خلافات بين افراد عائلة الحريري تخسر العائلة جزء كبير من استثماراتها في اوروبا وتركيا. يعود سعد الحريري الى السعودية لإدارة الشركة و تتسلم بهية الحريري قيادة تيار المستقبل و تصبح اول امرأة تتولى رئاسة الوزراء.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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--> Born in 1966, Walid Sadek is an artist and writer living in Beirut. He has exhibited *Love is Blind*, 2006; *File: Public Time*, 2005; *Les Autres*, 2001; *Al Kassal*, 1999, with writer Bilal Khbeiz; *Bigger Than Picasso*, 1999; and *Karaoke*, 1998. He has also published a collection of essays entitled *Jane-Loyse Tissier*, 2003. Sadek is currently assistant professor at the Department of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut.

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--> Born in 1963, Bilal Khbeiz is a writer, poet and artist living in Beirut. He is the author of two poetry books, *A Memory of Air, Perhaps*, 1991; and *Of My Father's Illness and the Unbearable Heat*, 1997; three collection of essays, *That the Body is Sin and Deliverance*, 1998; *Globalization and the Manufacture of Transient Events*, 2002; and *The Enduring Image and the Vanishing World*, 2004. He is an editorial secretary for the cultural supplement of the Lebanese daily Annahar.

JALAL TOUFIC (www.jalaltoufic.com)

--> Jalal Toufic is a writer, film theorist, and artist. He is the author of *Distracted* (1991; 2nd ed., 2003), (Vampires): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (1993; 2nd ed., 2003), *Over-Sensitivity* (1996), *Forthcoming* (2000), *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (2002), *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (2005), and *'Āshûrâ': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2005). His videos and mixed-media works have been presented internationally, such as in New York, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Kassel and Athens. He has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, California Institute of the Arts, USC, and, in Amsterdam, DasArts and the Rijksakademie.

FADI EL ABDALLAH

--> Born in 1976 in Tripoli, Lebanon, Fadi El Abdallah is a poet and essayist. He has published two collections of poetry; *A Stranger with a Camera in his Hand*, Dar Al Jadid, Beirut, 1999; and *The Hand of Intimacy*, Dar Al Intishar Al Arabi, Beirut, 2001. He is a frequent contributor to the cultural supplements of the local dailies Al Safir and Annahar. He co-wrote *File: Public Time*, 2005, with Bilal Khbeiz and Walid Sadek. He currently resides in Paris studying for a PhD in Law.

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LEBANESE CONTEMPORARY ART DOSSIER:

--> **Jean-Noel Aoun**

--> **Zeina Tawil**

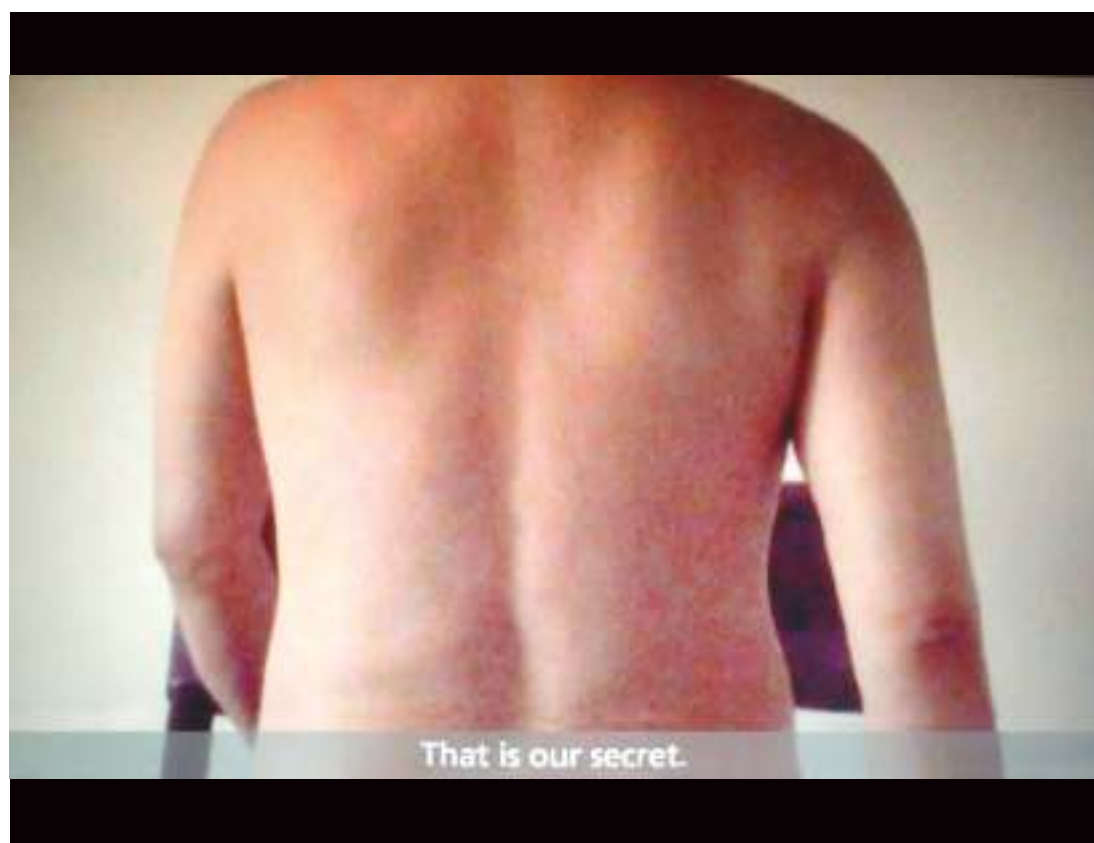
--> **Mandy Bouchedid**

--> **Maya Rizkallah**

--> **Samar Kanafani**

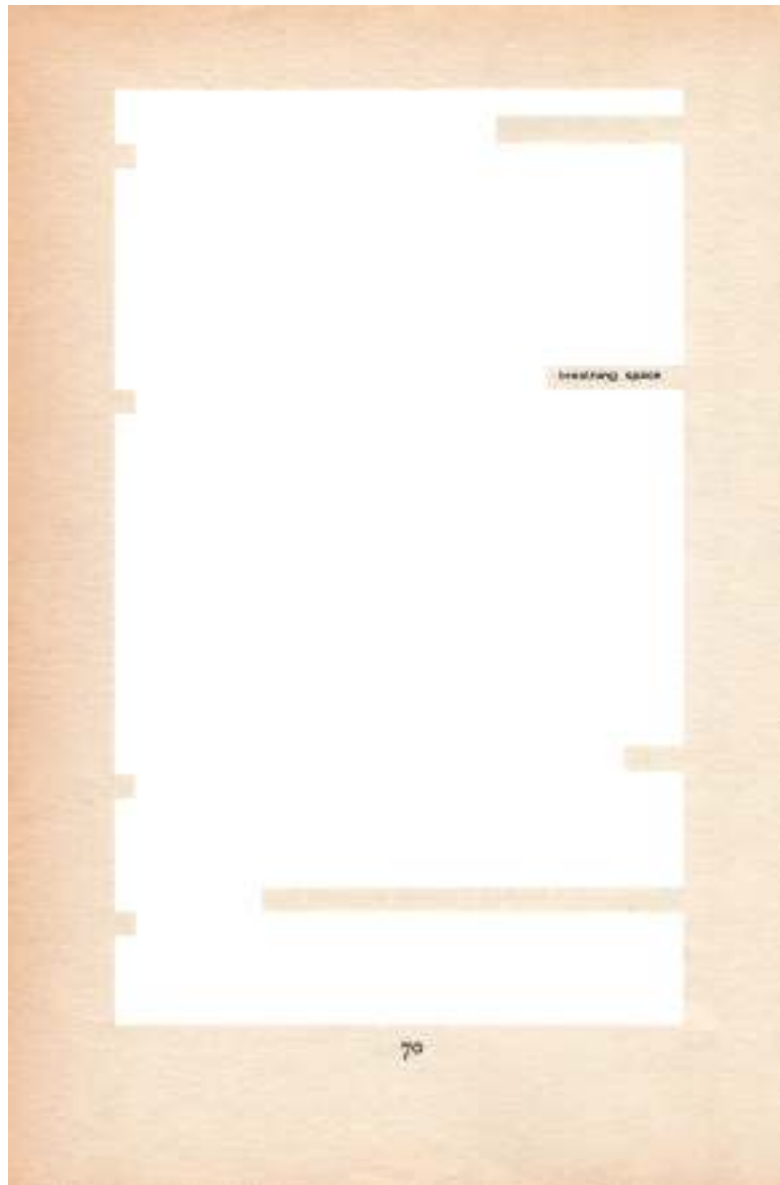


JEAN-NOEL AOUN → #002 (left) and #015 (above) from the series *Beirut Medusa* 30 x 45 cm each, photography, 2006, part of an on-going project of texts and photographs entitled *Beirut Un-Scene*, 2006

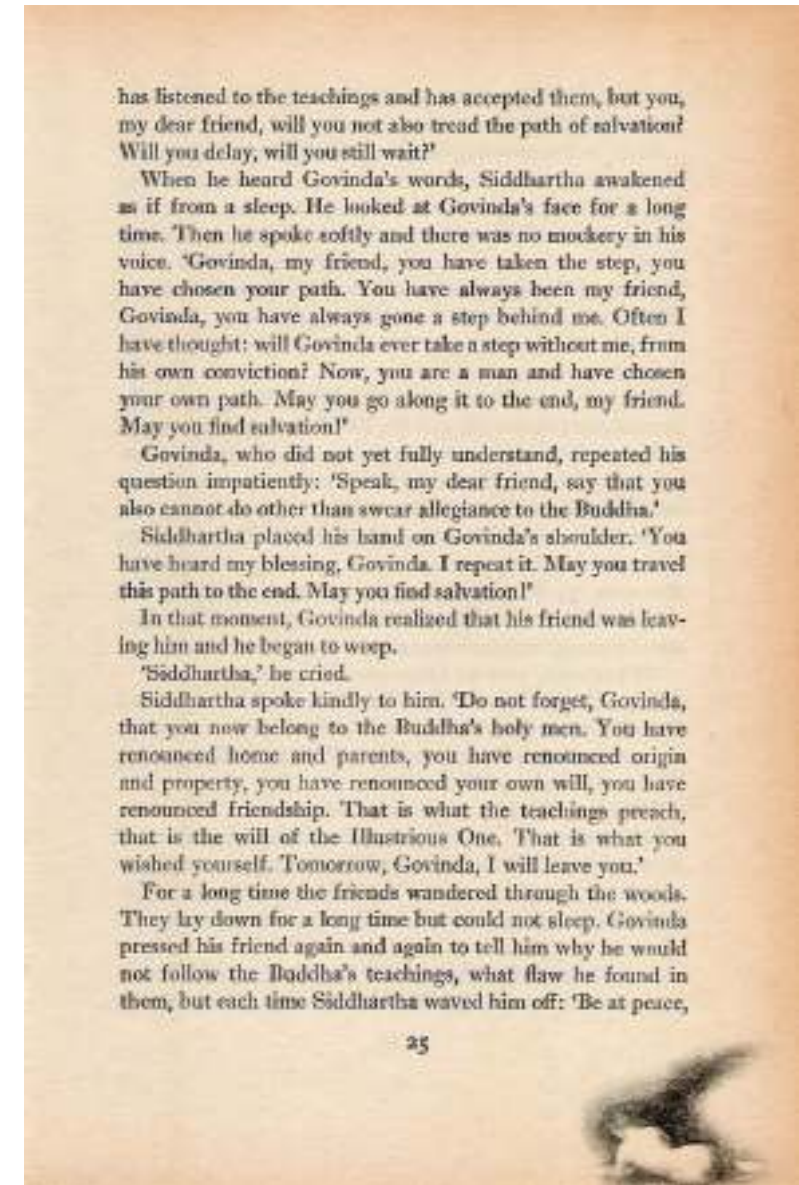


ZEINA TAWIL → On Track: Walking the Grotesque (left),
two-screen video installation, 5:20 mn loop, 2005

→ On Track: Walking the Grotesque (right)



MANDY BOUCHEDID → "Breathing Space" (plate #70) from the series *Margins*
paper cut-out, photo transfer and lettraset, 12.9x19.6 cm each, 2006



→ "Naked Woman" (plate #25) from the series *Margins*

الأربعاء ٢٩ - ١٠ - ١٩٧٥

الاشتباكات تعزل رأس أخطر نهار: قصف صبرا والمسلخ واقعه جبهة القنطاري تتعرض لمئات القذ ٥ قتيلاً و١٣ جثة وأك

من الأولى بعد منتصف ليل
الثلاثاء حتى السادسة صباح أمس
الأربعاء أطلقت في منطقة
القنطاري وشارعي جورج بيكو
وكليمنصو مئات القنابل والصواريخ
وقذائف الـ ١٢٠ م.م. والسوف،
الرصاصة الثقيل والخفيف. وقال أحد
الخبراء العسكريين إن ما أطلق في
هذه المعركة يفوق كل ما حصل حتى
الآن في بيروت من تراشق بين
مختلف الأحياء.

والمعركة التي دارت أمس أدت
إلى شطر بيروت وعزلها عن الوسط
التجاري.

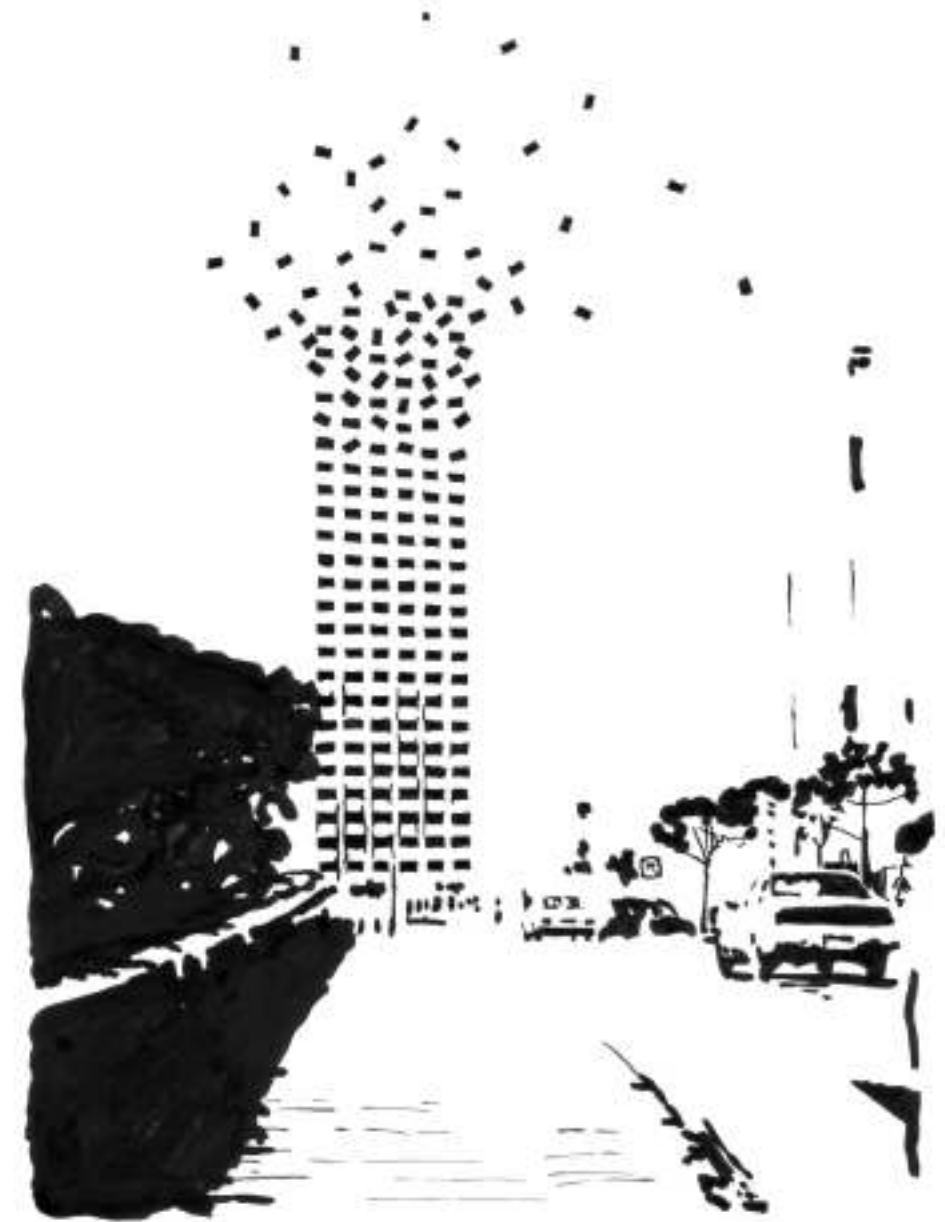
القوة المشتركة التي شكلتها
الأحزاب والقوى التقدمية وكل من
يناصرها تمركزت بصورة رئيسية في
برج الممر والمنطقة المحيطة به
والغريق الكتاكي عاد في العاشرة
لدى وتمركز في المولى إن وفي
الشوارع المحيطة بمنطقة مار
البياسر وشارع الساعة، خصوصاً
شارع م. ريان. وردوا هجومياً
ومحاولة تطويق استعملت فيهما
الأسلحة الثقيلة.

وقد ردت حشائر الطرفين في
الأرواح بين ١٩ و٢٠ قتيلاً وما لا يقل
عن ٣٥ جرحاً.



لحظة حرق

حريق لباله برج الممر في القنطاري.



MAYA RIZKALLAH → plate #6 from the series *Ink on Paper*
paper cut-out, photo transfer and lettraset, 12.9x19.6 cm each, 2006

→ plate #8 from the series *Ink on Paper*



SAMAR KANAFANI → still from *Mounzer*
video, 12:35 mn, 2001



→ still from *Mounzer*

featured artist
Gilbert Hage



→ Sara Saliba



→ Jad Eid



→ Yves Atallah



→ Charbel Fakhry



→ Rasha Kahil

Beyond the Lens. << by Rasha Kahil

Sitting for "Ici et Maintenant" (Here and Now) is a quick and emotionless experience. In a dim basement studio, there is a blank background, a couple of light sources and a chair facing a medium-format camera on a tripod. You sit, and fumble a bit while he adjusts the height of lens. There is usually silence. Then he asks you to look into the camera. Shoulders back, head high, back straight, and look into the camera. Look deep in the camera. Head aligned with your spine axis. Think of nothing. Look into the lens... Look beyond the lens... Beyond the lens.

And the light pops with that little whirring noise, once, twice, and before you know it, it's all over. Ten minutes at best.

In a way, that may be why the imposing portraits, once placed within the context of an exhibition (shot on a six by seven film, they are subsequently blown up to 175 x 150 cm), seem to stare through you, as opposed to into your eyes. Their gaze is not that of a communicative eye-lock, and they don't seem to have anything to say, most probably because there is no dialogue during the shoot itself. The gaze is almost blank, yet it is charged with a substance and poise that eventually demarcates the portraits from a common "passport picture" analogy that an un-discerning viewer may call upon them. The gaze of each of the portraits pierces through the viewer and into the space beyond.

When the shoot is over, you state your full name on a piece of paper. And then you are whisked out into the sun and on your way to wherever you came from...

All of the eight subjects shot by Hage, like him, are Lebanese. More specifically, they are part of the post-war generation, not under 18, not over 30 (seemingly), who have been blessed with the burden of having to define what "being Lebanese" really means. Having taught photography at the USEK and at ALBA universities in Beirut over the past 10 years, Hage is constantly surrounded by what he refers to as a "youth seeking motivations". And to possess motivations, one needs to have more or less formed an identity. But, in a Lebanon renowned for its cultural, religious and class jumble, how easy is it to forge an identity that detaches itself

from that of the country itself, in a day and age when being an Arab holds meaning beyond that of the individual?

Each of the portraits carries an identity borne from their name. They are Jad Eid, Sara Saliba, or Yves Atallah. They are not anonymous faces, but stare defiantly across the room with an identity that is fact, yet illusory. The name is the only sign that can engage the viewer in dialogue with the subject, yet it remains a name. It is an obstacle to stereotyping inasmuch as it offers clues, however much invalidated, to re-place the person into a mould. Hage says: "I am thoroughly convinced that human face or the portrait is neither determined or real; however it is receptive, flexible and subjected to changes. It oscillates between realities and illusions. Human expressions are only defined culturally and structured socially."

In light of the recent events that shook the country once again, the post-war generation is still in a post-war time, which legitimizes even more the scope of Hage's work. The selected photographs are actually part of a bigger plan of compiling up to 1000 portraits in view of a major exhibition one day. Already exhibited in Beirut as well as in Berlin's House of World Cultures in 2004 (as part of a conference on globalization and identity), the work continues to speak in terms of the carving of a contemporary Lebanese self.

As part of the Lebanese post-war generation myself, and with my portrait hanging bigger than life-size, I may just be extrapolating... Hage concludes by saying that "I intend to seize the frontier that exists only anthropologically", projecting faces that are linked only by their land and "Lebanese" appellation, and by the fate of having grown-up in a country finding its feet. No more, no less.

So maybe the economy of words when sitting for Gilbert and the inconstant gaze of the subject say it all.

Gilbert Hage is represented by the Tanit Gallery, Munich, and has exhibited in Lebanon, Syria, France, Germany and Brazil. He is currently working on a project about the July 2006 events in Lebanon. Gilbert teaches photography at USEK and ALBA universities in Beirut. www.gilberthage.com

The Latin American Turn

Curated by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera
and Jacopo Moroni
Images selected by Sylvia Ospina

→ Joaquín Torres-García, *Inverted Map of South America*, 1936. Courtesy of Cecilia De Torres Ltd





→ ILLUSTRATION BY EUNKYUNG KANG

The Latin American 'Turn':

Oscar Guardiola interviews Ernesto Laclau



(London, August 2006)

Oscar Guardiola: The current trend in Latin America has been represented in Europe and elsewhere under a variety of names. There has been cautious talk of a 'turn towards the centre-left'; a certain European Left proclaims, yet again, the coming of a 'Latin American revolution'. Others see a relatively minor re-accommodation, or else, a grand 'decolonising turn'. You just came back from a tour around the area; in your opinion what is happening in Latin America?

Ernesto Laclau: Everything depends on what experiences we are talking about. Some Latin American countries—Chile and Uruguay are cases in point—have constructed their transition to democracy on the basis of economic models that do not significantly go beyond the Washington consensus. Neither Lagos nor Vazquez, in the recent summit of Mar del Plata (2005), opposed the project of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, which is the backbone of the US strategy for the area, and which was defeated because of the strong opposition of the main Latin American players (Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela). I think that in the case of countries like Chile and Uruguay—and now also Peru—it is legitimate to speak of a relatively minor re-accommodation in the economic sphere. But for those countries, which are the backbone of Mercosur, the project is different and far more radical. The incorporation of Venezuela—and probably, in the near future, of Bolivia—means a qualitative change. The project of a gasoduct going from Venezuela to the south cone and other associated initiatives will mean the energetic emancipation of the continent and the possibility of transforming Latin

America into a serious player in the international arena.

O. G.: Is there really a trend? How can one compare the case of Bolivia, Ecuador or the Mexico Zapatistas—featuring a strong indigenous component—with that of, say, Argentina, with no such component and perhaps quite different demands?

E. L.: I don't think that the trend is linked to particular social bases—peasant or otherwise—but to the fact that many different sectors have established an equivalencial relation in their common rejection of the social cost involved in the imposition of the neo-liberal model. The application of that absurd model—whose epitome is the disastrous prescription of the IMF—is at the root of the crises experienced by the Latin American economies. These crises have produced a proliferation of points of rupture and antagonisms, which have cut across many social sectors. The globalisation of the economy has found its correlate in the globalisation of social protest, whose agents can no longer be divided, as in more traditional societies, in terms of their location within a stable social structure. In the successive meetings of the Forum of Porto Alegre you see how this interaction operates between very different local social actors. That is the reason why in my work I have spoken of popular identities—equivalentially created—and of hegemony.

O.G.: Indeed, only Colombia and Peru have elected openly neoliberal regimes, and even in this case the differences abound. APRA (Alan García) shares very little with the ultra-conservative movement of Uribe's Colombia, does it not?

E.L.: Definitely so. Although one has to wait and see before passing a definitive judgement, I do not think that Alan Garcia's policies can be too easily assimilated to the savage neoliberalism of Alvaro Uribe. Although he has ratified the trade treaty signed by his predecessor, he is probably thinking more in terms of the Chilean model, and trying to associate market economics and social reform. Whether the deeds will match the words is something that remains to be seen.

O.G.: Just to hammer this point, let me put to you a question originally formulated by a close friend and colleague, anthropologist Arturo Escobar: What is the meaning of this trend? Is it a form of anachronistic resistance to unstoppable globalisation? Is it a passing fad, soon to be superseded by the realities of world economy? Or is it rather a harbinger of more sustainable models to come, especially in view of the high ecological and economical costs of the neoliberal model?

E.L.: My hope is that it is the latter. Certainly there is nothing anachronistic in the movements, which can be called, broadly speaking, alter globalist. In the first place, if globalisation in its neoliberal version were unstoppable, this would mean that it has been successful, as with the process of European industrialization in the XIXth century. But it is far from being able to claim any lasting success. I think that in a few decades Milton Friedman and his followers will be seen as a limited thirty years aberration in economic thought and economic policy, which failed to deliver the goods. Moreover, these policies were strictly applied only to Third World countries, with disastrous results. The major players in the world economy—the US is the most blatant example—never had any reticence in violating the neoliberal prescriptions whenever it was convenient to their interests. Remember its protection, over recent years, to its steel industry.

But there is something more that I want to add. The fact that the neoliberal version of globalisation is dying does not mean that globalisation as such is a trend that can be reversed. The point is that a globalized world is not synonymous with de-regulation and market sovereignty. As I have said earlier, globalisation is creating numerous new antagonistic social actors who are launched into the historical arena. In the same way that in the XIXth century Marx asserted that capitalist development was creating its own grave-digger, the proletariat, we can today assert that globalisation is mobilizing forces that, at some point, will be strong enough to entirely re-shape international political and economic arrangements. This is what alter-globalisation means.

O.G.: Is "Left" even an appropriate label to describe all this?

E.L.: I am definitely in favour of keeping the category of "Left". But it is important to understand what is its theoretical status. I think we should conceive it as what I have called an "empty signifier", that is, a term without a fixed material content, for that content varies in different contexts. To take a few examples: At the time of the French Revolution, when the term emerges, it was not associated with anything having socialist connotations, but those connotations ended up shaping the meaning of the term in the course of the XIXth century. In the XXth century, again, these connotations varied, and the term was applied to many movements and situations that had little to do with classical socialist or communist discourses. What remains stable beyond all these terminological variations? Certainly no material content, but rather a distinction between the status quo and those forces pushing for radical change whatever the content of that change is. The hegemonic struggle largely consists in linking particular contents to the symbols—largely empty in the course of an organic crisis—of

political radicalism. Now, approaching the matter from this angle, I think it is absolutely essential to maintain the distinction Left/Right—whose contents, as I said, are variable—among other reasons, because the dominant trend in today's status quo consensus is to transform politics into administration in the hands of a more or less enlightened technocracy.

The epitome of this is Tony Blair's assertion that there are no right wing or left wing economic policies but only policies that work. The main intellectual component of this ideological operation has been the rejection of the "adversarial model of politics" proclaimed by Blair and his adviser Anthony Giddens, and also by other theoreticians like Ulrich Beck. This is a trend that we have to resist by all means.

O.G.: Another colleague, Argentinean critic Walter Mignolo, has suggested that cases such as Bolivia call for novel terms of analysis (as opposed to the Right-Left axis) given the centrality of the "cultural contestation" (his term) of modern models entailed by these transformations. Is the move from 'economy' to 'culture' (and in some instances, back to 'economy' again) sufficient to account for these changes, or else, do we need to break up with, precisely, such a wider spectrum (which vaguely recalls the structure/superstructure model of early sociological critique) in order to allow what is new about these changes to break out of the present deadlock, a sort of friendship/rivalry, in theory and practice, between the cultural surface and its alleged economic basis?

E.L.: I disagree with Mignolo for two main reasons. Firstly, because to replace the term "Left" by "cultural contestation" means that the former would have a specifiable material content different from the latter. So the term "Left" would be fixed in only one of its historical incarnations, which, for the reasons that I have just explained, is in my view wrong. But, more importantly, I don't think that the separation between the "cultural" and the "economic" is a fruitful operation. Let us see the matter from the two angles.

First, the economic. From a socialist perspective the economy was never conceived as a self-regulated mechanism, as for the neoclassical economists, but as political economy, i.e. as a process whose laws of movement were governed by social antagonisms. And these antagonisms depended on the identity of social agents, which are culturally shaped. So the cultural is an integral part of economic functioning.

Seen from the cultural point of view you have the same situation. Culture is not something operating in superstructural limbo, but consists in the contents through which social agents form their identities in an antagonistic context. I'll give you an example that brings us back to your previous question concerning anachronistic resistances. In many Latin American

countries the economic crisis of the 1930's led to a drastic fall in the standard of living for people in the countryside and, as a result, to their emigration to the incipient industrial cities where they became factory workers. Their adaptation to the new milieu created for them all kinds of tensions, and they reacted reasserting the cultural symbols of their areas of origin. Silly functionalist social scientists spoke of "cultural lags", while in fact it was an entirely different phenomenon: the transformation of those agrarian values into the ideological raw materials for the elaboration of a new culture of resistance. There was nothing anachronistic in this process. But this culture would have not been elaborated without the new economic context. Again, as you see, it is impossible to separate the "cultural" and the "economic".

O.G.: There has been a lot of discussion in academic and policy circles about so-called (neoliberal) globalisation. One may even venture that there is no shortage of alternative blueprints and models (for instance, alternative modernities, alternatives to modernity, alternative development and economic models), certainly not in Latin America, but there seems to be no will to pose, and no solution for, the most intractable question of all: who is going to make it happen?

E.L.: About neoliberalism and globalisation we have already spoken, but let me answer the last part of your question concerning the actors of an alternative change. I think that the constitution of these actors is a complex process of articulating heterogeneous elements, the construction of a collective will, in the Gramscian sense of the term. This is the point in which our contemporary social and political experience diverges more from classical Marxism, for which social emancipation was identified with a very precise social agent: the working class. Social heterogeneity in contemporary societies requires, on the contrary, a political construction that, in the conditions of globalized capitalism, has to combine a plurality of social demands. But perhaps you wanted to ask me something more precise about Latin American societies.

O.G.: Well, one cannot deny the presence of a strong popular manifestation in all this. Sometimes I am wary of the media's exclusive focus on the figures (Chávez, Morales, even Uribe) that seems to take it for granted that a crowd is a good crowd only if it has an external programmer, a leader, and is defined by that leader. Yet again, the most important events of recent times seem conspicuously leader-less, at least to a certain point: the striking manifestations during the Argentinian crisis of 2001; the popular defeat of an attempted coup d'état by the Venezuelan elite (possibly backed by the US); the defeat of the Free Trade

Agreement of the Americas in November 2005; the massive demonstrations in Bolivia, Ecuador and Southern Colombia against the combined forces of client governments, regular and irregular armies bent on 'containing' them, if not something much worse...

E.L.: Of the events that you mention, only the mobilizations following the Argentinian crisis of 2001 were leaderless, because they were a reaction to the collapse of the whole political class (do you remember the motto "que se vayan todos?"). The defeat of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas took place in the context of a presidential summit, so the leaders were very much present. As for some of the other cases: the Venezuelan masses mobilized against the military coup had a very precise target which was to bring back Chavez, their leader to power; and the success of mass mobilizations in Bolivia, far from being leaderless was to a considerable extent the result of the leadership of Evo Morales. You are right, however, in pointing out that Latin American mass mobilizations have become in recent years more autonomous and less integrated to the political system. This is largely the result of the weakening of those systems over the last thirty years as a result of the double impact of the military dictatorships and the consequences of neoliberalism. The "Piqueteros" movement in Argentina, the "Sem Terra" in Brazil and the Zapatistas in Mexico (at least in their initial stage), are the expression of this autonomization.

But I think that it is an illusion to assume that spontaneous mass action, left to itself, is enough to produce long term political changes. In my work I have distinguished between logics of difference, on the one hand, which is institutionalist, and by whatever means—"clientelistic" or bureaucratic—tends to absorb social demands in an individual way and, as a result, leads to de-mobilization and to transform politics into an administrative affair in the hands of technocratic elites; and logics of equivalence, on the other hand, by which dispersed and frustrated social demands tend to establish a relation of solidarity between themselves and, thus, to constitute a "people". To this last logic correspond the initial moment of mass mobilization to which you refer.

But it is not enough to constitute a "historical bloc" able to compete for power. Two more things are necessary: firstly, that this spontaneous mass action establishes some form of unity around shared symbols; second, that the mobilization is incarnated in the word of the leader. Can you imagine the process of the Cuban Revolution without the presence of Fidel? If you take the Argentinian case, after the 2001 crisis there was an immense horizontal expansion of social protest, but it was unable to transmit vertically its effects to the political system. The effort of Kirchner has been, in this sense, double: to have a political system more sensitive to social demands; and to have social movements interested in influencing political

decisions. The future of democracy in Latin America depends on these two dimensions, one way or the other, being politically articulated.

O. G.: Let us take Venezuela, for instance. During his recent visit to London, Hugo Chávez was greeted as a hero by some, while others, parts of the British press, for instance, denounced him as a dangerous "populist", yet another example of the proverbial Latin American caudillo. All the focus was on him. Does it matter to ask which one out of these positions is correct?

E. L.: It does, indeed. Firstly the British press was far from unanimous in attacking Chávez. The Guardian, for instance, published several articles favourable to him and a leading article which was, on the whole, also favourable. What is behind the anti-populist crusade is the establishment's fear of the politization of the masses. "Populism" for me is not a pejorative term, for it involves the construction of the "people" as a collective actor as it should be, inverted in its connotative evaluation, as the Christians did with the Cross, which before had the stigma of ignominy. It is characteristic of our conservatives, both in Europe and in Latin America, that their condemnation of strong leadership takes only place in certain cases. It is addressed to Chávez, but not to De Gaulle, without whose emblematic leadership the transition to the Fifth Republic would have been unimaginable. It is the typical attitude of those who condemn dictatorship in Marius but not in Sulla. Moreover, the centrality of Chávez as a leader has been accompanied by a profound democratisation of Venezuelan society, by an enormous expansion of the public sphere through the participation of many sectors that had been traditionally excluded from it. If there is a threat to democracy in Latin America it does not come from populism but from neoliberalism, whose implementation required, in its initial stages, the dictatorships of Pinochet and Videla.

O. G.: Allegedly, the Latin American 'turn' was initiated by the Workers' Party in Brazil, a loose articulation of variegated forces and grassroots movements that took more than twenty years to coalesce, just to break up, some have argued, almost immediately after Lula took power in 2002. Now some of those who previously supported Lula denounce him as pursuing conventional macroeconomic policies in spite of inflated rhetoric. Does the Brazilian example tell us anything about the nature of politics or is it just a 'local' problem?

E. L.: The Lula phenomenon is more complex than that. It is true that the wild expectations that his arrival to power raised have not been materialized. But there are a few things to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the room for manoeuvre of a government that has reached

power within the existing political system will always find limits that will operate as structural constraints. This applies even more to a country like Brazil, which is emerging as a major economic power. It is also true that in his politics Lula is less to the left than Kirchner and, certainly Chávez. But, on the other hand, Lula's politics concerning Latin American integration are far from negative. Without his strong support to the rejection, in November 2005 of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, it would have been very difficult for the anti-Bush camp to prevail. His support to the Mercosur and its new possibilities after the incorporation of Venezuela has been total. I think that if we are considering no longer "macroeconomics" but "macrohistory" we should still reserve judgement about Lula's significance.

O.G.: I agree, and wonder whether or not something similar applies to the leftist PDA in Colombia, and his mayor in Bogotá, where the structural constraints are even stronger than in Brazil. But still, some analysts, I'm thinking of people like Jorge Castañeda in a recent issue of Foreign Affairs, oppose a 'good' Latin American Left (e.g. Bachelet's Chile) to a 'bad' Latin American Left (e.g. Castro's Cuba, Chávez's Venezuela or Morales's Bolivia) and use such an opposition to demonise and divide. In spite of the fact that such distinctions are all too simplistic, if not just rubbish, the argument does entail that there must be some criteria to assess the transformation. What are the criteria to assess these changes?

E.L.: I have already given my views about these matters. As for Castañeda, what do you expect from somebody who has been minister of foreign affairs of the ultra-conservative government of Vicente Fox in Mexico?

O.G.: One of the most acute cases, one obviously close to your heart, is that of Argentina. After following dutifully IMF macroeconomic and social policy 'adjustment' prescriptions, Argentina went through an unparalleled crisis. Probably for the first time in recent history we all saw a country collapse under the weight of its 'global' relations. Some of the Argentinean movements became known worldwide, and the works of some of its activist-intellectuals (e.g. Colectivo Situaciones) are read vividly by activists worldwide in the context of a planetary military neoliberalism (e.g. the Retort Collective in San Francisco). What is happening now?

E.L.: What is happening now is that the country is recovering its bearings. You have to think that Argentina has passed through various experiences of total mismanagement. Firstly, there was the increase in the foreign debt that affected also most Latin American countries—in the stage of intense international borrowing which followed the world oil crisis of 1973. Then, the

absurd policy of the military dictatorship 1976/83, which eliminated tariffs and import controls, while it maintained the currency overvalued. The result was an influx of cheap imported articles that led to a near collapse of the local industry. After the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980's, we witnessed in the 1990's the full implementation of neoliberal prescriptions with disastrous results. A fiscal crisis, largely resulting from the privatisation of the pension's system, could only be solved through increasing borrowing because, being the peso pegged to the dollar, it would have been illegal to devalue the currency. The dependency on the dollar also made Argentinian exports less competitive in the world market. So when the Asian crisis took place in the late 1990's, the country was entirely vulnerable to its effects. When the recourse to further foreign loans dried up, the crash took place. The policies of the Kirchner government have been characterized by a serious pragmatism and the abandonment of all orthodoxy. The country is now out of the default and the debt with the IMF has been entirely repaid, so that the relations with that institution, which had been tense since 2003, have become now rather tenuous. Increasing State regulation of the economy, participation of economic sectors in negotiated agreements with the State, and a progressive integration to the Mercosur, are the main features of the present economic orientation of the country.

O. G.: Finally: Are there any global implications to what is happening in Latin America?

E. L.: What I have said already answers most of your question. Let me just add that the economic future of the continent largely depends on what is going to happen in the international arena in the next few decades. The essential point is that we should move into a multi-polar world, both politically and economically. This requires that the international centrality of America be increasingly put into question. There are already indicators that this could happen. China is becoming a major economic player, and India will probably also become one in the next twenty years. The European Union is these days in a process of soul searching, but if it manages to supersede its present crisis and advance in its process of integration, putting aside the American influence, it will become one of the most powerful forces in the world. Within this international context Latin America can have its voice heard and find its influence increased, on condition that it is faithful to its manifest destiny: to become an integrated political and economic space. For this, the Mercosur project represents a promising beginning.

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The Latin American Turn:

S I T U A T I O N S

- *Territorial Order, Natural Resources and the constituent Assembly in Bolivia: Towards a Plurinational State?*
- *State and Nation During the Coup Against Hugo Chávez.*
- *Reinforcing Colombia's New Alternative Pole*
- *Latinos(as) Migrants and the Decolonization of the US Empire*



Territorial Order, Natural Resources and the Constituent Assembly in Bolivia: Towards a Plurinational State?



FERNANDO GARCÉS

IN 1990, THE Indigenous March for Territory and Dignity gave fresh impetus to the longstanding demand for the transformation of Bolivia's colonial structure of domination. Coinciding with a similar campaign in Ecuador, the demonstration drastically altered the nation's sense of the space occupied by indigenous peoples within the traditional political framework: for the first time ever, aboriginal groups of both highland and lowland united to march on La Paz. The demand for land, together with the acquisition of seven territories by means of presidential decree, incited these indigenous organisations to position themselves in defence of their ancestral areas¹.

Two years later, the Regular Congress of the Unique Confederation of Rural Labourers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), amid intense debate and activity surrounding the five-hundredth anniversary of the conquest of Latin America, decided to found the Native Nationalities Assembly, with the explicit aim of winning back former indigenous territories. Testimonies from this time clearly demanded: 'Return to us what is rightfully ours'; 'Give us back our territory'; 'Leave, all of you who have stolen our lands and natural resources'; 'We must fight for our land to safeguard the future of the

1. Postero, N., "Movimientos indígenas bolivianos: articulaciones y fragmentaciones en búsqueda de multiculturalismo", en *Movimientos indígenas y Estado en Bolivia*, L. E. López, P. Regalsky, eds., La Paz: PROEIB Andes, CENDA, Plural, 2005, pp. 53-96.

→ Courtesy of Maza's weblog

children of our communities’.

As it is known, the so-called ‘Water War’ in 2000, was an unprecedented case worldwide. It saw a mobilised town expel a trans-national company that was trying to take possession of a natural resource. Immediately after the war, an urban leader of the Water Committee suggested the need to summon a Constituent Assembly, so as to provide a mechanism through which the Bolivian people would be able to take control of their natural resources. As of this moment, the idea of a Constituent Assembly began to gain strength in grass roots events and discussions. As such it was not surprising that in February 2002 President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada tried to impede the creation of such an entity; to do this he instead promoted the idea of a Citizens’ Council, whose aim it would be to suggest a number of reforms that might be made within the State Political Constitution.

During this same year the Indigenous Peoples’ March for Sovereignty, Land and Natural Resources took place, stating three objectives: 1) land for peasants and indigenous people; 2) recognition of indigenous territory; and 3) the immediate creation of a Constituent Assembly in which indigenous groups could participate.

October 2003 marked a key moment in Bolivia’s history of fighting for the control of its natural resources and for its quest for the devolution of popular sovereignty: it was the time that the joint bid for the nationalisation of hydrocarbons and the expulsion of Sánchez de Lozada from the helm of government were made forcefully explicit. It was also the time that the oligarchy of Santa Cruz re-launched its old discourse in favour of decentralisation, the ultimate aim of which would be its departmental autonomy. It has attempted to establish itself as the centre of business activity since the 1950s, the decade in which it inaugurated the Pro Santa Cruz Civic Committee. Today this comprises landowners, bankers and businessmen, all of which are linked to the principal trans-national companies operating in the country².

2. Lora, M., “Los capitanes del Comando Camba”, in *Juguete Rabioso*, 5th February 2005, pp. 8-10.

Halfway through 2004, the committee held the “First Council of *Crucenidad*”, with which it looked to neutralise the “October Agenda” of the previous year, put through by then President Mesa. The latter was a referendum on hydrocarbons and the Constituent Assembly. In September of the same year, the Pact of Indigenous and Peasant Unity³ was organised, stating as its central objective the summoning of a sovereign, participative and foundational Constituent Assembly. What it specifically called for was an assembly that would be 1) independent—answerable solely to popular demand, and not State actors; 2) largely popu-

lated by social ambassadors, especially those of secular indigenous peoples traditionally excluded from political participation; and 3) that would make radical changes to the country’s colonial structure of domination.

A massive, self-styled “Open Council”, summoned by the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz in January 2005, channelling popular discontent and signed by Mesa by means of a “curious” (to say the least) process of signature collection newly impressed the notion of departmental autonomy on the country’s political scene. Curious, we say, because it is from the Council and the signature collection that this question originates:

*Do you agree that in this country we should have departmental autonomies that would gain their own powers, and whose territorial jurisdictions would include the objective of freely disposing of their resources, choosing their own authorities and administering themselves?*⁴

3. At the same time, the following organisations were also founded: The Unique Syndicate Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers (CSUTCB); The National Council of Ayllus and Marcas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ); The Syndicate Federation of Bolivian Colonisers (CSCB); The Committee for the Ethnic Peoples of Santa Cruz (CPESC); The “Bartolina Sisa” Bolivian National Association of Peasant Women (FNMCB-BS); The Guarani People’s Assembly (APG); The Bolivian Landless Movement (MST-B); The Bloc for Peasant and Northern Indigenous Peoples of the Northern Amazon Organisations (BOCINAB); The Departmental Headquarters for Salaried Country Workers (CDTAC).

4. My own emphasis.

As we can see, this question gets to the heart of just what it is that the architects of autonomy are after: free disposal of financial and natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable). The promise of then president Carlos Mesa to call for the election of prefects would allow even a certain degree of *de facto* autonomy.

We know how the story goes from there: mobilisations from May to June of last year do not achieve the meeting of a Constituent Assembly, nor hydrocarbon nationalisation, this being what was demanded on the street by various social movements. Instead it ends with elections being prematurely called and the whole issue being transferred to the new government of Evo Morales on 22nd January.

Last February a Constituent Assembly Social Summit was held in Santa Cruz. Here it was decided to state the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) proposal regarding the *Ley de Convocatoria* in basic terms. The result was the following: three constituents per district, with 32 indigenous assembly members that could guarantee the participation of ethnic groups.

On 4th March this year two laws were simultaneously passed in Bolivia’s National Congress, both of which were of utmost importance to the social and political process the coun-

try will face over the next month: the Special Law for Summoning the Constituent Assembly and the Law for Calling a Referendum on Autonomous Departments. As predicted, Constituent elections as well as a referendum on autonomies were held on 2nd July. At first the results appeared contradictory. MAS won 139 assembly seats, representing 54.5% of those available. However, at the same time in the so-called Half Moon departments (Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz and Tarija) the vote in favour of departmental autonomy won the day.

The fact that these two laws could have been passed at the same time was no accident. It answers the demands of two parties in the conflict seeking hegemony within the system ever since the social movement originating with the Water War. As such, the Constituent Assembly should be seen as the result of various social organisations—mainly peasant and indigenous—clubbing together in the search for a voice to demand the redistribution of colonial power and the control of the country's natural resources. With respect to the demand for autonomy, what was wanted was the consolidation of oligarchic, agro-industrial power, represented by the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, through economic and political control of certain key resources, especially water, forests, land and hydrocarbons.

What is essentially being contested by the two camps then is the control of the country's strategic resources. The central question is: what level of restriction is going to be placed on the circulation of capital and on these resources' appropriation? Seen this way, the two processes point to opposing interests that can be summed up by three searches:

1) On the one side what can be seen is the Santa Cruz oligarchy's intention to ally itself with trans-national power to bring about the free circulation of capital through the extraction of strategic resources of global value. From this point of view the referendum became a juridical and political strategy to consolidate their economic power.

2) On the other side one sees the interest of Evo Morales' government, which demonstrates more and more a certain "nationalist return"; in other words, it would seem that his economic program strives for a return to the state formula of the 70s, under a strong social program based on using a stronger state to regain control of certain resources. This is evident in the current language of claiming the petrol, gas and forests as belonging to all Bolivian people.

3) Lastly we come to the interest of indigenous communities to control the territories in order to resolve a long history of expropriation on the behalf of different colonial

and republican regimes.

But what does all this mean? Well, at the very least that the central debate at the next Constituent Assembly will surround territorial re-ordering and control—be this state, communal or private—of the country's strategic resources.

WHAT THE ORGANISATIONS PROPOSE

As aforementioned, it was the indigenous march in 2002 that first raised the idea of a Constituent Assembly to a national audience. As of this moment, different indigenous and peasant organisations began to elaborate proposals with regard to the future Assembly. Following a bad spell for the Unity Pact, understood to have occurred in September 2004, and after the Constituent Assembly and autonomous referendum summoning laws had been approved, the organisations, as of May this year, have begun to reorganise, aiming to clarify a proposal with regard to the Assembly.

Original organisations of both highland and lowland have participated in the process. Four national meetings have been held, the last of which was a National Assembly of Organisations which was intended to bring them to a close. A technical commission has also operated throughout comprising leaders, organisation consultants and technicians from those institutions trusted by the organisations. Following a consultation period, a document entitled the *Proposal for the New State and Political Constitution: For a Plurinational State and the self-determination of indigenous and peasant towns and nations*, was approved last August 5th. It was subscribed to by all the organisations participating in the process.

The proposal is organised into six chapters: 1) State Model; 2) The Re-ordering of Land and Autonomies; 3) Land and Territory Regime; 4) Economic Regime; 5) Social Regime; and 6) Rights, Duties and Guarantees. The first three chapters are thought to contain the crux of the proposal. The first raises the idea of a Unitary and Plurinational State; the second has at its heart the constitution of territorial and indigenous autonomies and intercultural urban autonomies, the likes of which would provide a basis for territorial reordering in the country; the third succeeds in stating one of the movement's key objectives: the recuperation of land and territory.

The economic regime is one of the proposals weakest parts. In all, the issue of

the ownership of resources makes explicit a (pluri)national and communal initiative with respect to the economy. The Social Regime considers issues related to health, work and education. The last of these continues the work done by the so-called "Indigenous Education Bloc" that, as of 2004 has been issuing a proposal to the Education Congress to be assumed in 2005, but that was never ultimately carried through for various reasons. The Chapter on Rights, Duties and Guarantees stresses collective, political, economic, territorial and cultural rights.

Browsing through the proposal one can see that the immediate objective of the peasant and indigenous organisations is to counter the campaign of the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz for autonomous departments, and to regain the land claimed by the *latifundistas*. The medium-term objective, on the other hand, is the search for self-government and for the communities' ability to define their own frameworks, choose their own authorities and build their own juridical systems.

In this sense, the organisations have appreciated the importance of the land distribution theme within the Constituent Assembly. As such the need to establish Autonomous Indigenous Territories has been realised. The campaign for indigenous autonomy is understood as a stage in the process of self-control on the part of indigenous and peasant nations and peoples.

The indigenous autonomies are invested with political authority by the towns and communities that form them. It is important to distinguish between these and TCOs (Original Community Lands), which are a form of collective land ownership.

These indigenous autonomies have absolute priority to the access, use and control of natural renewable resources within their territory. With regard to non-renewable resources, the suggestion is that these should be co-administered by the Plurinational State and by the peoples native to these lands. As such, they reserve the right to veto concessions to natural resources affecting their territory. Nonetheless, one of the base principals on which these indigenous autonomies are based is one of solidarity and the subordination of individual to collective rights.

With regard to the state model, it is proposed that the Bolivian State be recognised as plurinational and unitary. Clearly it is understood that such a result would be the result of first achieving self-government on the behalf of indigenous nations and peoples. It is a



→ Courtesy of Maza's weblog

process that will not merely be achieved by entering it into the constitution. It will be put into effect by the people in question, looking to establish their own authorities in accordance with their own practices and customs. The introduction of these reforms into the Constitution is just the first step.

Also campaigned for is a fourth power (in addition to the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches) called *Plurinational Social Power*. The aim of this would be to create a machine for dealing with instances of state corruption. As in other bodies, the presence of indigenous representatives would be paramount. This would ensure that all political and juridical entities, indeed all political representation, would be based on a mixed system. In achieving the above we would in part be succeeding in recognising collective rights. This would be sowing discord within today's liberal system, which stresses the primacy of the rights of the individual.

Collective rights are reinforced once each indigenous people's authority, based

on a juridical system, has been recognised. But, moreover, by recognising collective rights we would be putting the necessary framework in place for these groups to place restrictions on private property and the private accumulation of wealth, of land and of natural resources, based on the principle of putting the rights of the many before the rights of the few.

THE PROPOSAL, THE ORGANISATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT

The Morales government has somehow already managed to demonstrate the tension between the nation and Indian, by analysing class and the racial-ethnic-cultural perspective, by way of an approach to capital, and by a certain decolonisation discourse. Certainly one can not view what is happening in Bolivia too simplistically. It is an enormously complex conundrum that the Morales government will have to appreciate from various different viewpoints.

From "inside" we need to look at the complex relationship between Evo as social and political leader, the MAS as a political movement, the state apparatus and the social organisations, especially the indigenous and peasant ones. From "without" we should examine the those complex relationships I have just mentioned in conflict with the fascist practices and discourses employed by the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz.

Based on this, the indigenous and peasant peoples' proposal has to confront the issue of its negotiating conditions within the Constituent Assembly. On the one hand what is needed is that MAS members raise and defend this issue; on the other hand it is important that the relevant organisations ready themselves to mobilise so as to stress key points of the agenda. In both cases the role of the so-called "organic assembly members"—those subject to the control of indigenous organisations—is of utmost importance.

Today in Bolivia, it would seem that we have progressed from the era of multicultural politics to the era of decolonisation. The latter might sound strong, especially in some areas of government. In the case of education decolonisation is being understood as equal opportunities for all Bolivians, as such transcending the traditional secular exclusion of indigenous people. Indeed, there is as much need as ever to re-categorise indigenous as national in terms of their language, practices, cultures and so on.

Those theories surrounding (de)colonising⁵ and decolonisation⁶ have gained

momentum in social analysis discourse in recent years. Personally I think that the academic discourse on decolonising is rich in analytical terms but weak in terms of what it actually proposes: we are told lots about what our societies should not be, but little about what they should be. In this sense, I think we need to pay more attention to what indigenous and peasant organisations have been striving for over the last three decades at least: the bid for self-governance as a means of recovering what the process of colonisation has usurped—the power of indigenous people to decide their own lives, territories and dreams. This is the challenge that must be confronted by the Constituent Assembly of the government of Evo Morales if it wants to advance towards the construction of a Plurinational State, where equality does not mean uniformity and where some are not more equal than others.

Translated by Charles Shaw

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5. Lander, E., *La Colonialidad del Saber: Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000; Mignolo, W., *Historias Locales / Diseños Globales. Colonialidad, Conocimientos Subalternos y Pensamiento Fronterizo*. Madrid: Akal, 2000; Walsh, C. (ed.), *Pensamiento Crítico y Matriz (De)colonial. Reflexiones Latinoamericanas*. Quito: UASB, Abya Yala, 2005.

6. Ticona, E., *Lecturas Para la Descolonización*. La Paz: Plural, Agruco, Universidad de la Cordillera, 2005.

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State and Nation During the Coup Against Hugo Chávez.



FERNANDO CORONIL

A ghost travels through a continent full of enchantments: the disenchantment with capitalism. The third millennium gives us surprises as soon as it starts: history is not presented as it has been announced (by those who have the power to do so). Just when the confrontation between socialism and capitalism appeared to be a thing of the past and the free-market shimmered in the horizon as the reign of progress, its promise of universal welfare was revealed to be nothing more than a sham, an elusive mirage, even among those who stood by it. While the metropolitan centers of power are desperately looking for correctives to the market in order to reduce prevailing global poverty and to assure its legitimate domain, in Latin America it is seen by an increasing number of sectors of society not as a neutral and efficient technocratic solution to collective ills, but rather, as a bulging homemade remedy that alleviates some ills it, but dispenses welfare only to a lucky minority at the cost of causing ever deeper wounds to the social and natural body of humanity.

In a global context where formal capitalist economy offers possibilities of achievement and profits only to a fragment of mankind, many are looking now to be among the lucky ones by abusing public power. In Latin America this has led to intensification in the duplicity of a political discourse that often proclaims the common good while pursuing individual welfare. "Corruption" (a term that condenses multiple meanings in relation to the violation of public in favour of private benefit, from a slack attitude at work, *clientelismo* -the practice of obtaining votes with promises of government posts and illegal commissions, to blackmail and murder) has become a structural endemic and a cultural phenomenon accepted as part of the normality of everyday life. However, far from extinguishing all hopes, this economic and moral

crisis has fed the hope that someone, or something, might come to offer a solution that will solve these social and deceitful fractures of the soul and will establish a sense of dignity and community.

NEW ENCHANTMENTS, OLD GHOSTS

Particularly in the "South", the false advent of a world defined by the mantra of the "end of history" announced by Fukuyama, or the "post-ideological ideologies" discerned by Žižek, appears more like a science fiction fantasy that could only be imagined in and for the "North". In a Latin America full of memories of struggles for justice, enriched with ideals and riddled with frustrations, fragmented by poverty and confronted by deep social and cultural heterogeneity, the spectral disenchantment with capitalism takes more and more the shape of the old ghost of socialism. This moribund spectre, which has been thought as missing so many times and reappeared so many others in the crevasses of capitalism, is encouraging radical sectors of many social movements from Patagonia to Río Grande: the "piqueteros" of Argentina (unemployed workers using disruptive tactics to force government to remedy social grievances), the landless people of Brazil, the workers of coca plantations in Bolivia or the "Zapatistas" of Mexico, but also the radical wings of progressive governments, from Kirchner and Lagos in the south of Latin America, Lula in the middle, to the governor and former Presidential candidate Manuel López Obrador in the north. But no one has incarnated and reincarnated this spirit like President Hugo Chávez, generating immense hope or exorbitant panic, depending on the way you look at it.

While this is happening in the South, the government of George W. Bush in the North has turned terrorism into the new terror, transforming the so-called Cold War in the War against Terrorism, an infinite war with no barracks, against an enemy without borders, ideology or state and even with no humanity. Against this malicious force with no borders, the USA has emerged as a police force obliged to break through the conventional limits of violence in defence of humanity. Assuming so openly this global leadership as the defender of civilisation, the democratic republicanism of the USA has been revealed as the undergarment of an imperial dress that is flaunted not only without prudence, but, increasingly, with shameless pride. From the center of the empire, the US is criticized not so much for being imperial, but rather, as in the case of Harvard Professor Niall Ferguson, for not being imperial enough. Against the background of a global war against terrorism, every confrontation of empire tends to be covered, from the perspective of the empire, under the cloak of the fight against terror. As president Bush put it

after 9/11, you are either with him or against him. And if former presidential candidate John Kerry was repeatedly presented in the American mass media as an ally of terrorists for being against the war in Iraq, Chávez is now represented along similar lines as part of the terrorist alliance because of his anti-imperialist nationalism. When Chávez showed pictures of children murdered by American bombs and said that terrorism cannot be fought with terrorism, in response to the invasion of Afghanistan decreed by Bush, Washington called its ambassador in Venezuela to an emergency meeting to respond to such insolence. In the ensuing war of words, while Chávez is accused of being a terrorist ally, and the USA of being the biggest worldwide terrorist, terrorism is confirmed to be an essential part of our reality, being true or not what it has been attributed of. Sharing the same fears, as if being reflected in opposite mirrors, the opponents end up looking alike, reproducing the same discourse that separates and unites them at once.

In this context, although capitalism still appears as the only visible or viable horizon for humanity, the bright future announced is now growing darker by the minute, thanks to this infinite imperial war against terrorism as well as persistent projections of marginality, poverty and the environmental destruction of the world. This social and discursive crisis has clouded Latin America with particular intensity, the area with the deepest social differences in the world and at the same time with the longest postcolonial experience and greater record of searching for the full benefits of modernity. This juxtaposition of hopes, fears and frustrations has turned Latin America into a particularly sensitive area of unstable attachments to policies and politicians, to volatile hopes, beliefs and emotions, to sudden enchantments and sad disenchantments. In this cloudy landscape, both movements and leaders have found the strength to proclaim that another future is possible.

I believe that the polarization in Venezuela vis-à-vis the Chávez government should be seen as coming from within the matrix of a worldwide ambient polluted by counterposed discourses of Manichean signature. For those who confuse the arsonist rhetoric of Chávez with his less ardent actions, his anti-imperialist populism coupled with his solidarity with the people of Cuba, is enough to trigger the spectre of the imposition of socialism in Venezuela. As if we were in a Disneyland haunted house, there is no need for real evidence concerning the actual existence of socialism; its spectral invocation terrifies with equal strength, as if the appearance of what we fear to come were equivalent to its full incarnation in the actually in-existent socialism of Venezuela. The democratization of oil revenue distribution (or at least the widening of its circuits) is without doubt a significant change, but it cannot be mistaken for the socialization of capital in rural or urban areas, neither in its form of productive and financial capital, nor as rural land or urban property. Precipitated in the present, we can see the future amid signs that should not be read just as they are presented, but rather, as anticipatory wonders or

spectral simulacra.

Since duplicity is part of the nature of this malicious spectre that appears to be what it is not in order to reveal itself only when is already too late, transparent signs never manifest its presence but rather, opaque clues in need of interpretation. Venezuelan everyday life has thus become the permanent process of decodification of public spectacle: the art of reading between the lines is put into practice everyday, seeing behind the facade, identifying conspiracy, finding out the simulacra of power and the transfigurations of what appears as truth. For the opposition, Chávez's government hides a totalitarian or at least authoritarian monster behind its immaculate democratic outfit. And even though there are big differences with the historical process that made possible the development of socialism in Cuba, the spectre of Cuba is giving the opposition nightmares, partly due to the presence of an influential Cuban population which interprets Chávez's steps as following on the footsteps, or wounds, left by Fidel Castro on his way to socialism in the Cuba of the 60's.

Without ever pushing aside external variables and relations, it is fair to say that politics in Venezuela is lived intensely as a strictly internal process. Setting it as part of this Latinate and worldwide crisis, I explore it in this essay also as a crisis of the discourses that define politics. I will focus on the polarized visions that have divided Venezuelans into two sides, leaving those who do not locate themselves in the extremes almost without public voice¹. I focus on the strange events of April 11th to 14th 2004 when president Hugo Chávez was evicted from power by groups backed by a sector of the Armed Forces after a massive rally against his mandate, and put back to power 48 hours later as a result of the break-up between the opposition and its supporters, and defenders of constitutional legitimacy.

I will follow three clues in the dense narrative of those days: the protest against the violation of "meritocracy" in the oil industry, the representation of the massacre of the Llaguno Bridge and the proclamation of Pedro Carmona as interim president. I will place this discussion in the context of Venezuelan political culture, in which the nation is perceived, as I have pointed out in other works, as an entity with two separated bodies: a material one, formed mainly by oil, and a social one, constituted by "the people" in the sense of citizens as part of a community. The State is conceived in that view as an entity that protects them and unifies the people². At the end of the essay, I will briefly explore some ideas regarding the State with a view to better our understanding of the complex processes that concur in the establishment of its hegemony.

There has not been another country in recent history with so sudden changes of government in such a short time span: a President has never been overthrown and taken back to

power so quickly and in the middle of circumstances so confusing. Chávez was elected with 56% of the vote in 1998, this popularity reached 80% by 2001, but at the beginning of 2002 it shrank to 30%. This mass disenchantment came together with an intensification and politarization of the political struggle into completely opposite sides. In a country used to celebrate and declare social harmony, in spite of sharp differences in ideology and economic position, the population became furiously divided in two sides. Each side was more passionate than the other and utterly convinced of being in possession of the actual truth. Disenchantment among Chávez's opponents reached its peak in 2001. Partially thanks to their firm hand on the media, they managed to establish as a hegemonic position the idea that it was impossible to live in a country under Chavismo. The opposition was convinced that the country was adrift, commanded by an incompetent captain, and decided it was its obligation to get rid of Chávez by any means necessary.

THE NATURAL BODY OF THE NATION³

Amidst interweaving conspiracies and polarized public debate, characterised by the intensity of emotions rather than clarity of the ideas, this repolarization had at least one virtue. Some sectors that had never taken part in national politics were thrown into the public debate. Suddenly politicized, with no major contact with the sectors that were opposing each other, many took *their* reality as *the* reality.

In this context of disproportionate expectations, the dissatisfaction of people recently politicized crystallized in the biggest march of the history of the country (until that moment). It was a demonstration, first, against the violation of "meritocracy" in the oil industry, but also a means to overthrow the President. Chávez had used his legal powers in order to dismiss furiously (on air, through the radio program "Aló Presidente") several members of the state oil company directorship and named others who, although being recognised as experts in the business, skipped the usual steps to get their the promotion to other directive positions. An emotive march of a few hundred thousands (between 300.000 and one million), authorised to meet at the so-called Meritocracy Square opposite the seat of the State oil company PDVSA⁴ was suddenly diverted by its leaders to Miraflores, the presidential palace.

The march used the violation of "meritocracy" as the flag to agglutinate the forces of the opposition against government.

It was named the "Not One Step Back" March to establish an affinity with other struggles of his-

3. This notion is developed in *The Magical State*. Suffice to say for now that this concept is based upon an ethnographic comparative study of Venezuelan political discourse during the 20th century. Theoretically, it builds upon an integration of the following ideas: Marx's concept of land rent, Lefebvre and Massey's work on space and time, and Kantorowicz's argument concerning the King's two bodies.

2. Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

4. Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. It has activities in exploration, production, refining and exporting oil, as well as exploration and production of natural gas. PDVSA dominates the oil industry of Venezuela, the world's fifth largest oil exporter.

torical meaning. However, it promptly radicalised its slogan: from the early hours of the morning claims towards the restitution of meritocracy were transformed into a demand for Chávez's resignation. The euphoric march was not aimed at correcting the state of politics anymore, but rather, at seizing power. The extraordinary magnitude of the march promoted the illusion that the entire country was with them and history in their hands. The marchers were singing slogans lifted from other struggles, "the people united will never be defeated", and they believed that day that collective action could lead to seize power, save the country and change the course of History. As pointed out on an article in the opposition's newspaper "*El Nacional*" which commemorated the 11th April march three years later, "the feeling of power of those human masses was total".



→ Courtesy of Catherina Lavoie

Even though the change of slogan came up at the beginning of the march, the bloody events in the afternoon transformed it into a general roar that gave it more legitimacy and urgency. Nineteen people were shot dead in very confusing situations around Miraflores, the government's palace, and Llaguno Bridge over Baralt avenue. TV news with large spreading through private channels immediately accused the government of causing the deaths, with no clear evidence. They repeated insistently the image of members of the government and supporters shooting at "pacific demonstrators" from Llaguno Bridge.

Although there is evidences that the military rebellion (at least part of the Army officers) was planned before hand, including probably the massacre itself as a mechanism of excuse, the "Llaguno Massacre" or the "Miraflores Massacre" was quickly transformed on a public level in the sparkle that turned the civil uprising against Chávez into an open military rebellion⁵. The repeated juxtaposition of the image of representatives of government shooting from the Llaguno Bridge and injured or dead bodies of pacific demonstrators was shown on TV in order to establish the complete illegitimacy of a government bent on killing "the innocent people". The notion of an intolerable massacre committed by a government who "stained its hands with the blood of the people" was repeated on TV again and again, as proclaimed by veteran leader Luis Miquilán once he had grown apart from the government he led together with his most forward disciple, Hugo Chávez. That image was shown to officers in barracks in order to establish the legitimacy of the resignation demand presented to Chávez. The same image was also widely circulated by American, European and Latin American media outlets, bringing support to the official declaration of Bush's government through his Press Officer Ari Fleisher, who supported the *golpista* government of Carmona stating on the 12th April that Chávez had provoked his own fall.

5. Among the pieces of evidence supporting this argument, I shall cite here only a videotape in which Vice-Admiral Ramírez Pérez talks about six deaths before they actually took place. I will discuss further this subject in my forthcoming book.

On the 11th April, the same day, Chávez's government was portrayed in the media controlled by the opposition as an usurper of the State who had wounded both the oil industry and the community. This double wound against what I have called "the two bodies of the nation" (the social and the material bodies) made the State illegitimate and seriously harmed Chávez's stand as the representative of the nation in its unity. In the political imaginary of Venezuela, formed in democratic struggles against personal or sectarian governments who made use of the wealth of the State for their own benefit, it is taken as a common place that the duty of the State is to establish a harmonious relation between the citizens and the territory, between the community and oil: the two bodies of the nation. Since the time of Dictator Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935), the nation has been imagined in Venezuela, by those who went on to become its political leaders during the 20th century, as a natural and social entity. Only someone who knew

how to protect the community, making sure its collective wealth is used for the common good, because oil belongs to all Venezuelans, could represent the nation legitimately. But to achieve this aim it is also necessary to protect the oil from the pirate hands of those who threaten to assault the Public Treasure and use it as an individual haul. From 1936 onwards, the State has taken the form of the protector of the nation directing the "sowing of oil", that is to say, guarding the process of transformation of the ephemeral mining richness into permanent social value.

In April 2002, the discourse of oil meritocracy was used as a shield against the feared spectre of a State who would use oil for sectarian ends and would convert the PDVSA, the state oil company, into a company as inefficient as all the other state bureaucracies. In one of the editorials of *"Tal Cual"* newspaper, the respected journalist and socialist leader Teodoro Petkoff, asked for support to the oil businessmen who were defending meritocracy in PDVSA by raising the argument of efficiency: "In short, they defend the argument that the company must not sink in the marshes of inefficiency, not be turned into yet another State Social Security. They cannot be left alone." (8th March 2002). Given the centrality of oil in the national imaginary, despite the argument of meritocracy being presented as a fundamentally managerial matter, the call to respect it was not perceived only as a violation of a corporate norm, but as a lethal terrorist attack against the core of the nation.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Chavismo, the discourse of meritocracy was a screen, a "mithocracy" as Chávez called it, hiding the interests of the opposition -backed by the Bush government- to overthrow government and regain control of the national oil industry which provides a considerable percentage of the oil imported by the US. According to the government, the new leadership was constituted by respected oil technicians with obliged career, each of them with more than twenty years in the industry. They had only skipped between four to seven levels in the new managers' merits (in a scale between 1 and 36); similar changes had taken place in the past without causing any protests. The core problem was political, rather than (managerial) normative. Chávez's government had changed in 1998 the path of PDVSA; according to him this national oil company had been turned into "an State within the State" since its nationalisation in 1976.

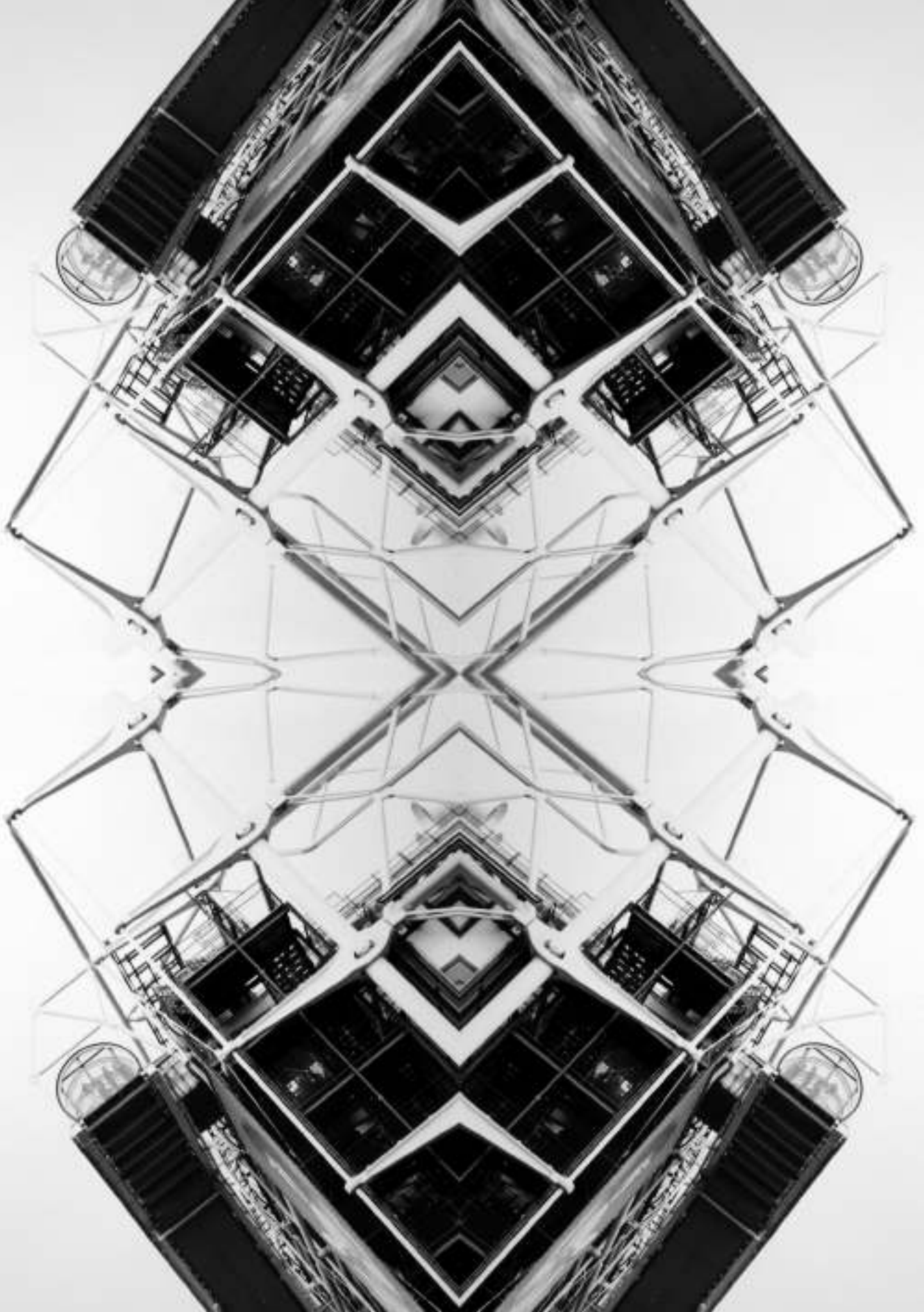
The government's politics consisted in gaining control of the company through the Interior Minister and a new Board of Directors, strengthening OPEC, increasing oil prices through reductions in productivity by means of fixed price-ranges established in the year 2002 by OPEC (mainly thanks to the initiative of Venezuela), limiting foreign investment in the company and establishing laws that will increase royalties and state control over investment in the energy sector. Chávez's opponents were against not only the sort of management that the State wanted to impose on PDVSA, but against its oil policy in general. They didn't support the oil sub-

sidy to Cuba, nor the drop in production according to OPEC quotas and, in general, they shared the vision that the ex-president of PDVSA, Luis Giuste, had pushed through during Caldera's government: he thought Venezuela needed to become an oil power through the maximization of its productivity, and its separation from OPEC restrictions. From the perspective of Chávez's government, the internal opposition found external support, specially from the USA which was about to confront the possibility that left-wing candidate Lula Da Silva be elected as president in Brazil and an imminent military conflict in Iraq. Given the identification of energy and security in the Energy Report put together by vice-president Dick Cheney in May 2001, it was logical to think that the USA would support a change of government in Venezuela to assure it as an oil power allied to US interests.

It is curious that in the public debate that took place during those tumultuous days, neither the government nor the opposition focused the discussion on fundamental matters of oil policy and geopolitics. For instance, in the short and passionate speeches given by the directives of the oil industry at Meritocracy Square on 11th April there were no matters discussed in depth but only short slogans intended to motivate the demonstrators. In the speech given by Chávez during the afternoon of 11th April he did not use the opportunity to explain carefully the technical aspects of the problem with "meritocracy", which were not mentioned as such, neither the fundamental matters of his oil policy. And this is surprising given that Chávez's public discourse, in spite of its baroque rhetoric designed rhetoric to marvel, was distinctive on its frequent use a didactic and expository style. The general attitude was to assume a set up consensus of understanding and emotions: the problem was hoe to mobilise them, not to discuss them or give them more depth.

Translated by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera and Laura Castro Mellado

Fernando Coronil. Venezuelan anthropologist. Harvard University / University of Michigan. Director of the Centre for Latin American Studies. Former member of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. Part of the Modern/Coloniality Project. Is the author of *The Magical State* (1997).



Reinforcing Colombia's New Alternative Pole



BY ORLANDO FALS BORDA, Honorary President, PDA

The following text was sent last June (2006) as a formal letter to the Alternative Democratic Pole Party, the latter having just become Colombia's second most powerful political force in the wake of the 28th May presidential elections. The Pole's forthcoming congress and next year's elections signify a crucial period for the party.

May 2006 was an unforgettable month: the record two million votes attained by Carlos Gaviria Diaz and Patricia Lara Salive on the 28th, the culmination of their political campaign in Bogota's Plaza de Bolivar on the 21st, and the almighty popular rally on the 1st. These three dates confirmed the triumph of a young, jubilant, and hopeful Democratic Pole, committed to defending the interests of the masses and rescuing a political system crippled by a bipartisan oligarchy. A firm, alternative program was drawn up by new political players, as the Pole scored an anticipated victory. We have at last climbed the Everest the Colombian left has confronted ever since a force comprising socialist artisans, the Central Junta of Francisco Antonio Obregon and General Melo's National Army seized state power in 1854.

i. Polo Alternativo Democrático or PDA.

ON THE NECESSARY IDEOLOGY

The new Pole, driven by its regional roots in which real democracy stirs, can now work to safeguard its potential and carry this momentum through to the next test: the 2007 election. An urgent need to fortify the Pole requires us to step boldly into the ideological ter-

→ Felipe Londoño, Courtesy of the artist

rain. I am conscious of the anxiety this may cause for some. However, I ask that we address this issue calmly, for it is one that has proven historically decisive. We must act together, casting aside our personal differences and in doing so rejecting all 'isms'. We have seen the PDA triumphant at the polling booths thanks to its robust organisational structure, which sees its internal elements unified.

To reinforce this, previously outlined, notion of a new Pole I should like to address the politico-ideological identity of our party's leader. Like many of us, Gaviria is someone from a liberal family background who has since succeeded in redefining himself. His self-proclaimed leftist democratic stance seems fair, even if this is inadequate for some. During his campaign there were those commentators that labelled him 'liberal doctrinaire', as had once been called Gerardo Molina, a sworn socialist by the end of his life. Still others, mainly political enemies, dubbed Gaviria a 'communist in disguise'. It would seem to me that, based both on the content of his public addresses and of his governmental program, it would be best to understand our leader as a 'radical democrat', just as he was perceived on the front page of *Cambio* magazine on the 27th March this year.

But why 'radical'? The use of this word has been perverted over time as its etymological origin has been forgotten (from the Latin *radix*, root). We do of course have the rightist party 'Radical Change', one that has failed to convince and will surely be short-lived. But I think it would stand us in good stead to establish an adequate understanding of the term radicalism. To be radical is to know and be able to interpret one's own culture and personality at their very core. This is a classical theory held by revolutionaries since 1789. But, as opposed to the aforementioned distorted use of the word, and to the diluted version used by social democrats, Latin America has seen the rise of a critical, socialist, humanist school that seeks to identify its roots in each and every country and culture. Its aim is to rebuild societies like ours that are in crisis. Such popular autochthonous organizations can be seen in countries ranging from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela to Mexico, Guatemala and Cuba. There are clear historical causes *in each case*.

In today's Colombia we see a new radical democratic school following in the footsteps of Murillo Toro, Camacho Roldan, Parra and the Perez's of the late 19th century, all of whom arrived in the presidential office.

But what differentiates us 21st century radicals from those mentioned above

(so influenced by European thought they claimed the Greek gods as their guiding light and cried when reading Limartine or Victor Hugo), is that we strive to know and appreciate our own roots as peoples and nations, from which we can derive core values highly relevant to today's political context. These are the criteria that guide us as modern radicals. It is not an entirely new thought: It comes from Mariategui.

The return to and development of this legacy is the subject of a growing intellectual current that is creating public opinion already. A group of theorists and intellectuals (Myself included) is ready to promote our own brand of radicalism. We derive much from our indigenous peoples, as it is they who ultimately made Colombia what it is today, and not those foreign elites who have governed in such a disagreeable manner.

All that remains is for these new parties and movements to identify themselves with this autonomist, nationalist and culturalist search, and that they use this modern democratic radicalism as a source of internal cohesion to fuse ideological common ground and concerted action. It should be used as a battering ram against the inadmissible status quo that so frustrates the aspirations of our people.

THE POLE'S POLITICAL COMPONENTS

This brings me to two final, and related points: opposition to the current regime, and the pursuit of power.

We are all aware that our differences, which we often make too personal, are those that encompass the entire left to centre-left spectrum. Too often—and as opposed to those *in power* whom we would replace, who are at least rhetorically united—these differences are made to define us. I invite you to consider our public duty with a view to governing in the near future, and of sustaining this government. We must not let our petty differences overwhelm and destroy us. Each of us will have to examine ourselves and decide whether or not we conform to the basic tenets of radical democracy, which has always stressed the importance of social issues, and the core socialist traits that we are here encouraging. We are fortunate to belong to a movement anchored in its regional bases in which vertical control is not permitted.

I acknowledge that this proposal, for all its audacity, could provoke some internal debate and even a process of decantation within the party. But this proposal is not

meant to in any way reduce or limit the Pole. It is intended to reinforce our position opposite our political contenders. In practice this has occurred within the FSP² since its creation. I use the latter as an example since here we have both transcended our differences before and managed to forge friendships bound by mutual respect and fundamental ethics, all of which we want to translate and to carry through to the new Pole.

If the Pole is to be 'radical' in the sense outlined above, as well as 'democratic' and 'alternative', it is also now open to discussion. This will begin with the respective changes which will be made to our Governmental Program, our Ideology of Unity, the Unity Table and the National Assembly. I trust that this letter should be duly considered at the Pole's next National Congress, and that it be discussed in our Theme Groups, our Gatherings, for which I would be most grateful.

The expectations of this Congress are naturally high, and we have to prepare ourselves now in our various locations. This is a crucial time.

Hereafter what is required is that this momentum that the left has gathered does not weaken or dissolve, but continues to gather strength in the "Kaziyadu" or "rebirth" that the Huitoto people speak of. This would be for the good of the Colombian peoples, that of its working classes and that of our political practices in general'.

With thanks that fate would have us live in this epic time, I end with utmost hope and pride for belonging to the new and radical Alternative Democratic Pole.

Orlando Fals Borda. Colombian Sociologist and Historian. Honorary president of the PDA (Alternative Democratic Pole Party), the Left-wing party that made history in Colombia in the last elections defeating the two historical parties (Liberals/Conservatives) and coming second in the run for the Presidency. Pioneered the participation/research approach in sociology. Is the author of *Historia Doble de la Costa* (1976-1986).



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→ Courtesy of Maria Szulc

Latinos(as), Migrants and the Decolonization of the US Empire



Ramon Grosfoguel
and Nelson Maldonado-Torres

The United States fully entered into the 21st Century on May 1st, 2006. That day millions of migrants, mostly Latinos and their supporters went to the streets across many cities in the United States to protest the proposed criminalization of non-documented migrants in the country. Such a proposal did not come unannounced. It was the culmination of increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric and practices by popular media outlets, ideologues who pass as scholars, and vigilante groups in the southern border and elsewhere who are alarmed about increasing immigration from Mexico. The marches were massive; the largest in U.S. history. The effects were very rapidly felt as the vigilante group called the Minutemen prepared for an anti-immigrant march of their own and as the president of the United States proposed to send the National Guard into the U.S./Mexico border soon after. The "problem" of migration, however, is hardly to be solved by such measures or eliminated any time soon. Rather, we believe that the "problem" of Latino migration is only the most visible form today of a larger problem that is at the heart of the United States, a problem that still remains unsolved in its history, a problem that was conceived by the eminent African-American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois as the problem of the color-line.

Du Bois used the idea of the "color-line" to refer to a problem with national and international dimensions. Migration from Latin America brings both aspects of the problem in a potent form. This "problem" is about millions of dark, brownish, and mixed subjects who escape poverty from an impoverished South—an economic condition that is tied to colonial and racial structures and policies that are still in place globally—and which are seen as invading/infecting a traditionally "white" defined north. Today, neither the barrier of language nor the barrier of culture, nor even less la "migra" or the National Guard serve as impediments for migrants to cross the border and settle in the United States. Latinos are already the largest growing population and largest minority group in the U.S. Their numbers are to a great extent responsible for estimates by the US Census of Population that by the mid-20th century people of color will constitute a demographic majority in the country¹.

1. See Ramon Grosfoguel; Nelson Maldonado-Torres; Jose David Saldivar, "Latinos and the 'Euro-American Menace': The Decolonization of the US Empire in the 21st Century" in Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres and Saldivar (Eds), *Latinos in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in 21st Century U.S. Empire* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Press, 2005).

The horror, the hysteria, and the anxiety provoked by the amount of Latinos and above all, Mexicans, in the United States created the environment for the proposal of the criminalization of undocumented migrants. An unsettling yet realistic expectation is that this hysteria will likely increase and inspire new and more racist projects as Anglo white U.S. Americans begin to come to terms with the real possibility of becoming a minority in their

own country in the twenty-first century. From here, following Du Bois, one is tempted to state that the problem of the twenty-first century is and will be the problem of migration, but not as a problem different from racism, but intimately connected with it.

The continued reproduction of white supremacy in the United States and the legacy of radical responses to it lead to many possible scenarios, among which it is possible to discern two extremes on the regressive and progressive sides. The first scenario is an apartheid form of democracy where a white demographic minority controls the political, economic, cultural and social structures of the country with a large non-European demographic majority excluded from the power structures. This is already the case in 70 percent of the United States' cities since

2. See Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres and Saldivar.

the late 1990s². Apartheid has been historically the political situation lived by most minorities in the USA. However, the formal acknowledge-

ment of equal rights to minorities with the 1964 Civil Rights amendment legitimated the claim that the country is democratic. Part of what is at stake for the impoverished communities of color is the problematization of such a claim. Can the USA continue to claim to be a democratic country under those conditions? This is the basic scenario and set of challenges that the U.S. faces in the 21st century. Political activity will be largely defined in response to them. While one possible response resides in new formations of apartheid, another one (more consistent with democracy)



→ Courtesy of Maria Szulc

is the decolonization of the economic, political, cultural and social power relations in the country. Most likely the two scenarios will occur simultaneously and compete with each other and with different reformist projects. However given the history of the United States we are inclined to believe that anything less than an explicit and dialogical project of decolonization and emancipation (from different forms of slavery that continue the legacy of anti-indigenous and anti-black feeling) risks reproducing old and new forms of apartheid with the appearance of democracy.

The use of the concept apartheid here is, to say the least, controversial. However, hardly any other term conveys the troubling aspect of manifold racial projects in the United States today, particularly those that are manifested in the different Bills about immigration considered today in the U.S. Congress. It is important to clarify that the discussion in Congress is not a Republican versus Democrat nor a racist and anti-racist debate. All of the Bills under discussion are bipartisan and all share racist/colonial premises, which highlight the positions coming from white elites to confront the new demography of the United States in the 21st century.

Although there are four different Bills, they are divided between two main conceptions: those who propose overt forms of exclusion and discrimination (supported by Sassenbrenner and others) which we call *apartheid forms of political control*, and those who

propose more subtle and complex forms of white elite domination and exploitation (supported by Bush, Kennedy and others) which we refer to as *neo-apartheid forms of political domination*. The former proposes to keep the 12 million illegal immigrants as illegal and excluded from human and civil rights, while the latter offers the possibility of a guest worker program where immigrants from the South can work without equal rights in labor and civil rights as a cheap labor force inside the USA.

With the end of American Apartheid after the 1964 Civil Rights Amendment, proposals for apartheid forms of democracy are a minority right now. But, given the continued perverse influence of racist discourses entangled with the challenges to white supremacy by the 21st century's new demography outlined above, proposals for overt apartheid forms of democracy have the potential of re-emerging very strongly. In their absence neo-apartheid policies and political projects will carry the agenda. We use neo-apartheid in similar ways to how neo-colonialism is used today. Neo-colonialism refers to the continuities of forms of coloniality (domination and exploitation) of the North over the South in the international division of labor, where the overwhelming majority of peripheral countries are formally independent states. Similarly, neo-apartheid refers to the continuities of apartheid forms of racial exclusion and segregation (white domination and exploitation; anti-black and anti-indigenous policies of segregation, some of which are extended to colored folks at large) in a context where human

3. A good example is the Bush Administration where white elites keep the dominant power position in the country incorporating a few Black and Brown faces while keeping under exclusion and subordination the Black and Brown masses.

beings are formally and legally conceived as equals. New racism such as color-blind racism and tokenism such as the current multicultural face of white power are at the center of the neo-apartheid strategies³.

The debates within the apartheid camp are going to continue throughout the next decade. White elites will continue fighting within the pendulum of apartheid versus neo-apartheid forms of political domination. The recent Bush Administration decision to militarize the US-Mexico border by mobilizing the National Guard is an example of a major concession of the neo-apartheid camp to the apartheid camp. But in order to better understand the politics that concern migration and the challenge to Anglo-white hegemony in the United States it is necessary to clarify the different modes of incorporation and segregation of Latina/os in the United States as well as dispel the idea that the absence of race discourse in politics is an indication of lack of racism. This will serve to provide some ideas about Latina/o political strategies after the "event" of May 1st, 2006.

INCORPORATION AND COLONIALITY OF POWER: THE DIVERSITY OF LATINA/OS AND THE WHITE-ANGLO CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

In order to understand the problems that emerge in respect to migrant and minority incorporation into metropolitan societies like the United States it is important to make some conceptual distinctions among diverse migration experiences. First, it is important to consider that migrants do not arrive to an empty or neutral space. Rather migrants arrive to metropolitan spaces that are already "polluted" by a colonial history, a colonial imaginary, colonial knowledges and racial/ethnic hierarchies linked to a history of empire. That is, migrants arrive to a space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality. There is no neutral space of migrant incorporation. If we apply the coloniality perspective to the history of U.S. migration studies we would need to distinguish between three types of transnational migrants: *colonial/racial subjects of empire, immigrants and colonial immigrants*⁴. Latinos are no exception. Within the Latino category there are multiple experiences of incorporation inside the United States.

4. See Grosfoguel, *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Colonial/racial subjects of empire are those subjects that are inside the empire as part of a long colonial history such as African-Americans, Native-Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, Chinese-Americans, etc. The metropolitan colonial imaginary, racial/ethnic hierarchy and racist discourses are frequently constructed in relation to these colonial subjects. They arrived to the United States or the United States "arrived" to them as part of a colonization process that gave wealth and privileges to Euro-Americans. There is a long history of racialization and inferiorization towards colonial/racial subjects of the empire that informs the present power relations of the U.S. empire. The "coloniality of power" of the metropolitan country is organized around and against these colonial subjects with a long history inside the empire. Colonial subjects are frequently at the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy.

In the conceptualization used here, immigrants are those migrants that are racialized as "white" (other European migrants such as British, Dutch, Germans, French, Italians, Polish, Jewish, Irish, etc. or migrants coming from other regions of the world but from European origin such as Euro-Australians, Euro-Latinos, Euro-Africans, etc.) and that experience upward social mobility in the first, second or third generation. These are migrants that once they adopt the metropolitan language, accent, demeanors and manners, are assimilated within the public domain to the dominant metropolitan populations. They pass as "whites" or are constructed as "honorary whites". These migrants include the 1960s cohort of Cuban anti-communist refugees

that through a combination of US foreign policy and Federal government policies were transformed into a Cold War showcase and incorporated as "honorary whites" in Miami⁵.

5. See Grosfoguel.

Colonial immigrants are those migrants coming from peripheral neo-colonial locations in the capitalist world-economy that, although they were never directly colonized by the metropolitan country to which they migrate, at the time of arrival they were "racialized" in similar ways to the colonial/racial subjects of empire that were already there before for a longer time. We refer here to the "Puertorricanization" of Dominicans in New York City, the "Chicanonization" of Salvadoreans in Los Angeles, the "Africanamericanization" of Haitians and Afro-Cuban marielitos in Miami, the "Antillanization" of Dominicans in Amsterdam, the "arabenization" of Dominicans in Madrid, and so on. When racist discourses constructed towards the colonial/racial subjects of empire are transferred to the recently arrived migrants from the periphery, we have the reproduction of the experience of colonial immigrants.



→ Courtesy of Maria Szulc

Thus, many migrants from the formally "independent" Caribbean, Central American and South American countries become "colonial immigrants" in the United States, even though they are not directly colonized by the metropole to which they migrate and they have class backgrounds that are higher than the "colonial migrants" that are part of the colonial/racial subjects of empire. However, it is important to mention that many of these migrants, such as the Dominicans, arrived to the United States as part of direct military U.S. intervention or, such as for the Guatemalans and the Salvadoreans⁶, as part of U.S. indirect military support of dictators.

The conceptualization provided here is a response to the "immigrant analogy" that informs many migration studies. The "immigrant analogy" takes as a point of reference the successful European migration experience and extrapolates this experience to the rest of the migrant groups. Consequently, if a migrant group is not as successful as the European migrants, it is accounted for by a "cultural" problem inside the migrant community⁷. By flattening down the diverse modes of incorporation and experiences of migrant groups with a cultural reductionist argument, the hegemonic population in the racial/ethnic hierarchy avoids confronting their own racist discrimination and colonial legacies.

7. See Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963).

This problem is linked with a crucial myth in today's world, the argument that colonial structures and racist ideologies are a "problem" of peripheral regions but not of core zones. Contrary to this view, we believe that what we see today is the reproduction and consolidation of the old colonial/racial hierarchies of Europeans/Euro-Americans vs. non-Europeans (particularly dark skin and "colored") and the hegemony of racist ideologies inside each metropolitan center. In order to understand this process we need to link the present racial/ethnic hierarchy to the colonial history of each empire. Otherwise it makes no sense to question why people coming from colonial or neo-colonial experiences keep being at the bottom of the social structures and the targets of metropolitan racism. In New York's racial/ethnic hierarchy, Mexicans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and African-Americans share the bottom of the hierarchy while Euro-Americans are at the top. The same could be said of Latinos in Los Angeles, Chicago or Philadelphia. Those groups coming from colonial or neo-colonial experiences are the ones with the highest poverty rates. Chicano, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Mexican migrants share the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy of these cities together with African-Americans, Native-Americans, Filipinos and Pacific Islanders. A constant feature of coloniality is that white European/Euro-American groups are always at the top of the racial/ethnic hierarchy

despite the changes over time of racist discourses, racial dynamics and the groups that share the bottom of the hierarchy.

The United States' coloniality of power is constituted by the supremacy of white males. The founding fathers of the country were all white plantation owners that wrote in the U.S. constitution an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory set of ideals and norms that merged ideas of freedom and liberty, as lived and desired by the majority of the white settlers, who were themselves the majority in the new independent states (a majority achieved, to be sure, partly through segregation and cleansing), with conceptions of self and society that safeguarded racial and sexual discrimination, exclusion and hatred towards women and minorities. It is true that the ambiguous ideas about freedom and liberty of the white settlers were to some extent in contradiction with the reality of slavery and serfdom, but they were also to some extent consistent with it, which makes any present or future project of decolonization not only one of appropriation of ideas but also one of conceptual creation. The process of decolonization that took place in the Americas in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was, in this light, an incomplete project. Like many other countries after it, but with the important difference that the "majority" of the population was white, the United States achieved "independence without decolonization", that is, a "colonial independence" in 1776 with white male élites in ruling positions. These paradoxical terms, used by Quijano to describe the independences of the Americas, refer to the fact that the old colonial/racial hierarchies put in place during several centuries of colonial administrations were left intact after independence. That the majority of the population in the new independent states was white guaranteed the acceleration of capitalistic forms of relations, which depended on salaried labor—historically associated with whiteness.

It is to such a relation between race and labor roles that developed in the heat of the colonial enterprise from the sixteenth century that the coloniality of power refers⁸. In this

8. See Quijano, Anibal, "Coloniality of Power, Ethnocentrism, and Latin America," *NEPANTLA* Vol. 1, N. 3, pp. 533-580.

configuration most whites could become salaried workers, while most blacks and indigenous peoples were confined to roles as slaves and serfs. Countries where the majority of the population was white thus

"developed" differently than those composed in their majority or to a large extent by black or indigenous peoples. According to Quijano, difference in "development" cannot be attributed solely or primarily to racial or cultural differences. Underdevelopment is neither something imposed to a "nation-state" or region from without, as the classical theory of dependency had it, or an innate feature of a people's culture—a "state of mind" as some have put it. As we have commented already, arguments that essentialize cultural differences tend to reflect the racist

structure of power rather than explain it. They themselves are part and parcel of the coloniality of power, which is tied not only with labor but with knowledge as well.

The coloniality of power is therefore not a reality of the past or simply an event, but a very powerful matrix with global reach that shapes inter-subjective viewpoints and structures relations of power. Its presence in the United States is very obvious. It helps to explain why the 1964 Civil Rights Amendment and the 1965 Voting Rights Act did not eradicate the racial and gender inequalities of the country. As we have seen, poverty in America is still constituted along racial and gender lines. Around 20% of the total individuals in households headed by white females of non-Hispanic origin live in poverty. While for people living in African-American or Latina female-headed households, 37% of the total population lives under poverty. In sum, poverty is racialized and gendered in America. That the majority of the US population is white, and can therefore claim all the benefits of citizenship while also feeling that it is being adequately represented in the political structure has helped to deny the presence of anti-black and anti-latino racism and coloniality. However, given the forthcoming demographic transformations of the United States in this century, if the legacy of white supremacy in the United States continues, we will move very rapidly within a few decades to a near-apartheid form of democracy where the demographic majorities are politically excluded and disempowered and with a demographic minority ruling the country. Euro-Americans would continue to dominate the minorities as it has always been for the last four centuries but with the aggravated fact that now non-Hispanic whites will be the demographic minority not just in a few states but in the whole country.

What will happen when the social majority, that is, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant America, no longer remains the demographic majority? What will happen when the economic, political, and cultural structures keep being dominated by WASPs while the demographic majority is constituted by non-white groups? Could this still be called a democracy? This scenario for the near future of the country is already a reality in many American cities since the late 1990s.

DECOLONIZATION AND THE US EMPIRE

The theoretical discussion outlined above is crucial to understand the complexities and contradictions involved in the discussion of "Latinos (as)." There is a multiplicity of experiences inside this category that are important to understand for a decolonization project

inside the U.S. nation/empire. There are Latino(a) groups that in our terminology are racial/colonial subjects of the U.S. empire, groups that are colonial immigrants and those who we conceptualize as immigrants because they have attained the privileges of "whiteness". These Latino(a) groups incorporated as whites tend to encounter different expressions of racism. As such, many of them have no urgent or immediate interest in the politics of decolonization. In terms of the struggles of undocumented immigrants they can easily take side with the Apartheid and Neo-Apartheid proposals of white-American élites. The Latino(a) groups with the most potential to decolonize the US empire are those defined as colonial/racial subjects of the empire and colonial immigrants whose everyday life is shaped by racial discrimination and whose bodies are incarcerated, exploited or segregated by the existing neo-apartheid forms of domination in the United States. The recent mobilizations against the racist immigration bills discussed in Congress were composed mostly by Latino(a) colonial immigrants and Latino(a) colonial/racial subjects of the U.S. empire. Still there is a multiplicity of contradictions/conflicts inside and between these two groups. Just as there are radical *decolonizing* voices among white anglos and immigrants, there is a diversity of proposals among colonial/racial subjects and colonial immigrants.

We would like to discuss one of these conflicts: the very meaning of the struggle. Similar to the white élites conflicts between apartheid versus neo-apartheid camps, we would like to offer a typology that can be used to map the political projects that of people who participated in the May 1st marches:

Colonial Positions: There are many who would support the reforms of the white élites neo-apartheid camp. In order to attain legal residence in the USA they would support the deportation of millions who have not lived enough years in the country, while themselves, having the right to stay, would have to conform to have less rights than common citizens. These are still colonial positions that play in the hands of white supremacy. Many people that sustain this position perceive other minority groups as rivals and sometimes reproduce racist discourses toward themselves and toward other groups.

Reformist De-colonial Positions: These are held by those who push for bestowing equal civil and labor rights to undocumented immigrants, giving them an amnesty and allowing them to live in the United States. They will struggle for equal rights of people of color across the USA, but would leave the imperial capitalist status quo intact.

Radical Decolonizing Positions: These are held by those who link the struggle for equal rights for undocumented immigrants to a decolonial anti-racist struggle against white supremacy and the imperial state. They struggle for a borderless world, for solidarity among people of color inside the USA and link their demands to anti-imperialist positions against the US imperial role in Iraq and Latin America.

These three positions as well as different combinations of them were present during the May 1st 2006 demonstrations. Which one will be dominant among Latinos(as) and among people of color is going to be significant in the forthcoming decades. If the Latinos(as) affirm Euro-centrism and coloniality of power, they will be part of the problem and not part of the solution, the de-racialization and decolonization of the United States. However if they decolonize their own cultures and epistemologies and affirm their African, indigenous, Arab and Asiatic traditions, they have the potential to be a decolonizing bridge inside the United States towards the radical decolonization of the U.S. Empire. The concept of "bridging" is, of course, not new in discussions on the politics and decolonization. Chicana feminism has explored the term with most seriousness⁹. The legacy of this work as well as that of the present decolonizing voices in the United States, Latin America, and elsewhere serves as a primary material of reflection for a politics of decolonization, which points to the need of conceiving education as empowerment and empowerment as the generous interaction of a new decolonizing polity marching and struggling for true democracy and freedom.

9. See Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, Eds. *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981).

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The Latin American Turn:

P O T E N T I A L I T I E S

- The People. The Popular and "Populism"
- The Most Sublime of Fetishists



→ Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre meet Ernesto 'Che' Guevara
Courtesy of Oscar Guardiola-Rivera

Korda

THE PEOPLE. THE POPULAR AND "POPULISM".



ENRIQUE DUSSEL¹

1. Thesis 11 taken from *20 Tesis de Política*. Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores/CREFAL, with permission of the author.

[11.1] Social movements and hegemonic claims.

[11.1.1] We can call the inter-subjective referent of the current political order the "political community". However, to avoid the pitfalls of liberal metaphysic individualism and the substantive collectivism of real socialism, here the term *community* signals the original inter-subjective, relational insertion of the singular subjectivity of each citizen. We are born within a political community that is always presupposed philo- (as a species) and onto-genetic (as singular). From a political point of view, this concept is still an abstraction, without the contradictions and conflicts that *always* necessarily mark it. Let us move then from the simple to the complex, from the abstract to the specific. Let us go now from the "political community" to the "people".

[11.1.2] If all the sectors of the political community had had their demands fulfilled from the outset, there would be no social protest, nor the formation of popular movements struggling because of the unsatisfactory achievement of their claims. It is from the *negation* of these needs—in some dimension of life or democratic participation—that the struggle for the recognition is frequently transformed into mobilizations laying claims (which do not expect justice to be the gift of the powerful but the achievement of the movements themselves). There will be as many movements as there are *differential demands*.²

2. See Ernesto Laclau, *La Razón Populista* (2005).

[11.1.3] The political question arises whenever we acknowledge that there are as many demands as there are needs around which movements are born: feminist movements,

anti-racist, of the 'elderly', indigenous movements, movements of the marginalized and the unemployed, the movement of the industrial working class, of the impoverished peasants or *sin tierra*, and the more geopolitical movements that struggle against colonial metropolises, Euro-centrism, militarism—or "pacifist movements"—the ecological movement, etc. Each one of these movements has differential claims, which initially oppose one another. How is it possible to pass from *one* particular claim to a *hegemonic* demand that can unify all the socials movements at a certain stage? That is the question of the passage from differential particularities to a *universality* that includes them.

[11.1.4] The solution to the question of the passage from each claim to a universal *hegemonic demand* is the proposal of Ernesto Laclau. The process involved in this "passage" is complex and cannot

3. There may be a problem with Dussel's presentation of Laclauian equivalence as 'univocity': the problem is that this term suggests, as it becomes clearer below, the idea of an all-encompassing universality, one that subsumes all particulars, does away with their specificity and totalises a social space. However, that is not the case in Laclau, since for him universality is always contaminated by a particularity it cannot master. For Laclau universality is not an underlying datum, but a power. This is in contrast with Dussel's reading.

4. See B. de Sousa Santos, *El Milenio Huérfano* (2005).

[11.1.6] However it would be possible to think that the claims of the movements are in the process of incorporating the claims of the other movements (1,2,3 N of *chart 11.1*). The Feminist movement for instance discovers that women of *colour* suffer the worst treatment; that workers receive the least salary; that women do not have a role in representative politics; that women in peripheral countries suffer even more discrimination, and so on. In the same way indigenous people encounter exploitation of the community in the capitalist system in the dominant Western culture, in the subtle yet still existing racism. That is to say that through mutual information, dialogue, translation of proposals and through a shared militant praxis, there is a slow constitution of an *analogical hegemony* (the *arrows* of the *chart 11.1* point to this process of analogical hegemony, considering the distinction of each movement) that somehow includes all the claims, although there could be some that, as E. Laclau thinks, might have priority. Thus, for example, in the process of emancipation from Spain in the 1810s, "Freedom!" achieved undeniable supremacy as a unifying claim by all the groups of the patriotic bloc in Latin America.

5. Here Dussel refers to the way in which those involved in the construction of a 'movement of movements' assume 'with clarity' (that is, without sacrificing their distinctiveness) the (analogically hegemonic) 'demand of demands'. Hence, the question here is that of the form of the demand: the coincidence of same and different (what Nicholas of Cusa called *coincidentia oppositorum*). (Translator's note)

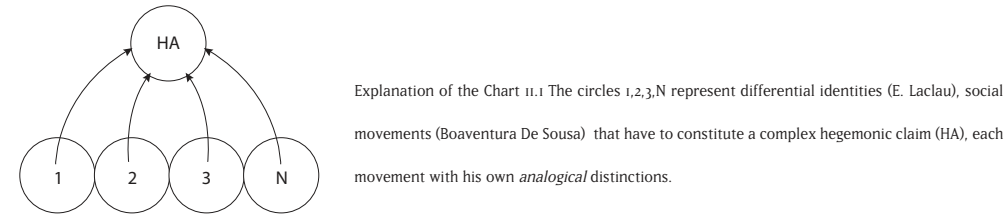
be analyzed here in all its detail. For now, it will suffice to say that such a process entails the production of an equivalential univocity.³

[11.1.5] In contrast, Boaventura de Sousa Santos thinks that every claim should enter into a process of dialogue and *translation* in order to achieve an understanding between the movements that is not an all-embracing universality.⁴ His critical postmodernism leaves space for what can be called an open hermeneutical dialogic.

[11.1.7] Once joined with the critical sectors of the political community, including the small bourgeoisie facing unemployment and the national bourgeoisie destroyed by trans-national rivalries, movements start to construct a "bloc" from below, developing a more national, popular, con-

sciousness around unsatisfied needs and claims that they assume with a clear understanding of the form of these claims.⁵

CHART 11.1 - Process of Constitution of Analogical Hegemony Originating from Distinctive Claims.



[11.2] The "people". The "plebs" and the "populus".

[11.2.1] There emerges the necessity of having a category that can include the unity of all these movements, classes, sectors, etc. in a political struggle. The "people" is the strictly political category (since it is neither strictly sociological nor strictly economic) that appears as essential, despite its ambiguity.⁶ Now, this ambiguity is not the result of equivocity, but rather, of inevitable complexity. Fidel Castro appealed to this notion in a famous speech, and referred to it as belonging within the context of a 'discourse on struggle'. That is to say, he explained that we use this concept in the political, strategic and tactical sense, as follows:

"We understand the term 'people', whenever we speak of the struggle, as the mass that has not been redeemed [...], that yearns for the great and wise transformation of all orders and hierarchies, and is ready to achieve such transformation when they come to believe in something or someone.⁷ above all when they believe in themselves [...] Whenever we speak of the struggle we call 'people' the six hundred thousand unemployed Cubans⁸ [...], the five hundred thousand land workers living in miserable huts [...], the four hundred thousand industrial and temporary farm workers [...] whose salaries go from the hands of the boss to those of the foreman [...], the hundred thousand small peasants who live and die working in a land not of their own, always looking sadly at it like Moses to the promised land⁹ [...], the three hundred thousand teachers and professors [...], the two hundred thousand small traders overwhelmed by debt [...], the hundred thousand young professionals [...]...eager to join the struggle full of hope [...] This is the people, those who suffer all the misfortunes and are therefore ready to fight with all their courage!¹⁰

6. See "La Cuestión Popular" in my work *La Producción Teórica de Marx* (1985, pp. 400ss).

7. Castro recognises here the importance of the individual subject in the leadership of the political process of construction of a community.

8. They are not wage earners as such, they cannot reproduce their lives, they are the *pauper ante festum* of Marx, the marginalized, the *lumpen*.

9. Notice the use of popular religious language, something "not quite orthodox" for a Marxist at the time, revealing other sources in liberation discourse. In contemporary times Evo Morales of Bolivia would find it an obvious reference, used before by Tupac Amaru, J.M. Morelos, the Sandinistas, etc.

10. "La Historia Me Absolverá", Fidel Castro (1975), p.39.

[11.2.2] In later texts Castro includes abandoned children, women in a sexist society, the

elderly, etc. In countries like Bolivia, Perú (the country of J. C. Mariátegui, accused of being a "populist" by dogmatic Marxists), Guatemala or Mexico we also have to consider indigenous peoples. We must not forget the masses composed of the marginalized because of the process of urbanization, nor the poor immigrants that have recently arrived, nor those politically excluded to the exterior of the State, etc.

[11.2.3] Among the Aztecs, the *altépetl*, and among the Mayas the *Ama* are the terms for "community" and "people", with an inclusive intensity of the "we" unknown to the modern-Western experiences.¹¹ That is why in Latin America, because of the indigenous influences throughout the continent, the word "people" has a deeper meaning than in the romance languages.

11. See Lenkersdorf, (2002).

[11.2.4] The "people" establish a division or internal fracture in the political community. There can be citizens, as members of a State, but we must distinguish between those in power and those who have their needs frustrated by oppression or exclusion. We will call *plebs* (in Latin) the people as opposed to the elites, the oligarchy, the ruling classes of a political system. The plebs, as a part of the community, tend to embrace all the citizens (*populus*) in a *new* future order where their actual claims can be fulfilled and where equality can be reached thanks to the solidarity in the struggle of the excluded.

[11.2.5] It is not at altogether strange that Antonio Negri opposed the *multitude* (as he defines it) to the people, rejecting the latter as a substantial and inadequate concept:¹² "Would it be possible to imagine today a new process of legitimization which would not rest on the sovereignty of the *people*, but on the bio-political productivity of the multitude?"¹³ I am tempted to give a negative answer; however, it is necessary to understand *people* in an improved manner.

12. Ibid, p.108.

[11.3] The "social bloc of the oppressed", the popular and populism.

[11.3.1] The "people" become a *collective political actor*, not a substantial, fetishized "historical subject". The people appear in a critical political conjunction, in the crevasses of the system, when they obtain an explicit consciousness of the analogical hegemony of demands, and define from this form the strategy and tactics, thereby becoming an *actor*, constructing history on the basis of a new foundation. As social movements argue: "Power is built from below!"

[11.32] In order to avoid such a substantialization (the working class as the "historic subject" of standard Marxism) Antonio Gramsci uses the concept of "bloc". A "bloc" is not a stone, a pile of 'inert matter'. Insofar far as its consistency is concerned, it is only a composite: it can assemble and disassemble. It can harbour "contradictions" within itself (as Mao Tse-tung argued); it appears with strength in a moment and disappears when it has accomplished its task (in case it achieves it, for the people also

fail, and quite frequently). It is a "*social bloc*" because it originates in the conflicts that take place in material fields (ecological extinction, economic poverty, destruction of cultural identity), and from here it slowly passes the first threshold of civil society, and from there it moves on to the second threshold of political society. These steps have been clearly taken by Evo Morales, who exerts the leadership of the movement of *campesinos cocaleros*; he participated in the mobilizations in civil society; then founded a political party (in the political society) and was elected President of the Bolivian Republic. The people are a social bloc "of the oppressed and the excluded". That is what differentiates the plebs from the rest of the dominant community and the future community (the *populus*). In the case of Evo Morales, the people, the "social bloc of the oppressed" constitute the "historical bloc in power" (obedient *power*, in its initial actions and declarations at the beginning of 2006).

[11.3.3] We can now understand that the "popular" is what belongs to the people in a strict sense (what refers to the "social bloc of oppressed"), which in politics is the last reference and regenerative reserve (*hiper-potencia*), but still in and of itself. What is "popular", such as the culture, the usages, the economy, the ecology, is permanent under all circumstances, in particular when we consider pre-modern peoples (such as the Mayas, the Aymaras, the Quechuas, etc.), who accompanying modernity attempt to go beyond it (towards a trans-capitalist, *trans*-modern civilization, rather than *post*-modern, given that the latter is still modern, Eurocentric, metropolitan).

[11.34] When the people give themselves institutions (*potestas*), as it happened in Latin America between 1930 and 1954, they merely set up "populist" regimes. This is the step of the "historical bloc in power" which actualises a merely bourgeois project of emancipation for the metropolitan bourgeoisie of the geopolitical "centre". In this step the aim was social integration for the purposes of strengthening national protected markets (a possibility between the world wars). The quasi-revolutions of G. Vargas, L. Cárdenas or J.D. Perón were the events that achieved greater hegemony in the 20th century; however, they were only reforms within a capitalist horizon of "social agreement" between the growing industrial working class and the traditional peasant sector. Until the end of the 20th century this "populism" was the process of institutionalization that enabled the achievement of a number of "popular" demands. Nowadays, however, people like Donald Rumsfeld use the word "populist" as an insult, a critic, meaning something close to demagoguery, fascism, the extreme right. This eventual meaning will not last for long because it is not based on any theoretical foundation. It is a superficial rhetoric and a denigration of the opponent.

Translated by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera.

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The Most Sublime of Fetishists



OSCAR GUARDIOLA

My purpose in this essay is to develop a short genealogy of the term 'fetishism' and its introduction into the language of criticism. In turn, this genealogy is part of a wider argument for a renewed form of materialism and critique. I wish to extend the term 'matter' to all composite entities, human and non-human alike, once we have accepted that *all* entities are composite and none of them simpler than others. To my mind, there are no criteria to distinguish materials that carry more ontological weight than others; therefore, the establishment of the human mind as (active or retro-active) efficient cause of inert or (affectively) invested matter must be considered suspect.

The term 'fetish' is probably the most important contribution of Portuguese/Spanish languages to modern metaphysics, political philosophy and theory (together with the term *guerrilla*): from ethnology and religion studies, to political economy and psychoanalysis. Once incorporated into French, German and English *fetich* become a crucial notion for criticism: it was made famous by Marx in *Capital* and later on by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*.

The term *fetich* comes from the transformation of the Portuguese *feitoço* into *hecho*, signifying 'made' or 'made by art'. Between Portuguese and Spanish the *f* often transforms into *h* (como en *fermosa* y *hermosa*) but the common root carries the notion of something made by human hands, an artifice, a copy, as degraded and therefore unworthy of our attention because of its disconnection from the alleged authenticity of nature. Because of this, the conditions under which an artifice becomes valuable as such become suspicious. But there is an additional, much less noticed level of meaning attached to the term: that of the power of the fetish itself. Although a mere artefact, the fetish infiltrates all the other objects it encounters. The

→ Nadin Ospina, Courtesy of the artist

suspicion that accompanies the fetish comes from these two levels of meaning, but as I will try to show, it is the second that becomes more powerful for criticism.

The term entered Anglo-Germanic languages via France, where the term *fétiche* was used for the first time in connection to the study of Afrological religious forms, in particular those of West African peoples, but also those which derived from the West African diaspora caused by the slave trade, such as *voudoun*, *candomblé* and *santería* in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this usage it referred to an object, a charm or an amulet, through which gods, spirits and ancestors would communicate or intervene. Fetishes anticipate their power, and actualise it.

Importantly, the context of this first usage of the term is that of colonial transactions around unique gods and spaces. As a result of conflicts, alliances and conquest, social and territorial bonds may enlarge, diminish or break down and disseminate, through, for instance, exile, caused by chattel slavery, as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or by modern migrations, as it happens today. Anthropologist Manuel Durand-Barthez has observed that in these situations 'contact is kept with gods who emanate from human minds and simultaneously exert a determining influence on human beings. These can, in turn, phagocyte foreign

1. Durand-Barthez, Manuel. 'West Africa/Haiti: The Voodooic Bridge', in *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14, 2002. Available at <http://www.inst.at/trans/14Nr.b/arthezi4.htm>.

gods, even enemy gods, whether victorious or defeated'. What Durand-Barthez explains, having in mind the 1938 encounter between French ethnologist Michel Leiris and Cuban painter Wilfredo Lam, is the process that Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade called 'anthropophagy' and Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz 'transculturation'.

As can be seen, *fétiche* is a hugely significant term. The very fact that it entered the languages of northern Europe via an ethno-anthropological study of West African peoples from Portugal and/or Spain, suggests that the context of this transit is precisely that of the emergence of capitalism and slavery at the heart of the world-system. This is the world that impinged upon Marx's observations. He might have picked up the insight concerning 'made up' gods being posited as the origin of everything and thereby canonized and worshipped *as if* they were the real thing from anthropological accounts and stories concerning the destiny of social, religious and political forms in situations of conquest and encounter. When one reconstructs the genealogy of Marx's earlier usage of the term in the 1840s, what emerges is a fascinating and, to my mind, little known network of connections.

As Enrique Dussel observes², the young Marx 'discovered' fetishism while writing on the limitations on the right to freedom of the press imposed by the Prussian government. In Chapter 3 (May 10, 1842) of his *On Freedom of the Press* we find the following lines:

A surprising turn of phrase! The influence of the province on its Assembly is characterised as something external to which the conviction of the Assembly of Estates is contrasted as a delicate inner feeling whose highly sensitive nature calls out to the province: Noli me tangere!³ (...)

3. Don't touch me!

We will do what we like (...) Who are we? The estates (...) The Assembly of the estates has a province to which the privilege of its activity extends, but the province has no estates through which it could itself be active. Of course, the province has the right, under prescribed conditions, to create these gods for itself, but as soon as they are created, it must, like a fetish worshipper, forget that these gods are its own handiwork (...) We are confronted here with the peculiar spectacle, due perhaps to the nature of the Provincial Assembly, of the province having to fight not so much through its representatives as against them.⁴

This is a very important passage. Here Marx is referring to the nature of the Assembly of Estates, what we would call Parliament nowadays, in the language of a modern constitutional lawyer who criticizes the conception of the Assembly that follows from the Speaker's words justifying the Assembly's privilege to publish its debates when and how it wants. In order to understand it correctly we must acknowledge that Marx's conception of constitutional law is, at this point, miles away from what can be called 'deflationary constitutionalism'. Deflationary constitutionalism reduces the projective capacities of a political collective, by denying that constructive future-oriented propositions make sense (that which entails irrationalism in respect to the future or the utopian dimension); it 'deflates' actual reality, including future time, into mere possibility. In contrast, Marx's conception of constitutionalism, as it appears in this early text, is realist in respect to the future and seems closer to what Larry Kramer has recently termed 'popular constitutionalism'⁵.

Kramer has shown convincingly that by the late eighteenth century this was precisely the prevalent view, aided and abetted by a number of epoch-making events, particularly the revolutionary cycle in the Americas and elsewhere. As it is well known, the cornerstone of the Atlantic revolutions was an understanding of the people themselves, conceived as a 'compact', that is, a meshwork, rebellious humans in alliance with their civil political machinery, as having produced a closure in history: an anticipation or visionary speculation that had produced (retroactively) causal effects in the actual world.

Notice the terms used by St. George Tucker in the appendix to his 1803 edition of *Blackstone's Commentaries*:

The American revolution has formed a new epoch in the history of civil institutions, by reducing to practice, what, before, had been supposed to exist only in the visionary speculations of theoretical writers (...) The world, for the first time since the annals of its inhabitants began, saw an original written compact formed by the free and deliberate voices of the individuals disposed to unite in the same social bonds; thus exhibiting a political phenomenon unknown to former ages (...) The powers of the several branches of government are defined, and the excess of them, as well in the legislature, as in the other branches, finds limits, which cannot be transgressed without offending against the greater power from whom all authority, among us, is derived: to wit, the PEOPLE.⁶

6. Quoted by Kramer, Larry D. The People..., 6-7.

St. George Tucker describes here the revolution as a vicious circle or a loop, and



→ Nadin Ospina, Courtesy of the artist

dimension. In this dimension, gods, visions and spectres emanated from human minds simultaneously exert a determining causal influence on human beings (crucially, through technical objects: in this case legal-political technology). This entails a special metaphysics of transition and withdrawal: their power is to transit or project themselves into the future and look back from there at the present⁷. In turn, this allows them to transform imposed or external conditions into internal conditions.

This is what the people do (through their civil/technical machinery): transiting from the past/present the future is/was open, but in the transition to the future, from its vantage point, the forces that led to it appear to have acted with the power of fate. The present is 'infiltrated' by a vision coming from the future. This is the language of self-determination, prophetic 'sovereignty' and transculturation that characterises the period of revolutionary constitutionalism in the Americas and elsewhere.

In Haiti, for instance, site of one of the three main social-political revolutions of the time, the only one carried out by slaves of West African provenance, the slaves did not invoke the avenging God of their masters, which seemed to them indeterminate and distant —unable to get angry nor to frighten— but rather, trusted their own gods who infiltrated deities

speaks of the people as transiting through time, seeking the circle's fixed point where the visionary speculation (on the part of the past with regard to the future) and the construction (of the future by the past) coincide. The people are deemed 'sovereign' here in two senses: First, in the sense of acquiring a greater power through the operation of the legislature and the other branches, whose excessive will (that is, if separated as an isolated element from the compact) is thereby limited. This is the origin of the doctrine of the separation of powers, and thus, the very heart of the constitution. Second, in the sense of having the power to *predict* the future and *make it happen* (deliberate voices ... disposed to unite ... thus exhibiting a phenomenon unknown to former ages).

Put otherwise, the people acquire a greater power in that they transit to or communicate with the haunting structure or utopian

(saints) of the opposing camp. This structure is similar to that of a story with which the young Marx was familiar: the story explains a rather obscure bond between the conquerors and the conquered peoples in the Caribbean. The former were fascinated by the puerile gods of the latter while these, in turn, became fascinated with the gold of the conquerors. The Europeans' money becomes a fetish while the indigenous perceive the power that it exerts upon the conquerors, which appears to them inexplicable and supernatural⁸. They trust their own fetish-vision (Maroa, El Dorado, Moctezuma's revenge and so on) to infiltrate the god-money of the opposite camp.

Nancy explains that this fetishizing was therefore at the same time parallel and symmetrical to that of the commodity itself, and that Marx's early reading of this story, going back to his student years and his then marked interest in the analysis of religious forms, is crucial. To our purposes, it matters to emphasize that this structure of contacted 'gods' or projected visions and fixed points in the future, retroactively determining the present, is central to the language of popular sovereignty that emerged in the Americas and shook the world in the eighteenth century. This is the language of Tucker and Marx.

What is missing (in Tucker, but also in Marx) is an elucidation of the particular metaphysics that underlines such a language. Political philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy calls this 'metaphysics of projected time'; and in that sense we may speak of a populist or 'projected' constitutionalism. I prefer to call it 'the sense of the unfolding' merely to emphasize that we are not speaking of transcendence or the supernatural, but rather, of time-matter, that time-matter has a directionality, and that such directionality can be conceived as the wrapping and unwrapping of forms within forms. 'Matter', in this sense, is not to be understood as 'content' opposite to form, or as having a purpose imposed from without by the causal powers of men. Rather, it should be understood as having a direction of its own in the structural (rather than causal) sense, as composing/decomposing or 'infiltrating' form⁹. This would be a neo-baroque ontology of powerful objects and vicious circles, rather than rizhomes.

This all sounds weird only if we maintain the religious sense of unfolding and the prophetic as exclusive, but this is unnecessary:

We would say today that the prophet's word has a *performative* power: by saying things, it brings them into existence. Now, the prophet knows that. One might be tempted to conclude that the prophet has the power of a revolutionary: he speaks so that things will change in the direction he intends to give them (...) The prophet is the one who, more prosaically, seeks out the fixed point of the problem, the point where voluntarism achieves the very thing that fatality dictates. The prophecy includes itself in its own discourse; it sees itself realizing what it announces. In this sense (...) prophets are legion in our modern democratic societies, founded on science and technology¹⁰

8. Nancy, Jean-Luc. 'The Two Secrets of the Fetish', in *Diacritics* 31.2, summer 2001, 4.

9. For a related argument see Harman, Graham. *Tool-Being*. Chicago: Open Court, 2002. 293. Significantly, Harman compares his object-forms to retroviruses 'injecting their own DNA back into the nucleus of everything they encounter' (212).

10. Dupuy, Jean-Pierre. *Complexity and Uncertainty*, 27-8.

Marx writes his comments on the Rhine Diet less than forty years after St. George Tucker's political paeon to the prophetic power of the ghost-like people. Unmistaken, the point remains the same. Marx writes: '*Privileges of the states are in no way rights of the province*. On the contrary, the rights of the province cease when they become privileges of the estates. Thus the estates of the Middle Ages appropriated for themselves all the country's constitutional rights and turned them into privileges against the country'¹¹. However, while Tucker writes from the standpoint of someone who has experienced a triumphant revolution and thus describes the experience of being on the other side of history's closure, Marx writes from the standpoint of someone who anticipates a revolution still to come, or better still, who fights a past that refuses to let go, much like the dead do in Garcia Márquez's novels.

This is the meaning of his tirade against the speaker of the Assembly: 'We will do what we like ... It is truly the language of a ruler, which naturally has a pathetic flavour coming from a modern baron'¹². In a sense, thus, Tucker speaks from Marx's future (even though Marx writes thirty nine years after him) just as the Speaker of the Rhine Assembly speaks from his past. We can make sense of this only if we let go of our everyday metaphysics of straight time-lines bifurcating like the roots of a tree. If we view time in its circularity, we can make sense of the reversed structure just described. The advantage of this notion over its opposite (straight, bifurcating time-lines) is that it allows us to think of the future as real, rather than merely possible, and thus, as impinging upon us, inviting us to take the sort of action described by Marx and Tucker.

It is in this context that the question of fetishism first emerges. To begin with, Marx writes that 'in this way, the rights of the provincial Assembly are no longer *rights of the province*, but rights against the province, and the Assembly itself would be *the greatest wrong against the province* but with the *mystical* significance of being supposed to embody the greatest right'.¹³ Where does the 'mystical significance' of the assembly come from? This is not simply a case of taking as divine what is merely made up, but rather, a certain concreteness or embodiment of the divine that is possible because of the real presence of the past in the present and its co-existence, in one and the same present-unit, with a future that comes embodied in what Marx calls, using the legal language of the time, 'the citizen'.

When Marx speaks of the 'mystical significance of being supposed to embody its [the people's] greatest right' he describes a form of action at a distance. He speaks of an appearance (literally, a ghost from the past) that has real, actual, powers upon the living. In this case it is an assembly of estates that subsumes all of the people's powers under the guise of a modern assembly. Now, the point is not the naïve empiricism that tells us to find the real face of the past behind the mask of modernity, but rather, that appearance is the truth. It is the appearance of

'being supposed' to embody the greatest right what gives the Assembly its 'mystical significance'. But this appearance is no falsity, or mere fantasy, but rather, it is the uncanny apparition of the past in the present, a past that 'knows only of the province of the estates, not the estates of the province'¹⁴.

¹⁴. Ibid.

The technical object involved in Marx's discussion is, of course, the constitution. By tampering with the constitution, for instance, by turning 'rights' into 'privileges' -in this case, turning the right to freedom of the press into a 'limited right' constrained by the privileges of government regarding what we would now call 'national security'- the forces of the past turn the constitution against the people. Marx writes:

This plaintive rhetoric about 'inner conviction' in contrast to the rude, external, unauthorised north wind of 'public conviction' is the more noteworthy since the purpose of the proposal was precisely to make the inner conviction of the Assembly of the Estates external. Here too, of course, there is an inconsistency. Where it seems to the speaker more convenient (...) he appeals to the province: "We," continues the speaker, "would let it" (publication) "take place where we consider this expedient, and would restrict it where an extension would appear to us purposeless or even harmful"¹⁵.

¹⁵. Ibid.

In this passage, which sounds today as relevant as it did in Marx's times, the idea that we, the people, should have, as Alexander Hamilton put it once, 'full confidence in the wisdom and virtue of government [the President of the United States] to whom in conjunction with the Senate the discussion ... belongs'¹⁶, appears ludicrous. This is so because an appeal to 'inner conviction' defeats the very technological purpose of the constitution, which is to make inner conviction 'external'. Here the constitution is conceived as a communicative device, *the* communicative technical object par excellence, whose tendency is to fully 'democratize' social decision-making. Put otherwise, it is through the constitution that the operator, the citizen, can unleash the powers of anticipation and participate in the sense of the unfolding. As in *The Matrix*, it is not the Oracle/Matrix who needs the human, but the human who needs the matrix in order to fulfil a prophecy of its own making.

In this passage Marx defends the dynamic proper to the technical object tending towards its concretisation (to use Simondon's terms). In this sense, he writes that 'the Assembly of Estates has a province to which the privilege of its activity extends, but the province has no estates through which it could itself be active'.¹⁷ At this point of his discussion technical objects have taken over and the clash between the forces of the past and the present/future appears as a clash between old and new technologies (the Assembly of Estates vs. the Estates of the People), but this is so in the sense that only through their own handiwork, that is, by creating gods for themselves *they, the people, stop becoming gods to each other*.

This is the meaning of the following lines: 'of course, the province has the right, under prescribed circumstances, to create these gods [the estates] for itself, but as soon as they are created, it must, like a fetish worshipper, forget that these gods are its own handiwork'. Only

¹³. Ibid. Emphases on the original, bold markings are mine.

¹⁶. Quoted by Kramer in *The People Themselves*, 4.

¹⁷. Marx, Karl. Op. cit.

when the people forget that the civil technologies [the estates, parliament, the laws, the presidency, etc.] are their own handiwork, not in the sense of being technology's efficient cause, but rather, in the sense that it is through them that prophetic capacities emerge, and with them, also the *performative* power of the prophet, only then men become gods to one another.

The error of fetishism is not simply to take an artifice for a natural thing, or to worship 'made up' gods rather than the real ones, but rather, to invest other men with the divine powers that a collectivity acquires only when it becomes a collective, that is to say, through the common effort of 'arresting' time-matter through common technical objects. This occurs, for instance, when a politician is endowed with quasi-divine powers because he holds a position of government, or else, when the CEO of a corporation achieves god-like status (delivering us from poverty, eradicating diseases, and so on) on the basis of the accumulated wealth produced by a collective. Thus, the question is: Why, if these prophetic powers (stopping floods, fighting poverty, eradicating disease) emerge through gods of our own making, shall some be allowed to become gods for the rest of us?

Marx understood that this problem had become exacerbated with the advent of modernity and its emphasis on equality (Marx's 'greatest right'). As he puts it, 'equality' becomes mystical when parliament (the very vehicle for such an equality) produces a people for itself, in which case there ceases to be a people and only a 'fetish worshipper' remains, oblivious to the 'made up' character of the god it worships. Again, the problem is not that the god is made up—in some sense they all are—, but rather, forgetfulness of its power to make them, for it makes the future indeterminate, it denies reality to time-matter, and in doing so it denies itself its own becoming; that is the main metaphysical block to a better existence.

In the previous passages quoted from the early writings of Marx it is not too difficult to see the imprint of his two acknowledged influences: the Scottish enlightenment, on the one hand, and Hegel, on the other. It is well known that the notion of the correspondence between social-economic forces and legal-political forms comes from the endeavours of the Scottish writers, struggling to understand 'naturally' the appearance of legal forms.

Indeed, the Scots' influence on Marx (also on Hegel) is everything but news. It has been acknowledged by scholars from different persuasion and political outlook such as Laurence Dickey, David Spadafora, Robert Heilbroner, Thomas Sowell, Anthony Chase, Knud Haakonssen, and Ronald Meek, to name a few. Any reader of the authoritative Glasgow edition of Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* cannot fail to see in the quote 'Till there be property there can be no government, the very end of which is to secure wealth, and to defend the rich from the poor', much more than a naïve paean to *laissez faire* capitalism.

The point is, of course, to highlight the dynamic (rather than static) character of property. However, between Scottish materialism and Marx's critique of legality in *On Freedom*

of the Press there is a deep gulf, a vacuum filled on the one hand by Hegel's notion of the uneven self-reflective nature of time-matter, already couched in religious-political language, and on the other, by the notion of fetishism as applied to the analysis of the relationship between social-economic forces and legal-political relations. Crucial as the former may be, not the least because of Hegel's recognition that from the point of view of the agent social existence not only encompasses the whole of his experience, but constituted the horizon of his expectations as well²¹, I submit that it is the latter what differentiates *On Freedom of the Press* from its political economic and philosophical forbearers, and sets materialism on the right track. Neither in the Scots nor in Hegel do we find the notion of a civil political technology left behind by its operators and transferring quasi-divine powers onto them.

What we find in Hegel is a sustained discussion and criticism of the absolutization of the right to property and the development, upon the basis of such a criticism, of a right to rebellion on the part of slaves and the poor. Indeed, this sets the stage for Marx's discussion but in no way does it entail the understanding of fetishism that allows the much firmer defence of popular constitutionalism, and the more nuanced analysis of the dynamics of property through legal form that is to be found in the 1840's literature.

If so, where does fetishism come from? The evidence I will present suggests two possibilities: on the one hand the study of Afrological religious forms and the way they related to the economic and political structures of Christian societies. On the other hand, and more decisively, the use of such metaphors in legal discussions of the time concerning, precisely, the uneven dynamic of property and the role of the people in government, particularly in the Americas. In both cases there is a not-so-hidden reference to the religious practices of rebellious slaves and other 'afrological' political forms that, by the 1840's, had become the stock of trade of revolutionary language.

A Black Marx, anyone? One is reminded of the fascinating scene in Ken McMullen's 1971, aptly titled 'Spectres of Marx', in which the father of African cinema, Med Hondo, dons the iconic white beard and appears as a ghost whispering in the ear of Napoleon III, interpreted by an amazing Dominique Pinon, the famous lines of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Queried on the matter, the British cinema director pointed at the striking resemblance between the Mauritanian cinematographer and London's most controversial philosopher. However, the suggestion that something else may have been operating in that scene at the level of the unconscious seemed fascinating to us ... a Black Marx, the most sublime of fetishists.

Among the excerpts and ideas from other authors noted as preparatory work in the Bonn Notebooks of 1842²², one finds Charles des Brosses' *Über den Dienst der Fetsischgötter oder Vergleich der alten Religionen Egyptens*

21. See Dickey, Laurence. *Hegel. Religion, Economic, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770-1807*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

22. Marx, K. & Engels, F. *Gesamtausgabe* (new MEGA), vol. 4/1. *Exzerpte und Notizen bis 1842*. Berlin, 1976.

23. Or *On the Cult of the Fetish Gods, or A Comparison of the Old Egyptian Religions with Contemporary Negro Religion*.

*mit der heitgen Religion Negritiens*²³, translated in Berlin, in 1785, from the French edition of 1760 titled *Du Culte des Dieux Fétiches*. Marx read it in Bonn while working on a treatise on Christian art (and the censorship laws protecting Christian art) that was never actually finished. However, some of these ideas made it into the articles that form *On Freedom of the Press*. Particularly, the concept 'fétiche' that had been coined in the French version of Des Brosses' book.

According to Nancy, it is in connection with this anthropological tract, and Marx's marked interest in the analysis of religious forms (also informed by Feuerbach and the *Persönlichkeit* debates) that the story about the conquerors and the conquered becomes familiar to him. This would be the origin of Marx's famous image. Crucially, the point of the text is to provide a comparative account of religious practices of West African peoples (the 'Negro' of the title) from a 'natural' standpoint akin to the evolutionary, materialistic stage-theory rehearsed also by the Scots. In this account fetishism is the 'original' religion and thus the matrix of all religious experience, starting from Ancient Egypt all the way up to the contemporary ways of West African peoples. The latter include, of course, the West African population exiled via slavery. Given the provenance of its chief notion (Portuguese/Spanish), it is not difficult to imagine that Des Brosses's 'native' information travelled the routes of the slave trade. The study's background is thus the cultural impact of colonialism (the West African diaspora, mainly to the Caribbean) and responses to it 'from below'.

Considering Mikhail Lifshitz's suggestion that Marx's piece on Christian art would have followed a path from the study of the religious and fetishistic art of Asia and Greece to the Christian art of the Romantics of his own time, and have attempted to link the latter with the former²⁴. We could then argue that an investigation on the significance of religious and fetishistic production would have started in Afro-Asia and finished in Marx's own times, both

24. Lifshitz, M. *The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx*. London, 1973. Quoted by Margaret A. Rose in her *Marx's Lost Aesthetic. Karl Marx & The Visual Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 60.

with the religious and economic-political forms of fetishism characteristic of Christian societies, and those persisting through the breakdown and dissemination of Afrological forms of fetishism in 'border' societies, and whose political significance had been made clear during the Atlantic cycle of revolutions, still unfolding in front of his eyes

Moreover, the specific comments made by Marx in the *Rheinische Zeitung* articles against censorship reflect not only the study of the history of African and Christian religion, but also Marx's involvement (originated in his student's years, as Nancy notes) on what could be termed a comparative study of religious forms that had, from the outset, strong political resonance²⁵. In this respect, there are crucial aspects of the argument on fetishism that Marx could have found in the work of Feuerbach (whom he was also reading, together with Hegel, in 1842). Among these aspects I wish to emphasize the following: the theory of anticipation or 'projection'

as the basis of art and religion, an idea that has become commonplace nowadays, particularly in ethnology and psychoanalysis.

The crucial passage from *The Essence of Christianity*, published in 1841, is the following:

Man —this is the mystery of religion- projects (*vergegenständlicht sich*) his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject; he thinks of himself as an object to himself, but as *the object of an object*, of *another* being than himself²⁶.

There are at least two important elements in this passage, both of them entangled with the difficulties of rendering the terminology used in the original by Feuerbach into the English 'projection': First, notice that 'projection' is here part of a meaningful chain that includes 'objectification' and 'alienation' in the Hegelian sense, that is, as moments in the developmental history of self-consciousness. In this respect god or 'gods' refers to an objectified image that alienates

25. See on this Breckman, Warren. *Marx, The Young Hegelians and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. This is a detailed effort to capture Marx's formative years, indeed the first major one in almost twenty years. Unfortunately, Breckman doesn't take into account Marx's growing interest for the legal and political language of the Americas in these formative years. Not only we find no mention of his familiarity with the Caribbean story, there is only a passing reference to the more political American sources of Marx's argument in the *Rheinische Zeitung* articles and On The Jewish Question, i.e., popular constitutionalism, civil religion and judicial review of property.

26. Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. Translated by G. Eliot, New York: Harper Row, 1957, 29 ff. Also, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, 71, included in the *Gesammelte Werke*, 19 vols, vol. V, edited by Werner Schuffenhauer and Wolfgang Harich, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973



→ Nadin Ospina, Courtesy of the artist

the individual from the species, an alienation that can only be sublated by restoring the predicates misattributed to the Divine Object retroactively onto the man-species where they rightly belong. This would be the 'false' aspect of the fetish. Second, the projected object impinges upon the individual who has projected it, so that the latter emerges as an object of an object, a big or Divine Other (*another* being than himself) and anticipates or desires to be recognized by It/Him. This would be the 'true' aspect of the fetish, in that the object emerges not merely from falsification or misattribution of the individual or the species' predicates, but rather, from the differentiation between the individual and his Alter Ego. As can be seen, we find in this passage a repetition of the same pattern present in the story of the gold of the conquerors and the conquered in the Caribbean, but also, crucially, in the coming-to-themselves of the people in St. George Tucker's appendix to *Blackstone's Commentaries*.

Famously, Feuerbach did much more than simply follow Hegel's lead: not only he inverted Hegel's subject-predicate relationships, a move that would make him very popular among the Young Hegelians, but he also separated the false and the true aspects of the fetish, thereby allowing for a distinction between the crude projected object and the visions, feelings, expectations, and anticipations invested in the object thus projected. This would permit, in turn, a comparative perspective that departs from the mere reduction of distinctiveness to an underlying rule-pattern²⁷. In more sophisticated terms, we may say that Feuerbach distinguished between affective investment or desire and the object invested upon. The latter may prove to be the crucial move since, as the reader may have guessed already, it allows for an anti-substantialist explanation of 'value'.

27. This move announces Foucault's critique of ethnology. See Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences* [1966]. First English edition printed by Tavistock Press, 1970. Reprinted in 1994 by Routledge, 376-77.

According to this explanation objects attain their value because they are desired *by others*, rather than because of some inherent property, just as the individual wants to be recognized as distinctively valuable by others. The true fetish (like the true God) is not just the result of 'projecting' essentially human attributes onto a thing, but rather, it has to do with the entrapments of desire: being seduced into believing in a big Other that, as Haitian *vodoun* practitioners

30. Métraux, Alfred. *Le Vaudou Haïtien*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989, 72.

It would be easy to ascribe 'seduction' and 'the entrapments of desire' solely to humans, but that would go against the more nuanced approach developed here by Feuerbach, and Marx's long-lasting fascination with it. Thus, in keeping with the more general argument of this essay, the transference-relationship appears as a general structure that, like desire, comes to presence 'in destroying, transforming, and 'assimilating' the desired non-I'³⁰. Isn't that precisely the power of the fetish? The story of the conquerors in the Caribbean, and the language of popular sovereignty suggest that much.

Thus, in the Hollywood blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Gore Verbinski, 2003), the true protagonists are neither Captain Jack Sparrow, modelled upon The Rolling Stones' Keith Richards, nor the fantastic crew of undead pirates led by Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush). Rather, the protagonist is the fetish, in the form of Hernán Cortés's Aztec gold, or else, in that of the cursed Black Pearl. The film is actually a re-telling of the story we encountered before: the conqueror's gold becoming a fetish for the conquered peoples, who, after having noticed its effect among the Europeans, understand its power to 'infiltrate' the gods of the opposite camp. Thus, the Aztec gold taken by Cortés carries with it a curse: the object injects itself into the nucleus of everything it encounters, destroys it, transforms it and assimilates it. This is how the Black Pearl gets cursed, and its crew with it.

Crucially, during the entire film Jack Sparrow longs to be recognized as the 'true' captain by his fellow pirates, His Majesty's Royal Navy and, mostly, by Miss Elizabeth Swann. He is the very embodiment of narcissism, *the absolute being*, interpreted by none other than the *object of desire* himself, Johnny Depp. He wishes to be freed from the constraints of necessity (his natural lack of maritime talent, the curse itself) and to be recognized as a distinctive individual, hence his antics and mannerisms, which explain his proverbial solitude (he is, literally, isolated from humans and nature, for as we learn later in the movie he himself is cursed). Sparrow is the personification of an object (money, the Aztec's gold), for he was cursed while lured towards it, like his fellow pirates and, crucially, like the Royal Navy and the whole Empire itself. The backdrop of the film, the emergence of a Christian, capitalist Empire, through predominance in the seas (the Caribbean being the foremost site of this battle for hegemony) and of money as the new religion, comes to the forth and becomes the true subject of the story.

This is made evident in the sequel *Dead Man's Chest* (Gore Verbinski, 2006) in which all the elements of the story are brought to a climatic cliffhanger that, tellingly, takes place in the shack of a *Vodoun* priestess (possibly in Haiti or Louisiana). In the sequel we learn that Sparrow's lack of maritime talent has to do with a 'natural' constrain, his indecisive nature (being 'unfaithful' to his desire, which is why his compass, yet another magical object, misleads him). William Turner (Orlando Bloom) is, yet again, used as currency in the transactions between Sparrow and Davy Jones (Bill Nighy), the magnificent squid-like Captain of the pirate ship The Flying Dutchman, and his crew of uncannily beautiful sea-phantoms, one of them Turner's long lost father. At this point of the story the reference to desire and its avatars has multiplied tenfold (Turner's desire for his absent father's recognition, the latter's 'sacrifice', the over-sexed Voodoo priestess, Commodore Norrington's turn to piracy ...) but there are two instances of it that become

31. Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Edited by A. Bloom and translated by J. H. Nichols Jr. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969, 4. The purpose of this reference is to highlight the connection between Feuerbach's post-Hegelian take on the fetish and Kojève's central notion of 'anthropogenic desire' as the source of the idea of justice. See also Kojève's *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. Translated by B. Frost & R. Howse. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, 6 35-38.

32. Incidentally, the expression 'Davy Jones's locker', which becomes in the film 'Dead Man's chest' (and later on a purgatory-like island), is itself an instance of transformation/destruction/assimilation. According to Linebaugh and Rediker, it is one of a number of African contributions to maritime pidgin English discourse and thence standard English. See their *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 154.

crucial: First, the heart of Davy Jones, locked and buried in the chest that lends the film its title³². Second, and perhaps more revealing, the East India Company's *longing* for world hegemony.

True to its origins in desire, lost love and mourning, too literal to be symbolic, the heart in Davy Jones's locker has become the most powerful fetish. Firstly, it embodies separation from a cruel nature totally oblivious to one's desire, and the distinctiveness of suffering that separates Jones from all mortals. Davy Jones's transformation from

dead man into an immortal octopus-like creature has been caused, apparently, by his withdrawal from the cruel necessity of nature, of unreturned love and never-ending lust. He has cut-off his still beating heart so that he may never love or feel compassion again. In turn, his withdrawal has turned into an overbearing lust for others, whom he devours both as his *debtors*, reduced to eternal slavery, and ultimately, literally, as it happens with Jack Sparrow, via the creature he commands (the ancient Kraken, last of the Titans, creators of the world). In this respect, Davy Jones—the true hero of the film—is the last avatar and proximate relative of such wonderful characters in cinema and literature as Faustus and, even more, Dracula: he is desire personified. Thus, secondly, the heart entails the possibility of projecting and/or, more crucially, controlling a prov-

idential,³³ superhuman being whose eternity (the immortality of Jones and his crew of sea-phantoms is but a knock-on effect of the immortality of that ancient god, the Kraken) indicates the ultimate possibility of going beyond the vicissitudes of fate and nature. Whoever possesses the heart controls god, and by doing so, becomes god himself. That is the goal of Cutler Beckett (Tom Hollander), acting as an agent for the East India Company.

Dead Man's Chest's cliffhanger suggests that by entering into possession of the ultimate fetish, Davy Jones's heart, the East India Company would gain unfettered power over the routes of the Atlantic.

As we know, this is exactly what happened: By controlling the Atlantic routes, the East India Company controlled the world, Britain became an Empire and Christian capitalism the end of history. The film provides a fictional explanation for the rise of greed and imperial hubris. But isn't fiction often the vehicle of truth? As all Hollywood films must have a moral, there is a lesson in *Pirates of the Caribbean*: refrain from excessive desire and greed. But scratch under the surface and you will find something much more enticing: a consideration of the desire to be freed from nature and a take on religion as belief in providence, creation and immortality, with relevant political undertones. All of them are presented in the films as manifestations of the subject's narcissism and its attempt to be freed from and manipulate nature at will.

Ultimately, that attempt leads to men becoming gods to other men, believing that their well-being is the greatest right.³⁴ The humble blockbuster doubles up, at this point, into a radical history lesson on the emergence of modern capitalism and empire.

It is 'radical' in at least two senses: First, just as Feuerbach and Marx, it suggests that subjective narcissism reaches its climax in Christian, imperial capitalism, with its emphasis on the individual that turns him/her into a god, in front of whom all other creatures and nature (all peoples, all territories, all things) must kneel down and worship. Second, it hints at the rebellious politics embedded in the life-style of piracy, transcultural religiosity, and rebellious slaves.

One of the most beautiful scenes of the film shows a group of black folks with candles, half-immersed in the swamp that surrounds the shack of Tia Dalma (Naomie Harris): An army of maroon freed slaves? Perhaps the revolutionary Haitian army? Is Tia Dalma a stand-in for Mawu, Jesus's black sister in *Voudoun* theology? Be that as it may, the film associates slavery with debt, and makes the latter no less worst than the former (it is 'eternal'), thereby re-describing slavery for the age of credit and consumerism. The contrast with the merry freedom of pirates and maroons could not be sharper.

Indeed, Johnny Depp may have not been off the mark when modelling his character upon a rock-star. Pirate Bartholomew Roberts has been quoted saying that in the merchant service 'there is thin Commons, low Wages, and hard labour; in this, Plenty and Satiety, Pleasure and ease, Liberty and Power; and who would not balance Creditor on this side, when all the hazard that is run for it, at worst, is only a sower Look or two at choaking. No, a *merry Life and a short one*, shall be my motto'³⁵. As is well known, a short and merry life, as in 'live fast, die young' is the very code of the iconic rocker. Alas, rockers are modern-day pirates. Through them, through their 'Sympathy with the Devil' we can connect with the power of the fetish, with hydrarchy and the free maritime state, with the struggle of slaves and with voodoo as a political weapon, but also, with an indictment of contemporary Christian imperialism and capitalist neo-colonization. Even if the rocker himself has sold his soul to the devil.

34. In this respect, Costas Douzinas is correct when he states that 'rights' have become the ultimate site of desire and the production of subjectivity. Ultimately, he describes rights as fetishes. See on this Douzinas, Costas. *The End of Human Rights*. London: Hart Publishing, 2000, and also *Human Rights and Empire* (forthcoming).

33. Feurbach writes: 'Providence is a *privilege* of man. It expresses the value of man, in distinction from other natural beings and things; it *exempts him from the connection of the universe*. Providence is the conviction of man of the infinite value of his existence, -a conviction in which he renounces faith in the reality of external things' (*Essence of Christianity*, 105). Since the idea of providence, associated to natural necessity and escape from fate, entails that human well-being is the greatest right, a being who guarantees such a right must also be able to escape necessity and manipulate nature.

35. Quoted by Linebaugh & Rediker in their book *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 168.

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Cover art feature: GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA

by Orlando Britto Jinorio

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a Mexican performing artist, writer, activist and intellectual living in San Francisco. He was born at Ciudad de México in 1955 where he lived and developed as a contemporary artist, and has been living in the United States since 1978. He is probably one of the most influential international figures in the discipline of artistic performance and a notable intellectual in the elaboration of artistic proposals related to the new territories of hybrid and border contemporary cultures. He is also the founder and Artistic Director of the interdisciplinary artist collective and production company La Pocha Nostra whose branches and members extend at present into the five continents.

His work is widely interdisciplinary. He has worked and continues to work in the fields of videocreation, radio, literature, journalism and cultural theory. At present, besides his international performance tours and his famous performance workshops, he works on an groundbreaking TV program for a Mexican TV channel and at the same time develops singular artistic works in the field of contemporary photography.

Strongly critical of the inherent contradictions of the global and dominant neo-liberal system, his chosen territory is that of experimental, hybrid, border, cross- and intercultural spaces. As part of these interracial and intercultural systems, he often mixes English and Spanish to create neo-languages with futu-primitive resonances, creating multilingual and polysemic spaces of fiction and reality. The new forms of culture and the novel socio-political modes of living together generated by the ongoing processes of migrations of people are territories of continuous exploration in his work.

In this issue's cover and pages, Naked Punch presents a Guillermo Gómez-Peña's selection of photoperformances by the title "Ethno-Techno: Evil Others and Identity Thieves", created in San Francisco in 2004 in collaboration with the photographer James McCaffrey and other members of the artistic collective La Pocha Nostra.

These photoperformance works have been edited in Spain by BRH editions, who has specialised his work on limited photography editions from international performance.

*Guillermo Gómez-Peña's photoperformances,
"Ethno-Techno: Evil Others and Identity Thieves", 2004
Photos by James McCaffrey.*

Portfolio of limited edition by BRH editions. Contact Orlando Britto Jinorio at britther@cop.es

→ Guillermo Gómez-Peña, (clockwise from top left) *El Chamán Travesti*, 2004, *Supermodelo Zapatista*, 2004, *Rito Neo-Azteca*, 2004, *Turista Neo-Victoriana*, 2004.

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