



Clinic 1

Zones of Disturbance, Cartographies of the Fracture

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THE ENERGY involved in the South as a horizon of historic transitions, poetic dissidence and political excitement, makes us think that a critique discourse arises from the periphery, that emphasises at what point the dichotomy between identity/difference is being taken out of place by the continuity between multiplicity and community. How far can we define the South as this geographical and historical locus shift? Or is it only a horizon of political evolution? A utopian imaginary to be colonized by a capitalism based in the circulation of subjectivities as commodities?

If we understand the discursive practices of contemporary art as a privileged space for locating disturbance areas or/and the outline for the multiple mapping of fracture. To what extent SOUTH is foreshadowed as a theory setback of the trinity: universality (globalization)-modernity-capitalism? Or is it the SOUTH the spectral interiority of the historic-politic formation of capitalism as world system? Periphery and/or sub territory of global imaginary? And, in what sense a map for the de-territorialisation of identities and desires, the circulation of a ghostly objectivity of history (fetishization), the postcolonial as invisible territories and/or virtual nomadism? As exchange (commerce) of secrete otherness that negotiate and experiment towards a project of autonomies flow, junction between diversity / heterogeneity.

Or in a more classic historical outline (Gramsci): Is the “southern question” the articulation for a methodology that brings us to the definition of

subordinate? Until what point is this the crossroad between the limit of any system of representation, the political violence and the construction of a hegemony? Is the South an “imagined community” from where the crisis of representation is screened? Is the critic to the representation system a crisis that orchestrates it and far from making it collapse it enables and renovates it?

In the South as theory territory, the commonality of history converges as a series of violent accidents and trauma. Is the common condition of the South as a “war theatre” of the occidental universality –an accumulation of disposable populations, excess labour force, political subjectivity without rights, forced migrations– a convergence for the radicalization of democracy? What are the political and aesthetic signs of a possible community of precarious subjects?

The Clinic is put together as a worktable for debate and discussion of essays and projects related with the international speakers of the symposium. The emphasis will be establishing a historic-theorist context for the concept-metaphor South as a critique device within the contemporary cultural practices. Works and projects related with the cultural intersection, politics and history are particularly relevant in the discussion. The disciplines of interest gather different fields of visual arts, photography, video, film, critique theory, architecture, virtual spaces, alternative media, activism and cultural interventions.

Report: César Cortés

Nowhere and everywhere: The south as seen from our north?

INSIDE IS something else. We don't imagine ourselves inside, because human flesh is hard; it's difficult to separate nervous tissue from the materials to be dissected; bone fragments may have inserted themselves even into the soft tissue and it may seem as if the flavor is even losing consistency, wavering between the bitter and the sweet, between the catastrophic and the patently delirious. That's why inside is something else, because the I over there is also an Other—though not in the same terms as Rimbaud used, in the Abyssinian realization of his ferocious romanticism, repeated once he reached Harar, bedridden and waiting for them to amputate his first leg. *Am I another? Yes? Or better yet, if? Or am I the same?*

The very, very same. Sameness itself in egg batter, practically dead from syphilis in a place he doesn't know... Yes: mobility reincorporates itself into habits so much that it ends up disappearing.

Sur. Sur-sur-sur; the word sur has resonated so many times throughout the SITAC conference that it seems a mantra of damnation, a reminder of sacrifice, a frantic order that perhaps is far from being claimed. Sometimes sur has been whispered, sur-whispered, sur-negated, saccharine sur-rrrrrrrrrr-sweetened, sur-subsumed. Sur, said with a conviction that intimidates and overwhelms because everything seems to be able to be read in those terms. For example, right now in this room and for brief periods I am irredeemably north, and all of you are sur (south). Is that really the case? It sounds ridiculous. No, it's not really. Yes, it's ridiculous, because we all think in the language of the north. So sur has been uttered so many times that it may have lost its meaning. Although we have to add that another word has been said:

Caaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaniiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiibal

On the night of 29 January, between tequila and discursive inconsistencies, some colleagues and I, assigned the task of articulating/not articulating a series of points for the preparation of this text, resolve that there is a fundamental difference between the radical Other, the anthropophagous subject, and the subject who has had to sublimate this cannibalism, because of living in situations of cultural urgency. On the one hand, the anthropophagous subject has not agreed to the idea of ONE, or individual integration, and he perceives the world from an imaginary that is inscribed in ritual and that is inaccessible as long as it is not recognized as having an organization of codes that is entirely distinct from ours, as Suely Rolnik suggested to us in the visits she made to our sessions. On the other hand, one could speak of modernity's de-ritualized cannibalism, the cannibalism that looks for immaterial aliases in order to redefine itself, and reintegrate itself while it survives in a ghost reality that pursues it—a molecular dismemberment of ideas, multiplied ad infinitum, and an overflow of meaning.

In cannibalism's radical eccentricity, there is no center and therefore the individual does not exist. After all, what does it mean to macerate your friend, to cut him into pieces, and devour him, little by little, as you look

his family members in the eye? If the cannibal is to be named, perhaps we have to do so using a different term, with some invented word or unintelligible syllables. Yes, yes, yeeeeeeeeesss, people insist, between shouts and tasteful accusations that negated Heidegger, Adorno or Baudrillard, depending on who was speaking, with certain tendencies from the pre-anthropogous (into which we were turning ourselves) while the tequila was flowing. I think now that the cannibal shouldn't even be named using the politically correct term of "anthropophagous," because don't those names always get used by the ones who are doing the looking? Don't they say more about who produces them than about what they attempt to delimit? This is precisely what Shakespeare's Caliban complains of in *The Tempest* "You taught me language, and my profit on't Is, I know how to curse." Your very language is a complete insult that condemns me to exile, to a lack of place, to be like you. And then I, who was never me because there wasn't a me before, am no longer me. I'm you, and it's from there that I name you and insult you.

Sur

Sur

Sur

No; the real sur doesn't exist. It exists as a phantasmagoria—that illusory vision about whom it focuses its own desire. About whom it fragments in the capacity of a logocentric conception that confuses veracity with verisimilitude. What we have on hand is an invention of the south, the consequence of development that could do nothing except exclude the radical Other to the extent that it classifies it and turns it into definable fragments.

This Derridean illegibility is an irrepresentable void. What can be represented, the Lacanian phantasm, to the extent that I understand it, is indeed a reality. An ouroboros, the serpent that eats its own tail. Sur is a self-reference from the north, that mixes pleasure with pain, an attempt at nearness that changes constantly as a result of certain ways of constructing reality, traditionally employing Occidental understandings that also depend on defined temporalities. The thing that presents the greatest conflict to all those Others that have not yet been touched by its advanced culture is that the West, by means of all its post-colonial deformations, mutations and mutilations, is at the same time inextricable for them.

Perhaps the most dangerous illusion in all this is that it incorporates any kind of institutionalized discourse on the part of the Other into its bipartite system. Like death, or conservation in an archive or museum. Let otherness, therefore be lost—in the eyes of the It Itself—and let it, at the same time, remain within its non-existence—its impenetrability—in the eyes of those whom I suppose to be those Others.

Let's not disdain confrontation, said others. Being doctrinally integrated is a strategy. A centripetal force that irredeemably moves toward the center. When someone says "artists of the south," he also speaks of a certain way of incorporating them into an imaginary. In confrontations, everyone has a name and I believe that no "cannibal artist" would call himself an "artist" or a "cannibal" or anything else of the sort. He would use names that don't correspond to our ways of reading the world. And to continue along those vindictive lines, one could add there is neither south nor north in art. There is an instrumental art, instrumentalized by a determined social division of labor within the art system. There is also an art that can appeal to the senses, but that belongs to an equal degree to Western practice's flow of perceptions.

I don't think the south's sublimated image is sufficient for the naming of the other. It smacks too much of humanism, that perfume in which an easy conscience anoints itself so as not to have to dislocate meaning or expose its segregationist nature. And—we know this for having lived through decades and decades of the discourse of commiseration—one of the worst unconscious (and maybe not so unconscious) cannibals is the humanist. Precisely because within his compassionate rationales he is guilty of escamotage, a switch wherein a theatre of pity is constructed that allows him to access power and govern behind the mask of the conquered. This perhaps, may be one of the reasons that the so-called machine of the Mexican baroque is called into action: the disintegration of penury via a symbolic substitution, layer upon layer, that ends up configuring a self-centeredness filled with latent Others who have been subdued, deceived and cheated.

An interesting image of this is the wound. This sublimation of pain appears to be exempt and ultimately loses appearance. One path to Otherness is the evanescence of the wound, since it seems not to be there. Nevertheless it hurts, even though it may demand we close it or place it in a closed space and then move on. The wound is the record of time in flesh, a radical mark

in that it threatens the body with rupture. How many wounds could there possibly be on the surface of an animal like us? Wounds are a preamble to death, but also a reminder of it. An inscription of the finite in the landscape of existence. And who here takes responsibility for his or her own wounds? What we really do is postpone them, try to make them close through forgetting, or by placing layers of something—that isn't skin, but looks a lot like it—on top of them, or by means of spells, glamour and a feigned lightness that has nothing to do with the levity Italo Calvino mentions in his *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. This new skin that isn't skin could also be called simulation, apparent discourse, a concealing of the Self that the Other attempts in order to save himself. Right away I think of the comments of Mariana Botey, who directed her SITAC workshop both provocatively and well. She spoke of the West's tendency to recuperate images of the south as if it were a second modernity. A strategy. Because naturally, as in the case of the Conquest, it seems that something has been "discovered" that wasn't there before and that is nonetheless the proof of the reflection, the psychotic Lacanian mirror that offers an image of the sublimated I in an Other who is none other than Oneself. Incorporating the wound, taking charge of it, would mean accepting the pain of this irremediable selfness, and then, as Nelly Richard also said, de-naturalizing meaning and provoking appropriations of signs. Testing the option of identity or its potential for signification in the interstices. Accepting that disruption keeps happening there, maybe because our European fathers have abandoned us or maybe because our native parents have been perverted.

In any case, I believe the latent problem that remains to be discussed is the nature of cultural resistance on the part of Others, who come from a genealogy that is different from that belonging to the dominators—be they northern or southern—which is the same cultural resistance that they have had to carry out in order to protect their vision of the world from extermination. And at the same time, sketch out methods to help these formulations find the proper channels for developing negotiation strategies. To bring forth tools, along the limits of Occidental culture and as experts in the constant features of that new and banal power that is the market, for this strategic disguising of resistance and as part of a disobedience proposal with relation to the environment established by the hegemonic powers of a West that grows ever more menacing, mutant and insensitive, what James C. Scott called the *infrapolitics of the dispossessed*."