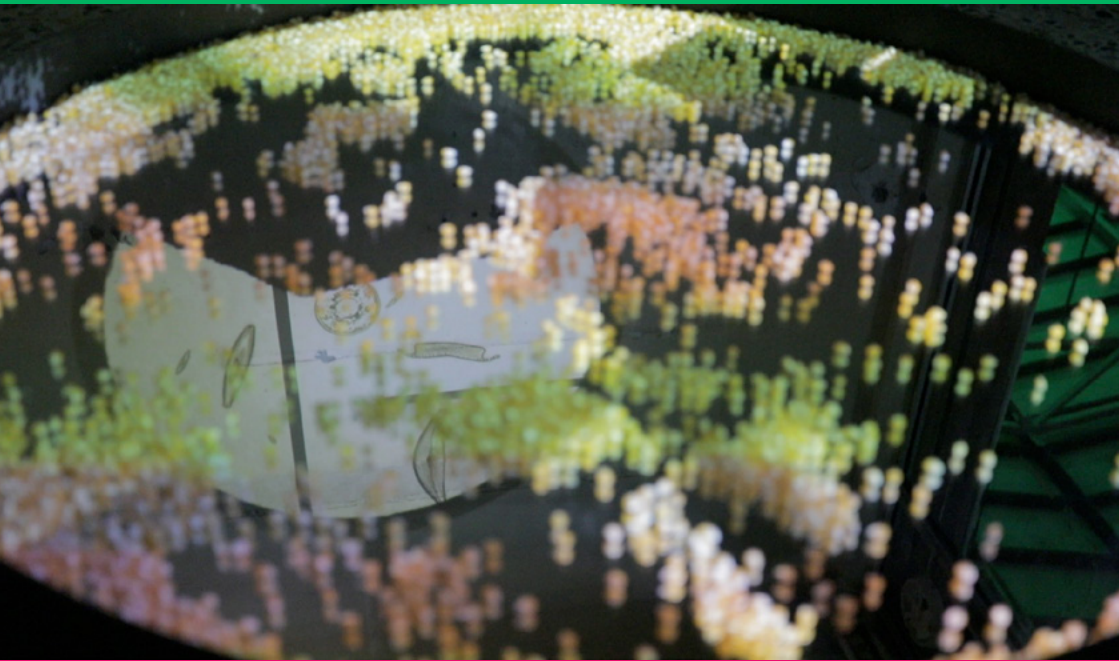


Austerity and Utopia



|'internationale

L'INTERNATIONALE ONLINE

AUSTERITY AND UTOPIA

ed. Nav Haq, Pablo Martínez and Corina Oprea

l'internationale

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7-14

Austerity and Utopia - Editorial Foreword
by Nav Haq, Pablo Martínez and Corina Oprea

15-32

Luxurious Poverty: Looking Back at a Cultural Revolution
Emilio Santiago Muíño

33-42

Time and Again, No Longer, Not Yet
Athena Athanasiou

43-60

Nana de esta pequeña era (This little era lullaby)
María Salgado and Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca

61-74

The Production of the Utopian Image
Marwa Arsanios

75-88

*Capital's Vengeful Utopia:
Unpayable Debts from Above and Below*
Max Haiven

89-116

*Chile: Shattering the Neoliberal Spell,
Joy and Desire against Economic Obedience*
Miguel A. López

117-130

Songs for Petals
Ayesha Hameed

131-138

Biographies & Colophon

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Nav Haq, Pablo Martínez and Corina Oprea

This little era
 Does not dream
 Does not dream, yes
 Does not dream, no

Spanish ecofeminist Yayo Herrero recently stated that ‘dystopias are becoming extremely conservative’, suggesting that our imagination is trapped by negativity and fear. Performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz wrote about the present as a prison, where, in a world without utopia, minority subjects are excluded and seen as hopeless. If fear and hope are both affective structures that can be considered anticipatory, we prefer to devote this issue to the latter. It seems that in moments like the current crisis of civilisation, with a pandemic affecting a whole generation and a planet that shows more and more signs of exhaustion, hope as a political anticipatory affect must be the first thing to activate rather than the last to lose; as researcher Max Haiven describes, the enclosure of the imagination is the trap of neoliberalism.

Whilst utopian scholars such as Ruth Levitas question the suitability of the term ‘utopia’ as a universal classification, there are equally re-articulations of utopia as liable means of reconstituting an unsettled society. Returning to the modern notion of utopia developed by Ernst Bloch in *The Principle of Hope* (1954), and going beyond the colonial utopia formulated by Thomas More, this issue focuses on the possibilities of both abstract and concrete utopias. ‘Abstract’ in the sense that it can inspire political imagination and draw horizons of collective emancipation and transformation, as depicted by Emilio Santiago Muño in his eco-socialist fiction. And ‘concrete’, as articulations of political and historically situated alternatives, like the feminist communities that artist and researcher Marwa Arsanios encountered in her recent project *Who Is Afraid of Ideology?*

‘Let’s shake out mentalities, change subjectivities, withdraw from the capitalist system altogether’: this is the radical standpoint advanced by factions of the revolting masses in North Africa and in the Middle East and harvested by young protesters in Greece, Spain and elsewhere in the face of austerity measures (one could name here, without exhausting the full list, the Iranian Green Movement in 2009, the anti-austerity movement in Greece since 2010, Tahrir Square in Egypt and the Tunisia Revolution in 2011, and the Indignados in Spain from 2011–15). Austerity is a violent means employed by neoliberalism, which takes form as lower wages, the dismissal of public workers and cuts to social programmes. Undoubtedly, the world is in a situation of fatal economic disaster, crisis and breakdown, but austerity as another means of accumulation must not be the solution. Social and political scientist Athena Athanasiou speaks about dispossession and the unsustainable consequences of neoliberal management over life itself, ‘as much as current neoliberal austerity is injurious for most people’. And as we shift to a necessary post-carbon society, in which the consumption of fossil fuels will have to be considerably reduced over time to avoid planetary devastation, it is not only political amendments and the substitution of technologies, but social and cultural alterations to our ways of living that are vital. Haiven opens his text towards the potential of crises, whether ecological, economic or identitarian, to alter the terrain of radical political possibility and set up new sites for structural transformations and strategic interventions.

Moving from global historical events to phantasmatic world history, this edition gathers analysis and engagement with the various contradictions and possible emancipations that the term ‘austerity’ generates, together with the radical, transnational desire to unravel utopian promises. In an effort to expand conceptions of austerity and utopia beyond the economic paradigm, we enter into a different epistemological

realm which recognises a multitude of knowledges. Any call for imagining another world must involve artists, performers, composers, writers and thinkers. This thought-provoking exercise, then, seeks to elaborate on other understandings of austerity and its relations to utopia.

The verse that opens this editorial note comes from *Nana de esta pequeña era* (This little era lullaby), an audiotext created by poet and performer María Salgado and the musician and composer Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca (on view here on L'Internationale Online's broadcast channel from March to September 2020, and published with a print created on the occasion of this issue). Sounds and words in this aesthetic tool play with the intrinsic structure of the popular genre of the lullaby, a song usually used to send children off to sleep and to alleviate their fears. Inspired by Guy Debord's 'Nana de la Zarzuela' (Zarzuela Lullaby), a 1981 remake of Federico García Lorca and La Argentinita's 1931 recording of the popular 'Nana de Sevilla' (Seville Lullaby), this online lullaby seeks to soothe a deeply damaged sociopolitical context – the lullaby does not lead to slumber, but to political activism through poetics.

The issue begins with a story by Santiago Muíño, who places himself in a Galician village in 2052 and sends a letter to Jorge Riechmann, the poet and fundamental figure in eco-socialist thought. From these other historical coordinates and fuelled by their friendship, Santiago Muíño depicts new ways of living based on austere sustainable practices. Beyond the idea of civilisational collapse that permeates the media today, the upcoming fifties of this century appear full of luxurious poverty, a simple life rich in the pleasures of bodies, words and relations with the environment. Written prior to our current confinement, with home lockdown practices of reduced mobility and more time for

cooking and reflecting on food production, this reading can be seen as anticipatory.

By citing fellow theorist Lauren Berlant's 'crisis ordinariness', Athanasiou turns to 'affect' to comprehend the state of continued crises. By tracing the various impasses that we face today, she acknowledges that certain normative forms of living are no longer bearable. Referring to Muñoz too, she proposes queer futurity as 'a mode of endurance and a critique which resists genealogical, reproductive "straight time"'.

In her text 'The Production of the Utopian Image', Arsanios considers the possibility of a feminist utopia. She asks if new social relations can be formed outside of capitalism and industrialisation and builds her considerations around the model of a commune based on seed guardianship, food sovereignty and the re-appropriation of land previously dispossessed. Describing her encounters with Indigenous communities in Colombia, Arsanios imagines utopia as autonomy created within given political contexts of violence. The questions she poses come from experiments conducted by communities of women in three war-torn places: in Kurdistan; Jinwar, Rojava, in the autonomous region of northern Syria; and in the cooperative Beqaa Valley, eastern Lebanon. The first two locations are to be seen in *Who Is Afraid of Ideology?*, part 1 and part 2, broadcast on L'Internationale Online from May to September 2020.

Haiven's essay describes the behaviour of neoliberal capitalism, in particular its vengeance of utopian social narratives. Considering austerity as a kind of 'economic sadism' of insurmountable debt combined with the decimation of the social safety net, revenge is inflicted to pre-empt workers' resistance to the capitalist system, Haiven states. And further, 'revenge is an oddly fitting way to describe a form of capitalism that,

in its own utopian drive, creates conditions which appear not only exploitative and oppressive, but irrationally vindictive’. He asks, how might we create forms of counter-vengeance and refusal by harnessing our historical consciousness?

In his contribution, Miguel A. López explores some of the practices that took place post-1970s in Chile, a time when neoliberalism found its topos and began to carry out its social experimentation. Starting from art practices as politically situated as those of Cecilia Vicuña, Francesco Copello and Juan Davila, he underlines the grammar that emerged from artistic collectives which employed craft and ephemeral materials, such as trash and refuse. Since last October Chile has been shaken by waves of protest against the devastating neoliberal policies which have suppressed any claim to the commons. New practices based in word, body and public space, like the performance *Un violador en tu camino* (*A Rapist in Your Path*, 2019) by LASTESIS, find their genealogy in these actions after the 1970s.

Ayesha Hameed’s long-form poem about the Citizenship Amendment Act in India evokes the sit-ins that took place in Delhi in 2019, led by a group of Muslim women. The poem is a personal and political cry to the racial and religious oppression multiplying worldwide at the speed of light: ‘a half-life as margin of witness.’ The poem is joined by ‘Black Atlantis: The Plantationocene’, a live audiovisual essay on Mother Earth’s alteration in late colonial capitalism. Taking Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing’s term ‘plantationocene’ to connect our geological era with the legacy of the plantation, Hameed asks: What is the relationship between climate change and plantation economies?

This issue, titled ‘Austerity and Utopia’, is the first in a series that looks at other potential narratives for mapping our

current landscape by redefining social, political and economic terms. It was planned a long time before the pandemic. Our current situation was unimaginable just a few months ago, but that it was not easily predictable does not mean that there were no elements pointing to a possible crisis of this nature. Yet the collective search for measures of care and climate justice in the attempt to redefine the neoliberal understanding of austerity and utopia – two major points of the current socio-economic formation – becomes even more pressing. We have written this editorial foreword in confinement, at a time when the desire for things to go back to normal is ever-present and much discussed. But is ‘normality’ what we really want? And if so, whose normality shall we return to? We need to reimagine the role that art and cultural institutions play in the production of a new set of relations and other modes of production and distribution. One can no longer think in terms of abundance, in terms of the desire of accumulation and the capitalist utopia, which only creates inequality and exhaustion.

LUXURIOUS
POVERTY:
LOOKING BACK
AT A CULTURAL
REVOLUTION

Emilio Santiago Muño

This essay explores the utopian materialisation of the idea of luxurious poverty as a central proposition of the necessary positive resignifying of austerity in energy and material resources, which is essential for any society to be sustainable. To this end, it considers the possibilities of comparing and contrasting the fall in the consumption of resources with an enrichment of other aspects of social life. Such an approach would make possible societies capable of disconnecting their environmental impact from their quality of life, so long as this were defined on the basis of other cultural parameters. This essay achieves this through a thought experiment: a future personal letter in the tone of utopian literature written in the mid-21st century – when people are taking stock of the transitional years – to Jorge Riechmann, a leading figure in Spanish ecosocialist thinking. The notes contain bibliographical references that point to material for further study of the concepts raised.

18 March 2051, Vila da Praia, Ferrol
Bioregion of Artabria, Republic of Galicia,
Iberian Confederation
(180 years after the Paris Commune!)

Dear Jorge,

Firstly, congratulations! In less than a week's time, you'll be 98 years old. And in such good health! I still remember how you surprised us just a few months ago during our traditional New Year's walk in the mountains around Cercedilla. I'll be very pleased if I get to your age feeling as well as you evidently do. The second thing is how nice it is to be writing a letter again. I've got no other choice since you announced that you'd be getting your phone line disconnected so you could achieve your wish for peace and quiet. And as it's been over five years since you quit the Internet, your hermit-like isolation is almost complete. You might not be aware of this but you're up with the latest trend among some young radicals! The press call them 'the disconnected'. They're a new counter-cultural movement - yet another one! - that's part of the boom in anthropological creativity in recent years.

1. Riechmann J. (2013), "Secretaría de Estado de Erotismo Odontológico", in *Fracasar Mejor*, Tarazona: Olifante, p. 130.

One of the good things about a letter is that I don't need to go to the community telecoms centre, though it is a nice walk there. Ah, the old high-speed internet! Sometimes I miss it. It turns out that while writing by hand, I can look out the window at the sea as I gather my thoughts. By the way, Hurricane Nadia did a lot of damage to the coastline as it passed by (and I didn't tell you but our solar panel got blown away in the wind! and we had to get by without electricity for a Special Period that went on for three weeks).

As well as sending you birthday greetings, I wanted to share a marvellous anecdote with you. Do you remember that poem in *Fail Better* in which you talked of a Secretary of State for Odontological Eroticism in the future eco-socialist society?¹ The Artabria Health Committee is launching a pilot project

2. Santiago Muíño E. (2019), "El cortísimo siglo XXI", *La Maleta de Portbou*, no. 36.
 3. The concept of 'The Century of the Great Trial' runs throughout Riechmann's work. See Riechmann J. (2013), *El Siglo de la Gran Prueba*, Tegueste: Baile del Sol.
- that could have come straight out of your poem! It's the madcap idea of some youngsters newly graduated from the University of A Coruña. They've got local dentists to draw up a census of patients whose saliva carries bacteria that protect against caries. And for the Eve of St. John's Day, they'll be organising their voluntary participation in a kind of orgiastic party on the beach, to be called *The Kiss of a Summer's Night*.

They hope the outcome will be a statistically significant improvement in people's oral and dental health. Naturally, the local Unitary Eroticism Network groups are closely involved. Something like this would be impossible were it not for the delightful eroticising of everyday life that we've seen these last 20 years. Which suggests that eco-socialism is reaching far and wide.

This idea prompted me to take stock. In 2019, I began to talk about the 'extremely short 21st century', along the lines of Hobsbawm's distinction between the long 19th and the short 20th century. Back then, I anticipated the historic dilemma we would face, stating, "By the middle of the century, we will have crossed the ecological Rubicon: either our society will have dropped back to within the limits of what the biosphere can provide, or we will see the catastrophic breakdown of industrial civilisation".² Now that spring 2051 is upon us, the midway point of what you termed the 'Great Trial' is behind us.³ So what does an evaluation of the Great Trial indicate? Well, the result is a kind of draw. It seems that the denouement has been delayed somewhat and the final outcome hasn't quite revealed itself.

So will there be biospheric reintegration or catastrophic breakdown? We can't say for sure, but recent events give me hope.

There was a new record in the global cut in emissions in 2050. The news from the Arctic is grounds for moderate optimism concerning the climate feedback loops that filled us with dread during boreal summers two decades ago. And the mass mobilisations of the green movement on the streets of Moscow, Delhi and Toronto are opening up cracks in the most intransigent nations in the pro-fossil-fuels bloc. I heard from Héctor⁴ a few weeks ago.

The results of the 12th IPCC report have leaked: it looks likely that the global temperature will rise by *just* 1.8 °C in 2100 and then it will stabilise. I know you'll say that 'just' 1.8 °C is still too much. That the Tropics are already suffering severe impacts (there's the tragedy of the millions of climate refugees). That we'll feel the effects soon. And above all that this is an 'anthropocentric' assessment. Perhaps you will agree with me that we are, contrary to all expectations, managing to put on the emergency brakes. But that the string of crimes against the biosphere we have committed in the past is unacceptable. You know what I'll say in reply: that biophysical limits aren't the only ones, that there are also anthropological limits. You yourself taught us "we are (and always will be) simians that are out of order".⁵ It was perhaps too much to ask of us that we would do things better. When I argue with you in my mind, I remember the line of that poem I wrote at the height of the climate terror of the twenties: "of not extinguishing along the way / the humans of the year 3260 / they too will take consolation in banalities / in the face of inconsolable facts".

I haven't forgotten that we're still fighting on many fronts. The pro-fossil-fuel bloc, which marched in step behind that

4. A reference to Héctor Tejero, a climate activist and Más Madrid deputy in the eleventh legislature of the Madrid Assembly. In 2019, Tejero wrote *¿Qué hacer en caso de incendio?*, Madrid: Capitán Swing.
5. This notion is found throughout Riechmann's work. See Riechmann J. (2017), *¿Vivir como buenos huérfanos?*, Madrid: Catarata.

6. On the historically pioneering nature of the Trump administration, see Santiago Muíño, E. (2018), “De nuevo estamos todos en peligro”, in *Petróleo*, Barcelona: Arcadia.

pioneering criminal Trump, is still going strong.⁶ And ecosocialism is not the socioeconomic system most widely adopted by those countries leading the ecological transition, though the fact that ecosocialism exists at all geopolitically is to my mind a miracle. The econational axis, the material

expression of the idea of ecofascism that we all speculated on decades ago, is stronger than we would like. And it is true that the most significant reduction in our emissions has been driven by the unexpected alliance between the United States and China under the umbrella of green techno-capitalism and their neo-colonial tentacles. That even though the market society may be effective as regards the climate, it continues to put pressure on other aspects of the biosphere because nobody questions it. The suicidal rise in the destruction of biodiversity has come to a halt, which is more good news. But the areas of sacrifice are still there, and there are a dozen new mega-mining projects around the world. Ecocide hasn't stopped, instead it has become pinpointed. The panorama is that of a Gaia tortured by terrible extractivist acupuncture. Things could be better. But they could also be much worse. And the ecosystemic regeneration in every area that we remove ourselves from is astounding.

I'm recapping the last century in this way because we still haven't dared to look back at it in terms of victory. But today, as we commemorate the 180th anniversary of the Paris Commune, I wish to state it plainly: we're winning. Despite all the turmoil, the constant toing and froing and the pain of the victims, if we compare the real course of events with what might have happened, we deserve to celebrate the times we live in with a handful of cherries. And to trust that this era will not be short, whatever the song by Jean-Baptiste Clément says⁷.

It's time to celebrate victories, Jorge, and it's time to analyse them in order to consolidate and extend them. Below the colliding of geopolitical tectonic plates, another much more important and decisive battle is being waged, one that will end up tipping the balance of the first. And because it is extremely asymmetrical in nature, we are going to win it: the war for the meaning of life, as the Situationists would say.

None of the opposing regimes are able to show the results we have achieved.

Obviously, there's the reduction in our ecological footprint or in the Gini coefficient, but there are other even more relevant facts and figures. We boast of the free time we each enjoy, in which none can better us, but our soft power has made next to no use of the argument that to me seems crucial: the mass consumption of anxiolytics and antidepressants that was a characteristic feature of Spanish society 30 years ago, particularly among women, has virtually ended. There may be fundamental differences of opinion over the idea of happiness, but even there we are gaining ground.

Luxurious poverty: I believe that to be the key to our success. The cultural revolution that began at the end of the twenties, and which is today in full swing around the world, is the most powerful weapon of mass construction for our project. We were smart enough to anticipate its arrival. But its riches have exceeded our most feverish utopian imaginings. I'm thinking of that visionary project that anticipated degrowth, *Será una vez Móstoles 2030*. Fundamentally, we didn't go far enough.⁸

Drawing a map of luxurious poverty and practices is an impossible task. In particular because the 'deuniversalisation of

7. *Le Temps des cerises*, the song written by Jean-Baptiste Clément in 1866 that became one of the anthems of the Paris Commune.
8. This project is summarised in Santiago Muño E. (2019), "Será una vez Móstoles 2030" [Online]. Available at: <https://enfants-perdidos.com/2018/10/22/sera-una-vez-mostoles-2030/>

9. Del Olmo C. (2013),
¿Dónde está mi tribu?,
Madrid: Clave Intelectual.

the world' caused by the shrinkage of the transport system, which has meant geographical distances have grown enormously, means that local singularities are proliferating at a dizzying pace. New ideas and new customs are emerging in every city, in every bioregion. No political rival can deny this: the foundations of the ecologist project – financial security, secure lives, social justice, free time, community restructuring and the austere ecological relocalising of everyday life for the benefit of effective sustainability – are making one of the most fascinating cultural transformations ever possible. Neoliberalism managed to impose its anthropological mutation in 40 years. We are on track to do the same in less.

At the heart of this is the reconnection of community ties, while preserving the best of what liberalism achieved. Loneliness, which became a psychological problem that affected people's health, has now been virtually eliminated. People today cannot imagine their lives in any other way except as a member of extended networks of family and friends, solid and diverse networks they are proud to belong to and which sustain the spending of time in good company. We live in all kinds of tribes, of the kind that Carolina del Olmo envisaged in an idea that later proved so popular.⁹ But unlike traditional communities, these tribes aren't rigid. They don't promote homogeneity, nor do they censor ideological or sexual heresy. On the contrary, they encourage it. And unlike econationalist communities, ours are open, generous, cosmopolitan without losing touch with those many traditions that deserve to be preserved.

Ecofeminism played a crucial role in this. Together with the entire feminist movement, it pushed for the full equality of women, which strengthened the notion of human equality just when people were readying for their worst battle ever, which

took place in the middle of the century (to share or to kill in a world in which there was no more room). And it made two important contributions. First it introduced men into the world of care, with no going back. The ‘cowboy economist’ (Boulding) inside all of us men could not have had a better shock to his system than singing lullabies or wiping his old parents’ bottoms. That profound wisdom that a life can only be lived aware of our human condition as children, rather than freeing ourselves of it, is no longer the exclusive preserve of grandmothers and mothers because there are grandmothers and mothers of every sex, as Santiago Alba Rico puts it.¹⁰ Moreover, our ecofeminism has wrought this change without idealising care, as the econational patriarchy does: it is necessary and valuable, but it is exhausting. That is why our policies have created a network in which the things that are public and common to us are brought together to make care a social and not just a family responsibility. In our ecosocialism, there is no need crush the personality of a member of the group for the benefit of the survival of the rest.

Secondly, ecofeminism has been the best vector for popularising green philosophy and its ideas: ecodependence, interdependence, finiteness and the skewed nature of the way in which the capitalist market measured material wealth and defined work, leaving essential aspects out of the equation. And I know we’ve commented on this already many times, but it needs emphasising: how lucky it was for our republics that we were able to elect Yayo as the first president of the Iberian Confederation after the turmoil of the constitutional process!¹¹ In the old Spain and Portugal, the process consolidated so quickly and we were able to go so far because Yayo’s emotional

10. Alba Rico S. (2017), *Ser o no ser (un cuerpo)*, Barcelona: Seix Barral.

11. A reference to the eco-feminist thinker and anthropologist Yayo Herrero. See Herrero Y. (2018), “Sujetos arraigados en la tierra y en los cuerpos”, in *Petróleo*, Barcelona: Arcadia.

12. From the poem “Hacia la Séptima Internacional”, included in the book Riechmann J. (2013), *Entreser. Poesía reunida 1993-2007*, Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores.

and outstanding public discourse dispelled reactionary arguments. Yayo was the striker who thrashed the opposition in the media battle at the key moment. Leadership figures are always problematic. Fortunately, Yayo never wanted the job and cut and ran as soon as she could, which undoubtedly helped her to do it so well.

I must emphasise here that the new tribes are anything but a space for social reaction. Quite the opposite. One of the most fascinating effects of everything that’s happening is something you pondered on in a poem many years ago: the day when the “archipelagos of personal places” replaced common places.¹² That day has come. People no longer gather around commonplaces, expressions or awkward silences. Tribes come together in private languages and shared meanings constructed together. The extreme anthropological diversity of the capitalist market has not dissolved. Instead, it has grown stronger. But it is not reproduced by buying and selling things. It is reproduced by sharing time, now so plentiful, with loved ones. Everywhere I see something that could only be glimpsed among certain privileged groups: the magic of collective genius. Everyone seems profoundly inspired and brilliant at that which they share with their circle of people. Everyone seems to be playing in the dream team of some unrepeatable obsession: here fossils, there bossa nova, elsewhere dark humour, earthenware drinking vessels or home insulation. Today we all have five or six extremely specific enthusiasms that bring us together and draw the best out of us. Many of these passions are to do with meeting needs that no longer depend on the market, like the powerful organisations involved in green construction, ecological farming and handicrafts. We have come a long way from the autonomous society that Adrián advocated,

but we have gained in material independence, and local resilience has improved considerably.¹³ Consequently, the community is unquestionably the testing ground for anthropological innovation par excellence.

13. On environmentalism and political autonomy, see Almazán A. (2018), “La actualidad del ecologismo como propuesta de autonomía”, in Riechmann J. et al., *Ecosocialismo descalzo: tentativas*, Barcelona: Icaria.

Of all these new traits, the one that best anticipated the trifling green utopistics that went before us (I’m thinking of *Ectopia* by Ernest Callenbach) is biophilia, something you too put a lot of effort into. Nowadays, enjoying the sense of nature and its tremendous beauty is not a matter of a weekend fling. It’s a happy marriage. In Ferrol, the migrations of seabirds, the Perseids or simply the latest storm have been spectacles watched by as many people as used to go to the premieres of good films. Children’s lack of contact with nature has been remedied through schools: the community and outdoor experiences that in our day were only to be had during summer camps are now part of their year-round education. The liberals scorned us and accused us of engendering something like the young Cuban pioneers. What foolishness! As if there was even the slightest indoctrination in this learning to live as a team outdoors! All you need to do is talk to any teenager: if you ignore the fact that they’ve got their heads in the clouds, which you’d expect given their age, their sensibility and love of everything are such that you feel as if you might be talking with Whitman himself. And look at how beneficial Paco Fernández Buey’s Third Culture is proving to be as a centre of educational reform, which our friend Carmen succeeded so well in pushing forwards while she occupied that ministerial secretariat.¹⁴ Multiple skills and broad knowledge in the humanities and science are not the exception in universities today; rather, they are the norm. You can see the positive results in children from an early age. I am constantly surprised by the fact that my grandchildren Ibai and

14. On the notion of the Third Culture, see Madorrán C. (2018), "Buscando un candil. Movimientos de Ilustración para el Siglo de la Gran Prueba", in Riechmann J. et al., *Ecosocialismo descalzo: tentativas*, Barcelona: Icaria.
15. A reference to Eugenio Castro, a member of the Surrealist Group in Madrid and the author of Castro E. (2011), *La flor más azul del mundo*, Logroño: Pepitas de Calabaza.
16. A reference to Jaime Vindel, the ecosocialist art historian and author of "Entropía, capital y malestar: una historia cultural", in Jappe et al. (2019), *Comunismos por venir*, Barcelona: Icaria.

Sálvora can identify the flora and fauna of Artabria in a way that only biologists could do in the past. I learn something new from them every day. And I like to go with them on their astronomy camps with their friends. I've persuaded them to play at designing maps of imaginary constellations and to spin tales regarding their myths. I'm a kind of old surreal guru for them. At the moment, they pay attention to me, but it won't be long before they tell me to leave them alone.

And talking of Surrealism, how magnificent the effective democratisation of artistic talent has been! If this isn't the communism of genius that Breton and his buddies extolled, then I don't know what it is. Our friend Eugenio Castro¹⁵ never approved of my remark, but I remain convinced. In a round-about way, the Surrealist project has achieved its historic goal in the love-

liest way possible: stopping being avant-garde in order to become popular custom. The conversion of art into common terrain without rights or ownership, the anti-enclosures of art (as Jaime¹⁶ magnificently dubbed it, making reference to the fencing in of the original capitalist accumulation) is a permanent wellspring of cultural vigour. And I'm not just talking about the thousands of music groups that have sprung up in recent decades. Or of the many novelists and poets, painters or sculptors. Or the fact that there is no neighbourhood that doesn't have its own amateur theatre company. Yes, even the cult of our own dreams – and there's nothing more Surrealist than that – is today increasingly widespread. Not to mention

the experimentation with the marvellous that animates this subculture, “the explorers of the wondrous”. Who, though they know little about Surrealism, organise congresses where they share their discoveries, which undoubtedly are glimmers of what Breton called “the gold of time”.

It's interesting to note as well how the poetic terrorism formulated by Hakim Bey in the last century, filtered through that Hollywood commercial film from twenty-twenty-something, provided an extremely fruitful conduit for the vulgarisation of Situationist ideas. How important non-intellectual fashions are and how little attention we pay them, Jorge. Lots of people today spend their free time on the ‘construction of situations’. Doubtless in their own fashion and in a manner so unsophisticated that Debord would be shocked. But there they are. And it's amusing to watch groups from different cities compete to generate creative jokes that reach far and wide, such as the latest one in Zamora with a false alarm over anacondas. When I look back, I think that my most important books were my short publications on psychogeography, like the one on Madrid, which encouraged people to engage in dérives. I'm proud to have contributed to ensuring that the re-enchanted walk has its small community of initiates in our ecosocialist culture. I have always argued, as you know, that the video game industry was a “bitter Situationist International victory”. My son Lautaro tells me that we still have good video games programmed collaboratively using open source code, though no longer those online multiplayer platforms that were unviable in energy terms, as well as psychologically addictive. But it's fascinating how board games have taken up the baton and in such a creative way: nowadays there is no group of friends worth its salt that has not invented its own board game!

This Situationist-provincial realisation of art did not catch us unawares. But what did take us by surprise was the massive

explosion in sport. How did we not see that coming? It's obvious that you and I have always shared the leanings typical of bookish types. The Decathlon phenomenon and all its derivations were full of good ecological promises! We've gone beyond the foibles of the early 21st century, such as equipping ourselves with vast amounts of technological devices or engaging in long-distance sports tourism. And we must admit that mass participation in sports has contributed to ecosocialism by adding a considerable measure of sociological stability and improved quality of life! The lower leagues in the most diverse sports, many of them new and outlandish, are some of the most vibrant events of the social calendar. The data released by the Confederate Institute of Statistics (CIS) show that almost 85% of the population actively engage in sport. And even though we still have football stars, Laura Acosta or Mario Luque's charisma cannot be compared with the hypnotic influence exerted by Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo at the beginning of the century. Celebrity idols are fewer and farther between. But good examples close at hand and more readily accessible are increasing in number. And I'm sure the young girls of Ferrol appreciate pitting themselves against each other in a game of medieval football (they're spectacular, with hundreds of people taking part on each side) on Valdoviño Beach with Helga Prieto (the star of the Racing de Ferrol women's team) much more than they would a photo taken with Acosta.

Undoubtedly it is this increasing interest in sport, allied with a more plant-based diet, an atmosphere that is less polluted and the continuing existence of our public health systems, that has enabled us to maintain our life expectancy. The pessimistic predictions of a number of friends that the death rate in the 21st century would be tremendously high have proven to be mistaken. And in our countries, having more than two children is almost seen automatically as a cultural aberration, on a par with the acceptance that incest is taboo. Is this restrictive

demographic control? The issue is still open to debate, but as a number of our feminist friends and colleagues pointed out years ago, we are seeing that if you give women rights on an equal footing – not only reproductive rights but also financial and political rights – the demographic transition will take place without further intervention, in a gentle *laissez-faire*.

17. Alba Rico S. (2015), *Leer con niños*, Barcelona: Random House.
18. A reference to the song “Ciudad Vampira”, by Nacho Vegas on his album *Resituación* (2014).

I talked earlier of the eroticising of everyday life. The sexual revolution of the 21st century, our “bonoboc turn”, as the anthropologist Lucía Gándara put it, has proved incredible: what a marvellous Hegelian synthesis! We are a much more promiscuous society, one in which we fuck more often and better, with far more empathy and a lot more playfulness, with desires less conditioned by the aesthetic standards set by advertising or the gestural archetypes of commercial porn. But at the same time, the loving partnership is much more solid, and couples consisting of friends who love each other, even married couples!, are increasing in number and enduring, laying the foundations for all kinds of families that are no longer suffocating. What a difference in comparison with the compulsive neoliberal sexuality of the Tinder era! What a delightful distance we have travelled from what Santiago Alba Rico termed “a world of singletons, on the loose and alone”, incapable of falling in love, which we now see as binge-and-purge narcissism that enables the disconsolately lonely to interact!¹⁷ I’d like to draw a comparison with an old song by Nacho Vegas that comes to mind.¹⁸ Nowadays, when there’s a full moon at night, werewolves surrender as never before to their wildest orgasms and their most twisted fantasies. But when dawn comes, they no longer die of grief, as this song had it.

How comforting it is to see that hedonism and sustainability are fully compatible! The true *carpe diem* of Horace, who urged us to gratefully enjoy the simple miracles of everyday life, is forcing out that adulterated *carpe diem* that became the official watchword of the consumer society. The monstrous traits that became all too familiar during the hedonism of the Great Acceleration were owing to the sickness of capitalist accumulation. The Zero-Miles Pleasure Movement (which so closely resembles what I imagined many years back and termed barefoot dandyism) is unquestionably one of the most widespread and interesting countercultures to have emerged in recent years. Its ramifications are wide-reaching: arts like interior design, massage and craft clothing design and making are today part of a broad DIO (do-it-ourselves) movement. Our ecosocialist cuisine, based on local produce, is growing increasingly subtle. As people have more time, there is no social event that is not accompanied by delicious home-made food, wine and beer, all produced using almost extinct local varieties that have been resurrected by local growers. If there was a sensualometer capable of measuring the variety and intensity of sensations, this contribution of recipes devised by unknown individuals to a network of reciprocity would make a laughingstock of the *cuisine d'auteur* at the beginning of the century.

Even drug use no longer serves as a tool of mass medication and social control which, under the guise of flouting the rules, regulated the collective states of anxiety and frustration caused by capitalist alienation. As in the past, young people today are once again reading essays by Huxley and Castaneda, as well as books that initiate them into important mysteries. And they spend many hours collecting the psychotropic drugs offered by their local ecosystem (here in Galicia, the current craze is fungi that that grow wild deep in the new forests that are springing up in place of the old eucalyptus plantations). However, framed within the new emerging world visions, these

forays into the unknown realms of the consciousness no longer seem either ridiculous or superficial.

19. See Riechmann J. (2017), *¿Vivir como buenos huérfanos?*, Madrid: Catarata.

On this point, even though it is a phenomenon of great moment, the years are passing and I find it difficult to reconcile myself to the return of spiritualities, both traditional and new. Though I accept their importance. The alliance with Christianity has been fundamental at the political level, of course. In retrospect, it has to be acknowledged that the *Laudato Si'* was one of the most momentous documents of the century and consequently ever. The blend of Buddhist and Taoist wisdom with Hellenistic ethics (especially those of Epicurus), in which you were a pioneer, has laid the foundations for the new moral common sense that we have settled on.¹⁹ And I accept that the last major anthropological task still outstanding – the supplanting of an anthropocentric paradigm with a biocentric paradigm (although I still think this will take thousands of years) – can only grow out of the success of Gaianism, now in its infancy (though some of its expressions still seem crazy to me and are, in political terms, unbearably irritating). In short, this cultural explosion of compassion, this widespread acceptance of finiteness as a gift and not as a hindrance, would not have been possible without the return of spiritualities. And without doubt saving one's soul, or, more simply, meditating, is that type of praxis whereby we can construct a meaning of life that comes to terms with a finite planet.

This brief rundown of the most notable traits of luxurious poverty as a cultural revolution may not be new but even so I believe it allows us to better assess our potential. What stirs in the hearts of Russian demonstrators, but also of the wave of young people that threatened to shake the US Democratic Party to its core, as Alexandria did 30 years ago, is not just a fear of climate change: it is that we are being increasingly won

over by our austere and environmentally friendly model of happiness.

I'm going to end with a confession, Jorge: I look at my grandchildren and I feel something I never expected to feel at this stage of the game. All my life, I've been tormented by their judgement as the generation coming up behind us. But in all honesty, I see them growing up surrounded by the gifts of luxurious poverty and I am moved by something similar to healthy envy. Oh to be 15 or 20 years old today! To continue with the lyrics of *Le Temps des cerises*, seeing as we're celebrating the Commune, I see that the girls of today have much more madness in their heads and the lovers of today much more sun in their hearts than we did. When I am plagued by doubts, I cling to their brand-new joy.

I will close here. Best wishes from your friend Emilio.

Translated by Sue Brownbridge. Original version in Spanish available online at www.internationaleonline.org

TIME AND AGAIN,
NO LONGER,
NOT YET

Athena Athanasiou

The Utopian Urge of Capitalism: Promised, Deferred, Distributed Life Power

In what ways might critical(ly) situated knowledges – operating necessarily from the inside (i.e. the very meshes of subjectivation and knowledge/power) and hopefully beyond the limit – induce potentialities for ‘our times’ despite and against the biopolitical timescapes of present and future? This question calls for critical epistemologies and imaginaries of alternative differing and deferring temporalities, capable of engaging the present contingencies and producing possibilities for anti-fascist cultural criticism and political life, in a present structured through what Lauren Berlant calls ‘crisis ordinariness’ (2011).

Although the neoliberal doctrine of ‘there is no alternative’ has been sedimented as the normalised paradigm of governance and self-governance in this historical *Geist* we call the present, the trope of utopia is not incompatible with capitalism. In fact, capitalism is driven (or better put, inspired) by a certain utopian imagery and imaginary. The utopian urge of capitalism is imagined and enacted through ‘promises’ of effectivity, productivity, success, security, property, profit, flexibility, mobility, connectivity, creativity, (self-)knowledge, self-actualisation and (opportunities for) fulfilment and consumptive enjoyment. A constitutive component of this incitement to fantasise for an ideal future is, however, rational administration and ‘responsible’ (self-)regulation of desire and enjoyment.

The capitalist utopia that is implicit here (meaning the ‘free market’ utopia) is geared to the theological aura of consumerism as a nodal point of interpellation and subjectivation, which in turn is produced through socially sanctioned attachments and ‘appropriate’ desires. And so the late capitalist utopia as a *dispositif* of the manageable future repeats and sustains the desire for plenitude and surplus, and, at the same

time, generates the regulated and distributed failure (or deferral) of promised satisfaction. The reproduction of the global capitalist present rests on this ambivalence of proximity and suspension, anticipation and discontent, catastrophe and salvation. And, further, it is this ambivalence that operates as a topological grid in which the normative temporality of the present biopolitical crisis comes to be firmly lodged within the most intimate folds of social intelligibility and affectivity.

This is about the ‘spirit of capitalism’ as famously described by Max Weber (1905/2009) and denoted by devices such as the calculation of profit and double-entry bookkeeping. Weber’s ideas on the spirit and magic of calculation offer significant resources for understanding the moral and discursive aspects of the recent global financial crisis (Appadurai 2011/12). In a similar vein, Jean and John Comaroff (2000) have interrogated the salvific, also even magical, qualities through which ‘millennial capitalism’ is invested with and configured by. What we might call the Geist (both as logic and as phantasm) of capitalism is twofold; namely, it performs as ‘ascetic prohibition’ (the bourgeois virtue of saving and self-control) and ‘commanded enjoyment’ (the consumerist incitement, or the duty to enjoy through spending and consuming) (Stavrakakis 2012). The implication and mutual contamination between these two biotemporal paradigms (i.e. austerity and expenditure, disaster and well-being) provide a common sense for upholding apparatuses of self-management and calculable risk administration, in all its lived embeddedness in the ordinary.

The spirit of capitalist utopia is manifested, then, either as a lure for a future of upward mobility and security, compensating for the massive despair of post-Fordist austerity, or as a lived reality for the classes profiting from the normalised state of crisis. The current state of late capitalism – having become ordinary by the structures of neoliberal governmentality – puts

into crisis the distinction between the enchanted spirit of ‘organized capitalism’ (Lash and Urry 1987) and the neoliberal management of menacing crisis through deregulation and austerity measures. Euphoric market mastery and abundance, the purpose of which is to ‘invest life through and through’ (Foucault 1978, p. 139), has never been sustainable for everyone, as much as current neoliberal austerity is injurious for most people but a profit opportunity for a few others – this is about the thanatopolitical limit of capitalist biopolitical rationality. The savvy irresistibility of the free market obscures local and translocal violences of abandonment, exclusion, alienation and disempowerment that inflect intersections of gender, sexuality, race and class.

Neoliberal governance of the free market entails the upward distribution of wealth and, thus, demands the dispossession of differently situated bodies, spaces, rights, common resources and livelihoods. For the consumer fantasies and free market profits to be enjoyed by some, others must be rendered cheap reserve labour – utterly exploitable, dispensable and disposable. The accumulation of wealth enabled by the expansion of the ‘free market’ not only necessarily implies and precipitates but obscures normalised cultures of social suffering and injustice. The present translocal predicament has revealed what was always the case in colonial/capitalist histories, as well as in their postcolonial and neocolonial corollaries. Rather than representing the ‘benign’ face of capitalism (purportedly opposed to the scorching moment of neoliberal excesses), grand narratives of prosperity, accumulation and entitlement are intertwined with structural forces of injustice, upward redistribution, war against labour, and the biopolitics of impoverishment, racialisation and heteronormativity.

Michel Foucault addressed this complex amalgam of different yet consonant capitalist spirits in his lectures at the Collège

de France in 1978-79: '[T]he liberalism we can describe as the art of government formed in the eighteenth century entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship with freedom. Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera' (2008, p. 63). From this perspective Foucault understood neoliberalism as a 'new' regime of truth and mode of governmentality, which makes economic activity (especially in its forms of investment, interest and competition) an all-encompassing matrix of social and political relations (2008). As he summarised: 'Homo economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself' (2008, p. 226). Neoliberal governmentality, thus, renders economy as a dominant and pervasive rationality, subjecting all modes of the political, including processes of subjectivation, to this domination (Brown 2015). By operating with desires and aspirations, along with coercion and (self-)control, neoliberalism 'makes live' by saturating the field of possibilities for living in the present and in the future.

Troubling Authorised Ontologies of/in the Present, (Un/Re)learning the Poetics of Critical Agency

The ambiguous and polysemous figure of utopia – implicit and historically imbricated in colonialist, imperialist and nationalist projects – is often posited in essentialist terms, as a means of attaining and securing the ideals of a 'true', 'full', and 'well-ordered' society. However, something else is going on too in the present conditions of this possibility of utopia; other restless spectres are called up in the wake of temporal normativity that upholds the biopolitical present. The present milieu gives rise to critical utopian thinking as a performative way of reimagining and resisting (in) the present. The question of critical possibility is put to work despite and against the mainstream discourse of the neoliberal and neoconservative

right, according to which any attempt to resist and change the present normalisation of injustice and inequality is utopian, and by 'utopian' they mean naive, impractical, impossible.

Drawing insights from postcolonial feminist and queer critique of universalist utopian assumptions, I would like to point to a conceptualisation of critical possibility, beyond the schematic dichotomies of affirmative versus negative and, ultimately, optimism versus pessimism. How can we reclaim imagining collective life otherwise amidst the normalising powers of a present that limits and unjustly allocates such possibilities? And how can we engage collective imaginaries and desires for political change, not in terms of an untethered, pure futurity but in terms of situated, agonistic relations with others? Such questions seek to explore ways of considering the aporetic as an inescapable site of critical agency.

These questions consider critical agency as always already an experience of the impossible; one that holds out on the transformative promise of self-questioning, unlearning and undoing the epistemic violences, institutional boundaries and divisions of labour that form the conditions of possibility for dominant knowledge production. In this sense, a critical, utopian, situated (un)learning emerges as a contingent modality of political agonism, which might rearticulate and undo the established power/knowledge matrices regulating which (and how) bodies are made to appear, endure, matter, (make) sense and act as 'we'. This is about conceptualising political subjectivity as a critically dispossessed state of relatedness, rather than an unlimited positivity of human action premised upon the disavowal of contingency and vulnerability.

Critical agency is, thus, understood in terms of a collective agonistic desire to unfix and displace the orderly and ordinary terms of everyday despair, such as those related to neoliberal

injustices in their intersections with racism and homophobia/transphobia. As recent anti-neoliberal and anti-fascist public gatherings and uprisings have shown, it is the common practice of assembling in public with others that actualises the living register of the political (Butler 2018). Such an account of political agency as a radical re-emergence of the demos resists the drive to set up the desiring subject as situated prior to subjection through the matrices of the liberal, colonial, racial and phallogocentric (Brown 2015). It also resists the propensity to conceptualise ‘agency’ as a capacity or quality that one might or might not ‘have’, akin to the model of ‘possessive individualism’. This is what seems to be at stake in current critical practices emerging despite and against the embedded norms and forms of ongoing crises, in order to make justice thinkable and possible again.

‘Most utopias forget that utopia is nowhere and make the empirically representational move’, writes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999, p. 318). Her critical perspective on the fantasies of immediate referentiality and unambiguous figuration has prepared us for rethinking utopia: defined not as an achieved or achievable hypostasis which ‘takes place’ under conditions of power-free timelessness, a prescribed enterprise of essentialist unity, but as a resistance to the normalising powers and foreclosures of the contingent present – the ghostly figure of critical performativity.

Drawing on these performative accounts of temporality, I would also like to point to the configurations of critical possibility that are not reducible to self-transparent subjectivity, moral universalism and temporally fixed actualisation, but which remain receptive to the restless sociality of dissonance and contingency, deferrals and ‘disidentifications’. Some may contend that such a performative account of critical temporality lends itself to a melancholic framing. Why would one

assume that melancholia is incompatible with critical agency, however? The question is rather under what conditions melancholia can be mobilised as a critical political concept and not be reduced to a mere sign of a self-absorbed, psychologised impasse. For those outside the purview of racial, class, gender and sexual propriety, melancholia is a socially constituted, affective site of subjectivation, and a performative modality through which to fashion world-making perspectives on everyday survival and resistance. As performance theorist José Muñoz wrote,

‘melancholia, for blacks, queers, or any queers of color, is not a pathology but an integral part of everyday lives. [...] It is this melancholia that is part of our process of dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of color, lesbians, and gay men. ... it is a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names - and in our names’ (1999, p. 74).

The utopian is, thus, redefined here as a non-placed field of possibility in the face of its impossibility, occasioned by accumulated experiences of displacement, injustice and loss.

It is also from this perspective that we might read the performative nuances of the encounter between Ernst Bloch and Adorno on the question of utopia: the aporetic tension between the ‘principle of hope’ and negative dialectics. For Bloch, the rehabilitation of utopian hope remains an uneasy experience of the here and now, and involves a critique of homogeneous time: ‘Even a dash of pessimism would be preferable to the banal, automatic belief in progress as such’ (1995, p. 199). Adorno’s notion of utopia, on the other hand, emerges from a combination of despair and hope: ‘Art’s utopia, the counterfactual yet-to-come, is draped in black’ (1984, p. 196). Rereading their dialogue, Muñoz, in his book *Cruising Utopia*

(2009), developed a critical methodology for queer temporality. Cultural performances of queer futurity by those outside the racial and sexual mainstream can disrupt the normative social scripts of whiteness and heteropatriarchy and open possibilities for other ways of being in the world. In this respect, queer futurity is a mode of endurance and a critique which resists genealogical, reproductive 'straight time'.

And so this reflection has addressed the agonistic (in)determinations of political temporality and accounted for some of the differential ways in which vulnerability, brokenness and dispossession allow transformative potentiality to remain uneasy, unsettled and aporetic. The utopian has been reconfigured here as a performative power which resists closure and finality, and underlining its proposal are the polyvalent implications of hanging in and moving on as well as being moved with and by others – *otherwise* rather than elsewhere.

REFERENCES:

- Adorno, Theodor W. 1984. *Aesthetic Theory*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Appadurai, Arjun 2011. 'The Ghost in the Financial Machine', *Public Culture* 23, no. 3 (65): pp. 517–39.
- Appadurai, Arjun 2012. 'The Spirit of Calculation', *Cambridge Anthropology* 30, no. 1 (Spring): pp. 3–17.
- Berlant, Lauren 2011. *Cruel Optimism*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Bloch, Ernst 1995. *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 1. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Brown, Wendy 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books, New York.
- Butler, Judith 2018. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

TIME AND AGAIN, NO LONGER, NOT YET

- Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff 2000, eds. *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, special issue, *Public Culture* 12, no. 2.
- Foucault, Michel 1978. *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, *An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Pantheon Books, New York.
- Foucault, Michel 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France (1978–1979)*, edited by Arnold Davidson. Translated by Graham Burchell. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Lash, Scott and John Urry 1987. *The End of Organized Capitalism*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Muñoz, José Esteban 1999. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Muñoz, José Esteban 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York University Press, New York.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Stavrakakis, Yiannis 2012. 'Beyond the Spirits of Capitalism? Prohibition, Enjoyment, and Social Change', *Cardozo Law Review* 33, no. 6: pp. 2289–306.
- Weber, Max 1905/2009. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

NANA DE
ESTA PEQUEÑA
ERÁ
(THIS LITTLE ERA
LULLABY)

María Salgado and Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca


NANA DE

PEQUEÑA

THIS

ERA

ESTA
A ERA
S *LITTLE*
LULLABY



Este calamarcito
no tiene mares
no tiene mares, sí
no tiene mares

Los hirvió Bolsonaro
para abrasarle
para abrasarle, sí
para abrasarle

Este invierno el infierno
no tiene fuego
no tiene fuego, no
no tiene fuego

En el Ártico el hielo
lo arde entero
lo arde entero, sí
lo arde entero

*This little squid
does not have seas
does not have seas, yes
does not have seas, no*

ares, no

*Bolsonaro boiled them
to sear it
to sear it, yes
to sear it, no*

arle, no

*This winter Hell
does not have fire
does not have fire, no
does not have fire, yes*

ego, sí

*In the Arctic the ice is
burning the whole of it
the whole of it, yes
the whole of it, no*

ero, no



Este barco pequeño
no tiene puerto
no tiene puerto, sí
no tiene pu

En la boca de Europa
mastican huesos
mastican huesos, sí
mastican h

Esta pequeña era
no tiene sueño
no tiene sueño, sí
no tiene sue

El roto de su vela
va contra el tiempo
va contra el tiempo
va contra e

This little boat

does not have a harbor

does not have a harbor, yes

erto, no

does not have a harbor, no

In the mouth of Europe

they are chewing bones

they are chewing bones, yes

í
uesos, no

they are chewing bones, no

This little era

does not dream

does not dream, yes

eño, no

does not dream, no

The rip of its sail

goes against time

goes against time, yes

o, sí

l tiempo, no

goes against time, no

como dura como pe
azul del cierre el cie
el ceno invierno infie
oscuro el peso el du
Oscuro como duro c
cierre azul del ciego
infierno el cierre el p
Muy duro. Oscura c
peso como cierre az
invierno obsceno os

eso como cierre

re obsceno

erno el cierre

ro ERA. Muy duro.

como peso como

invierno obsceno

eso el duro era.

omo dura como

zul del cieno

curo el cierre

duro era. Oscura como
cierra como el cierre
obsceno infierno era
Como azul obsceno
era cierra dura hibe
Dura. Muy dura.

Oscura como obsce
oscura hiberna duro
Como el cierre azul
muy dura. DURA. M

omo pesa como
e azul oscura dura
a. Dura. Muy dura.
o invierno
rna oscura.

ena era azul
a. Dura. Muy dura.
oscura era azul
UY DURA

*as tough as weight
the closure the
mud winter inferno
the weight the tough
tough. Obscure
blue closure of the
inferno the closure
the era. Very tough
as weight as blue
winter obscur*

ght as blue closure of
obscene closure the
to the obscure closure
with one *THE ERA*. Very
as tough as weight as
blind winter obscene
the weight the tough
gh. Obscure as tough
e closure of the mud
ne obscure the tough

*closure the era.
as it closes as the
tough obscene in
Very tough. As obs
era closes remains
Tough. Very tough.
was blue obscure
Tough. Very tough
obscure
TO*

Obscure as it weighs
blue closure obscure
inferno the era. Tough.
scene blue winter the
hibernates obscure.
Obscure as obscene
hibernates remains.
as the blue closure
was blue very tough.
TOUGH. VERY TOUGH

Las nanas suelen usar el nombre de un monstruo (*el coco*) o un peligro terrorífico para advertir a los bebés de que se protejan. Cuando quien escucha comienza a sumergirse en el sueño, quien canta va progresivamente omitiendo las palabras hasta que la canción desaparece. La nana ideal, dijo Lorca, sería aquella construida con sólo dos notas. Tras seguir los pasos de la "Nana de la Zarzuela" de Guy Debord, un remake de 1981 de la "Nana de Sevilla" que Lorca y La Argentinita grabaran en 1931, inventamos una nana para un contexto sociopolítico tan profundamente dañado como el presente.

Lullabies tend to use the name of a monster (el coco) or a terrifying danger to warn babies to protect themselves. When the listener falls into sleep, the singer omits words until the song disappears. The ideal nana, Lorca said, would be one constructed with only two notes. Following Debord's "Nana of the Zarzuela" a 1981 remake of Lorca and La Argentinita's 1931 recording of the popular "Nana of Sevilla" we brought to our new lullaby for a deeply damaged sociopolitical context.

to name a monster
verifying danger to
protect themselves.
er begins to drift
anger progressively
l the song
ideal lullaby,
d be the one built
tes. After tracing
de la Zarzuela”,
f Lorca & La
1 recording of
na de Sevilla”,
r present a
oly damaged
ntext.

CRÉDITOS CREDITS

Audiotexto *Audiotext:*

María Salgado & Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca

Arte *Art:*

Rubén García Castro & María Salgado (ANFIVBIA)

Ayudante de traducción *Translation assistant:*

Enrico D Wey

1ª ed. : Madrid, marzo de 2020

1st ed.: Madrid, March 2020

Esta publicación está producida con el apoyo de L'Internationale Online, en cuya web (<https://www.internationaleonline.org/>) está publicado el video de la "Nana de esta pequeña era" desde el 23 de marzo de 2020. Este audiotexto fue creado para el "Cancionero de la guerra social contemporánea" de Pedro G. Romero basado en Guy Debord en el marco de la Bergen Assembly 2019. *This print was produced with the support of L'Internationale Online. The video "This little era lullaby" was published on <https://www.internationaleonline.org/> on March 23rd 2020. This audiotext was created for "Songs for the contemporary social war", by Pedro G. Romero based on Guy Debord, within the project 'Political parties / Asamblea General', by Pedro G. Romero and María García for 'Actually The Dead Are Not Dead', Bergen Assembly 2019, Conveners: Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler in collaboration with Murat Deha Boduroğlu, Banu Cennetoğlu, María García, Hiwa K, Katia Krupennikova, Viktor Neumann, Paul B. Preciado, Pedro G. Romero, Simon Sheikh, and Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa.*

NANA DE ESTA PEQUEÑA ERA (THIS LITTLE ERA LULLABY)

The separate printable A2 poster is available to download on www.internationaleonline.org.

THE
PRODUCTION
OF THE
UTOPIAN
IMAGE

Marwa Arsanios

If we think about 'utopia' away from its definition as an idyll, an image of an elsewhere linked to the desire for territorial expansion, let us attempt to think about it in the present, in the making – this is far from an idyllic image. This will entail stepping into the space of political action, while carrying within oneself the imagination, the ideologies, the politics one seeks to practice. It will involve entering the political field and not only watching it from a distance. The drive towards utopia can, of course, only be a collective movement, otherwise we linger inside a capitalist utopia – linger inside the slick, polished image.

I will attempt here to think through the image of utopia, the way it is produced and drawn, and the way it produces the political unconscious, affects it and is affected by it. I will think through a few ecological feminist projects that deal with such questions of land repossession and the manner with which they perform a certain utopian aspiration. These projects were forced to reimagine utopia, because of a direct threat to a community's survival, whether a situation of war or targeted murder.

From Heterotopia(s) to Utopia(s) – Image Concrete

Being a child of the 1980s and an adolescent during the 1990s as a young adult I looked for an experience of utopia in smaller communities and avoided confrontation with the wider political sphere; in fact, I imagined that the only possibility for the utopian moment lay in the retrieval or retreat from society. Perhaps this relates to the ideals of modernism, or even the 1960s North American/North European experiments of living in libertarian, egalitarian communes. Although these were in absolute contradiction with my own reality and immediate surroundings, somehow together they became my dominant utopian image and it took some time to break away from it.

I have always viewed myself as a hyper-urban subject. I grew up in Beirut and witnessed its reconstruction over the 1990s. Once a no man's land the city quickly turned into a haven for neoliberal urban experiments, based on property dispossession and expropriation. Nevertheless, I fantasised about, and probably fetishised too, the utopian idyll as being a calm, faraway 'green retreat' – I was performing the neoliberal imagination at its best. This projection was more than likely a way to avoid the political paralysis Lebanon had been dealing with over two generations, along with the fear of yet another political failure.

My first encounter with political organising in the broader sense was through a feminist organisation. It had become obvious to me that I had to step outside the drawn limits of the arts, culture, academia. However, here, I was also met with a certain establishment: in this case, a hegemonic feminism that had been promulgated mostly through NGOs, those institutions founded on individual rights and other identitarian discourse produced in the post-war period. This was, of course, not so straightforward. The post-Cold War political subject has more often been built on a mix of ideologies in conflict with one another. And so, in turn, was my feminist political consciousness.

I did experience the materialisation of utopia in other separatist feminist movements later on. But again, I faced nothing but contradictions. To accept political disappointments and the accumulation of defeats, whether inherited or directly experienced, is all part of building the utopian image. With every utopian imaginary comes the dystopic. They are dialectically entangled: the possibility of dystopia is embedded in every attempt at imagining utopia. I soon realised that inhabiting the contradictions was the only way forward. Whether initiating a cultural project for the few, running away to a commune, or attempting to establish feminist politics inside the

institution – the most reformist move – I was stepping outside the harshness of the urban, capitalist environment, but also the field of politics. So small communal experiments ceased being the only parameter for me. This is when a new utopian image surfaced.

Utopia has had differing meanings. It once referred to a mass movement that takes over a place, a territory, a country, yet without the acknowledgement of slipping into a dystopic situation. Later, the term was used for political projects, such as socialism formed in the nineteenth century. Today, I ask, what would a feminist socialist utopia come to mean? Could we delve into this imagination? Would it occur on a large scale? How could such autonomous zones be organised? Could we think about this utopic imagination outside of the drive for property and the repossession of land and territory (seen even in the case of the commune)?

To imagine utopia is to enter into fiction, of economics, politics, social arrangements and agreements. It is a literary act in itself. It also relates to a very concrete, legal act of drafting a social contract, as evident in social realism. An act of writing and an act of planning, which means ‘drawing’. Let us also add ‘science’, in the feminist tradition of science-fiction novels, those written about a world either free of men or with dystopic predictions for the future. With both these strands of science fiction and social realism, perhaps it could be possible to imagine this feminist utopia expanding into a wider social sphere and reshaping social relations outside of capitalist relations of production and society.

The drawing, planning and construction of my own utopian image – made of soil, earth and concrete – first came from the experience of being at a women-only commune in Jinwar. The commune is built on repossessed land. And although it seems



Still from *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part 2* (2019)

close to what a twentieth-century modernist utopia would look like in its architectural plan, the way the project is organised connects with a political life built around the notion of assembly. The commune also aspires towards producing a self-sufficient agricultural microeconomy, one that is in direct relation with the land and closely familiar with the lives of fauna and flora. The feminist plan for the commune came from the absolute need to survive in a situation of war.

The 'image concrete' of the commune claims to tell the truth. But is it an image for what utopia could be (in the modern sense of a future projection)? Perhaps we should reframe the question and ask about the material upon which this utopian image is built, its maintenance and its changeability. What if the earth used to build the houses of the commune transformed with water and time? What kind of image would that become?

Utopia in the Making - Image Liquid or Image Mud

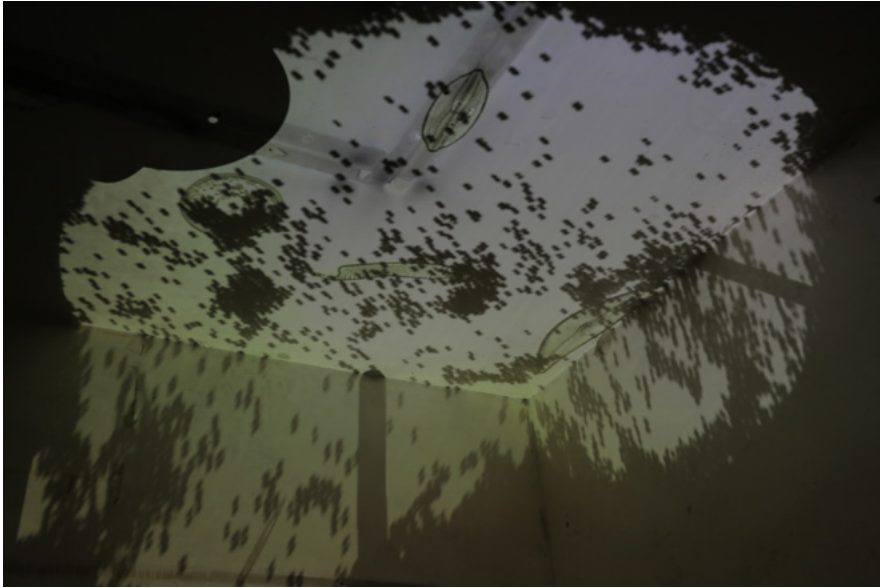
To build another utopia comes from the urgency of present conditions: the unsustainable economic system, for example. When the illusion of this apparently solid system melts into liquid, the solid image melts away too - in documentary terms, twenty-four frames per second dissolves. One must take advantage of this liquid moment in order to enter the matter of the liquid image. The utopian image. And its contradictions.

The making of the utopian image is a question of vision, optics and lenses. It is an image that is in movement. It has no fixed frames and so can be easily extended. It is an image of an abstracted landscape, produced in a situation of disarray and on the run. An image that multiplies and shapes itself according to the level of liquid or its lack. An image that absorbs its producers and transforms their hands, body, faces into its

subject. An image that is shapeless, yet some solid entities can be identified on closer inspection. An image that unlike the solid documentary image cannot be identified and placed into a genre. The liquid image is heard and listened to in drops. It belongs as much to the realm of the unconscious as it does to consciousness. It also belongs to social media and the physical analogue world. It is a twirl. It gets stuck on a surface and then falls with a splash, leaving traces. The liquid image is a promenade. The liquid image belongs to many spaces at once. It also belongs to many ideologies that it adapts and adopts. It changes texture and colour; there is a formal change with every ideological shift.

This liquid image-to-come is an image in movement. And closer to the idea of utopia in the present it makes space for contradictions, mutations and voids. According to Newtonian physics the void is where there is an absence of matter, an absence of property and laws; it has no energy. Feminist theorist Karen Barad conversely states that in quantum physics, the vacuum is where particles are created; there is an inseparability between void and matter. The vacuum is not silence, it is speaking, it is murmuring, she says. It counters Newton's concept, which was ultimately used as a colonial/capitalist expansionist excuse to reclaim and expropriate. It is a space of constant energy formation, a space to watch and listen to.

Utopia, too, can be a counter-expansionist project and build around the smallest entity, such as a seed or bacteria. When the smallest grain becomes the essential thing, utopia stops being a human-made plan or a human-made projection only. We start seeing the utopian image inside the earth, inside the ground, or underground. Rather than building the solid concrete image, we dig for it. Yet, in digging we do not extract. We watch the utopian image as it forms. It is made of small particles moving together in groups. An image from under the



Stills from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 3* (2020); set concept and design by Vinita Gatne

ground or what lies beneath. It is a reappropriation of territory by small entities and creatures.

Microcosmic Utopias – Image Bacteria, Image Seed

While walking through agricultural land in Tolima, south of Colombia, I came upon a site where a seed guardian was once murdered and so stopped to pay my respects. I noticed that what is now delineated as the scene of a crime is a space that cannot be fully seen nor captured by the camera lens; not that it cannot be framed, but that it cannot be captured. There is always a surplus of sight or a more than vision. Where a crime happens is indicated by the corpse itself, where the corpse fell and landed or where it was found. How the earth actually remembers this fall is different, however. It becomes a question of matter and material remembering: the way the murder has affected the soil. The effect of the fallen corpse on the soil spreads much wider than the surface marking of the crime. It also takes the form of bacteria and other living entities, to be seen under the microscopic lens.

Departing from Hannah Landecker's concept of the microcinematic image, we can perhaps think of the zoom lens as a tool to get closer to the soil of the crime site. The formations of bacteria that travel between body and soil are mainly invisible, but not only. If we think of the body as a bacterial mass, we no longer see it as having borders in the first place: the human becomes indistinct from its environment, and, more precisely, from its non-human environment. There is more life underground than there is on the surface of the planet, or in the air. This microbial dark matter of mysterious creatures consists mainly of bacteria and archaea; within each form are millions of distinct types, many of which are still to be discovered.

How to look through the zoom lens at a woman carrying a seed and explain why she has been working to conserve it? How to look again at the same woman in an agricultural field and show the smallest of dust particles which emerge from her working? How to dig for the formations of bacteria that rest inside that soil without disturbing its development and make an image for this? There is the macro and the micro lens, there is the mapping and the zooming out, there is the zooming in on the soil and the observation of the microorganisms within. There is the constant movement between. Between microscopic viewing and telescoping, macro framing and micro farming.

It is undeniably cold murder that is linked to the struggles for land and seed autonomy of the Campesino movements in Central and South America. This much became starkly clear to me when I met Mercy Vera, a farmer from the Pijao Indigenous community in Tolima, along with Samanta Arango from Colombia's Grupo Semillas and María Estela Barco Huerta, the general coordinator of DESMI, the most important association of Indigenous farmers in Chiapas. Barco referred to the fight for seed conservation and food sovereignty as 'la guerra permanente y sistémica' (the ongoing systematic war). She also said, 'si los pueblos indígenas pierden, pierde el mundo' (If Indigenous people lose, the whole world will lose). She talked about how this war is waged on the smallest things, the most essential things, such as corn seeds. Taking away the seeds deprives people of the basic right to nourishment; it deprives them of their right to be a peasant, forces them to migrate and to rely on industrial systems of food production.

Corn and native seeds are life that our ancestors bestowed upon us, and that we have to pass on to our children. Corn represents resistance and struggle. It has a heart, it has nutrients, and it is the healthiest thing we have.



Still from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 3* (2020); set concept and design by Vinita Gatne

A few years ago, Mercy Vera went to sleep every night thinking that she would be murdered. Many of her comrades had been killed by Colombia's paramilitaries; everyone in her community expected to be next. 'We Indigenous people live very close to our seeds', she said. Seeds are history, they represent heritage, and they are proof of belonging to a certain community, to a place and to a land, as they are passed from one generation to the next. Seed autonomy is a threat for transnational corporations, governments and the paramilitaries. The reasons vary for each of these bodies, but significantly it is safety and, most importantly, self-sufficiency that seed banks give the peasants, which, in turn, can potentially lead to marginalising the state institution's 'legal apparatus', the agribusiness of transnational corporations, and patent and genetically modified crops.

Samanta Arango from Grupo Semillas, an organisation that was established in Bogotá to ensure conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity as well as collective human rights over territories and food sovereignty, added:

Once a Pijao woman told me that we have forgotten our language, but we will not give up our seeds. So, the seeds became like a symbol of resistance. The Pijao's recuperation of their land was done through the seeds. Those lands were considered colonial guards. During the twentieth century the lands were divided in the aim of privatising them. Since the 1970s the Pijao have been taking back their land through seed recuperation. There is much resistance – groups like FARC were born there. Peasants are stuck in the middle of the war.

Arango works with different Indigenous communities throughout Colombia to assist in building seed banks. She also referred to the question of gender and of women as guardians in this process:

There is a very important figure for the Pijao community, which is *Casica do lima*, the seed guardian. She was considered a witch by the Spanish conquistadores. They thought that she was concealing a golden treasure. When they captured her, they discovered that it wasn't gold but seeds. Before they killed her, she liberated the seeds in her territory.

Seeds, then, become the central element around which we can build another understanding of utopia. The smallest entities found inside the ground is the drive. One can imagine the tunnels, the under-image, the under-earth of the utopian image. Although we are forced to reimagine utopia because of the conditions in the present (survival, weather, the context of war, such as the women-only commune in Jinwar or targeted murder in Tolima), there is a feminist potential for its image at this time. It remembers land dispossession and is rebuilt on reappropriation, from the underground.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs* 28, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 801–31.
- Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Warner Books, 1993).
- Hannah Landecker, 'Creeping, Drinking, Dying: The Cinematic Portal and the Microscopic World of the Twentieth Century Cell', *Science in Context* 24, no. 3 (2011): 381–416.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE UTOPIAN IMAGE

- Ursula K. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
- Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed: A Novel* (New York: HarperCollins, 1974).
- Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (New York: Fawcett, 1976).

CAPITAL'S
VENGEFUL
UTOPIA:
UNPAYABLE
DEBTS FROM
ABOVE AND
BELOW

Max Haiven

1. See my book, *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
2. See my recent book, *Art after Money, Money after Art: Creative Strategies against Financialization* (London: Pluto, 2018).

1.

Much can be gained from considering the current order of financialised, neoliberal, racial capitalism as a kind of utopia for capital. This is an inhuman utopianism, one where the world is reconfigured towards the horizon where capital enjoys immanent access to all aspects of human potential: the commodification, monetisation and financialisation of every process of life. The transformative imperative of neoliberalism and the structures of financialisation have the effect of encouraging, disciplining and enticing every social actor into using the logics, measurements and frameworks of capitalist markets, which will, in effect, recode, reorient and recast nearly every sphere of social activity to better resonate with and contribute to the increasingly digital network of capitalist circulation.¹ We are, of course, resisting and refusing this necro-utopian drive in a variety of ways. But recognising this utopian drive within the system itself helps us better frame its catastrophic trajectory and its demonstrative moments of vengeful excess.

I have previously meditated on the luxury free port (where the world's super-rich stash their art treasures) as an example of a utopian space of capital.² Certainly these institutions market their services to the elite of the global capitalist class, those who are eager for such exclusive, bespoke hyperspaces, which cater to their whims and their vanity. But while such spaces may have a utopian flavour for their clients, they are more important to understand as the materialisation of capital's utopia. The free port transfigures 'art' (that bourgeois cipher for human creative freedom) into a pure speculative commodity:

art and artefacts encrypted within the free port's vaults may not move in decades or even centuries, but the rights to their ownership are traded, hedged on, used as collateral, leveraged and securitised innumerable times. These artworks exist to all intents and purposes in a parallel universe where capital moves without inhibition or latency. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say, a universe in which latencies, borders, inhibitions, regulatory regimes and laws simply represent a variegated and mouldable terrain.

2.

It is by now well known that the intellectual architects of the neoliberal revolution were, at least in principle, motivated by a fear of utopianism. For economist Friedrich von Hayek and his acolytes and collaborators of the Mont Pelerin Society, capitalism was the only system that might allow human society to transcend the tyranny of particularistic moral value paradigms declared universal and imposed on society by force.³ Even when guided by the loftiest principles and the wisest rulers, any political ideology poses a totalitarian threat on the economy and society. This threat stems largely from the fact that society is too vast, too complex and too contradictory to be encompassed by any intellectual or moral framework. As the late theorist of financialisation Randy Martin illustrates, for Hayek and company it was ultimately a problem of knowledge and its limits: no one human mind could possibly know and therefore plan or manage the whole of social intercourse, and so would necessarily come to impose their utopian and authoritarian vision on the whole.⁴ Only a free market system – held in place by a minimum of laws to prevent fraud, theft and

3. Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

4. Randy Martin, *Knowledge LTD: Toward a Social Logic of the Derivative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015).

5. Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (New York: Zone Books, 2017).

violence, and, as Melinda Cooper has recently shown, by the values of the patriarchal family⁵ – could transcend this contradiction. The unfettered market is (theoretically, at least) a pure reflection of the *actuality* of plurality and the

diverse demands of social subjects, which it accommodates relatively fairly, sustainably and without coercion.

Four decades into the neoliberal revolution and we now know all too well that such an agenda leads to an almost universal dystopia. The theoretical suprahuman and the post-utopian neutrality of markets in practice create vast, coercive forms of inequality and financial authoritarianism – today on the scale of the planet itself. The age when nation states were susceptible to totalitarian leaders who sought to pivot the entire society and economy towards some utopian scheme is well gone. Current authoritarian leaders claim only to offer protection and competitiveness to their chosen (ethnic, religious, national) people against the ravages of the global capitalist market; a dire situation to which they and their policies also contribute. Authoritarianism today does not force society into a formation to fulfil perverse dreams of utopian potential. Rather, it offers austerity, purification and revanchism as means of survival in an ever more hostile world.

3.

I propose that it is fruitful and more so revealing to consider our moment of financialised, global, racial capitalism as so shot through with contradictions that it appears to be taking a needless, warrantless, reckless, and, ultimately, self-destructive vengeance on humanity.⁶ In this frame, austerity appears as a kind of economic sadism, which is not the intention but

the result of systemic and structural forces. There are at least three aspects of revenge capitalism in operation today, though these are by no means exhaustive: the making surplus of whole populations who are dependent on capitalist markets for their reproduction, yet remain superfluous to the system's own reproduction and, thus, left to die; the rise of the 'hyper-enclosure', by which I mean the extension of capitalism's logics of primitive accumulation into the spaces of cognition, affect and sociality (for instance, through digital platform technologies that harvest data and broker connection and attention); and unpayable debts, which I will focus on here.

On the one hand, we have the kind of unpayable debts that are foisted onto whole nations, even though everyone knows that they cannot be repaid and, indeed, the austerity and privation they enforce means the conditions of repayment will never be approached. This imposition of unpayable debt has a long imperialist pedigree: a prime example is the way colonial powers imposed debt on the new Haitian nation in the wake of the revolution of the enslaved, a debt essentially to repay their former French 'owners' for the theft of their own bodies.⁷ More recently, we have witnessed the imposition on Greece and Puerto Rico of such ruinous forms of debt financing that even mainstream financial institutions admit it will prevent their economies from reaching a state where actual repayment may be possible.⁸ This follows decades of similar forms of endless debt

6. See my forthcoming book, *Revenge Capitalism: The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debts* (London: Pluto, 2020).
7. Éric Toussaint, *The Debt System: A History of Sovereign Debts and Their Repudiation* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2019).
8. For a singularly excellent resource on these topics, from which I have also borrowed the term 'unpayable debts', I highly recommend the *Caribbean Syllabus* prepared by the Unpayable Debt Working Group, a project of the Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University: caribbeansyllabus.wordpress.com.

9. Verónica Gago, 'Is There a War "on" the Body of Women?: Finance, Territory, and Violence,' *Viewpoint Magazine*, 7 March 2018, <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/03/07/war-body-women-finance-territory-violence>.

10. Andrew Ross, *Creditocracy and the Case for Debt Refusal* (New York: OR Books, 2014).

11. On debt and death, see Annie McClanahan, *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First-Century Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

discipline wielded by the Global North (via financial institutions and intermediaries like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) on nations in the Global South, which to all intents and purposes appeared as a kind of financial vengeance for the successes of decolonisation.

Yet, this empire of unpayable debts also affects individuals in a rapidly financialising world. Austerity politics see the regressive enclosure of former public services (including health, education, transportation) and the transfer of costs and fees of social reproduction onto populations, and disproportionately, as Verónica Gago shows, onto women.⁹ When combined with stagnat-

ing (inflation-adjusted) wages and a financial services industry eager to offer new forms of securitised (meaning: globally tradable) consumer debt, this shift can produce an explosion of unpayable debt on a personal level.¹⁰ In the US and in the UK, an increasing proportion of adults are expected to die in deep debt, and there is no respite for the younger generations who emerge with astronomical debts for improving their human capital ('getting an education') to take a chance on increasingly hostile, competitive and precarious labour markets.¹¹

4.

There are many ways of framing such a situation. But revenge is not only evocative, it is highly suitable – it is as if the economic system itself (without any individual intending it

or bearing any malice) is wreaking a strange vengeance on whole nations and populations. I propose the term ‘revenge’, because unlike crass sadism it implies a logic of retribution. Capitalism has always relied on regular incidents of vengeance of the powerful, or their laws to repress and punish workers and others who dare to rise up. The neoliberal revolution, from Pinochet’s Chile to Thatcher’s Britain and beyond, is a kind of reactionary political and economic vengeance against the social gains made by trade unions, students, women, minority groups and others, whose struggles in the 1960s and ’70s so unsettled conservative social factions. Capitalism has never been without revenge. But what I am more interested in here is how a system *at large* can be vengeful as it spirals deeper and deeper into financialised crisis. Yet, vengeance for what?

12. Martin, *Knowledge LTD.*

13. David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011); Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).

As always is the case with the vengeance of the powerful, no infraction or crime actually needs to have been committed: more often it is pre-emptive. Martin, again, has theorised that financialisation is key to how capitalism was reconfigured in order to control, contain and conscript the energies of decolonisation movements in the late twentieth century – literal decolonisation in the Global South, metaphorical decolonisation (of bodies, of social relations) in the Global North.¹² In both cases, unpayable debt operates as a means to discipline, control and extract value from social actors (individuals or whole nations), while still maintaining flexibility and adaptiveness. As both David Graeber and Maurizio Lazzarato have illustrated, unlike direct violent repression or colonial force, debt has the added benefit of making the debtor imagine their plight as being their own fault and moral failing.¹³ Though, as Miranda Joseph and Jackie Wang state, the notion of the ‘indebted man’

14. Miranda Joseph, *Debt to Society: Accounting for Life under Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2018).
15. Robin D.G. Kelley, "A Day of Reckoning": Dreams of Reparations', in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2002), 110–34.
16. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1989), 88–89.
17. See, for instance, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; repr., New York: Grove, 2008).

needs to make way for a more nuanced account of how debt actually works on and through different gendered, racialised and classed bodies.¹⁴

Capitalism, obviously, doesn't have intentions and so it can't be vengeful per se; it is not human and much analytical and political grief will come from attributing human characteristics to it. Yet, metaphors are all we have. And so I propose that revenge is an oddly fitting way to describe a form of capitalism that, in its own utopian drive, creates conditions which appear not only exploitative and oppressive, but irrationally vindictive. Unpayable debt, debt that sabotages the debtor's ability to repay or even reproduce themselves, is one such moment of nihilistic capitalist vengeance.

Underneath the unpayable debts 'from above' are the unpayable debts 'from below'. These are claimed (or ought to be claimed) by those whose stolen lands and labours built the racial capitalist world system, a system which now superintends a world of coercive unpayable debts from above. These include the unpaid, unacknowledged debts for slavery, for colonialism, for the generation after generation of exploited labour and its accompanying vengeful forms of enforcement. These silenced horrors are the midden on which today's economy is built.¹⁵ These debts are unpayable not only because those in power refuse to pay (or acknowledge them in the first place), but, arguably, because there is not enough money or resources in the world to repay them

without bankrupting the capitalist economy that was built upon these debts. The crimes and harms are too monumental and too foundational to capitalism to be accounted for in its ledgers. More profoundly, there is a strong argument that even if there was enough capitalist money to pay, it would be the wrong form of compensation: the debt is unpayable because it is not financial, but ontological. Those vengeful systems that wrought colonial violence and whose operations continue to inflict structural violence must be abolished, such that the violence ends once and for all.

5.

Prior to their revolt, the enslaved people of Haiti were subject to constant, brutal and dehumanising vengeance from their enslavers, compelling historian C.L.R. James to muse in his magisterial *The Black Jacobins* that ‘the cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression. For the one aims at perpetuating resented injustice, the other is merely a momentary passion soon appeased’. He continues that, ‘When history is written as it ought to be written, it is the moderation and long patience of the masses at which men will wonder, not their ferocity’.¹⁶

It was, in fact, the fear of the potential vengeance of the enslaved that drove the slave-holding class and their agents to perpetuate the normalised atrocities of their rule.¹⁷ Perhaps it is always thus with the powerful: they mask their own sadistic and vengeful character, necessary to enforcing their exploitative rule, by projecting onto the subjugated the bestial (yet all-too-human) thirst for vengeance. In the name of taming, averting and suppressing that vengeance, all pre-emptive vengeance is justified. Vengeance functions in the imagination of the powerful in tandem with the logic of sub-humanisation. In

18. On sub-humanisation, see Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, 'Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations', in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 9–89.
19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Other Writings*, ed. Keith Anell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

the same way that they imagine those whom they enslave or oppress as just barely human (or barely not inhuman), vengeance is understood to be uniquely human, but abjectly so.¹⁸ Animals may react to harm or fear, but do not appear to plot revenge, nurse vendettas, or dream of poetic ways to reclaim a blood debt – only humans do. But what kind of human? Only the worst. As Nietzsche observed, those who would elevate themselves as the legitimate masters of the world and their fellow human beings would declare themselves above petty vengeance and as subjects of the law – even when vengeance is deemed honourable, it is only

vengeance inflicted on those deemed one's peers.¹⁹ And yet, the system that so empowers and ennobles the slaver is itself based on endless vengeance.

6.

It is important to think about the vengefulness of systems and the particular vengefulness of today's form of financialised capitalism (and its utopian drives), if we want to understand the recent political turn towards neo-authoritarian politics. These politics, almost universally, are characterised by a kind of political revanchism: 'it's time to take *back* our country, even if it kills us'. Such authoritarianism does not conspicuously promise a better, utopian future, and the oath to return to some past seem dubious, even to adherents. But it does promise a revenge on those who can be blamed for some perversion or deviation in the past, those to whom 'we' (or at least

some among us) were too kind, too generous, too welcoming, too compassionate, and who ‘stabbed us in the back’. The affects and existential miseries that drive these revenge politics – this will come as no surprise – bubble up from the quagmire of contradictions of revenge capitalism itself. Unable to name capitalist exploitation and alienation as the source of their misery, yet all too aware capitalism is foreclosing the future, whole politics pivot around a politics of bilious invective which treads the well-worn paths of sexism, racism and xenophobia. When no utopian horizon is available, except endless commodification, financialisation and competition unto death, when we live in the shadow capital’s utopia, all that is left is revenge.

Is there a possibility for a radical, revolutionary vision from within this situation? It is valuable here to recall Walter Benjamin’s fateful ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, his last major work. Writing of the tragic political reversal of the Weimar Republic, which formed with Germany on the brink of a communist revolution (led by the Spartacists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who were assassinated on the orders of the ‘moderate’ Social Democrats) and ended with the ascendancy of the Nazis, Benjamin observed:

In Marx it [the proletariat] appears as the last enslaved class, as the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden. This conviction, which had a brief resurgence in the Spartacist group, has always been objectionable to Social Democrats. ... [who] thought fit to assign to the working class the role of the redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren.²⁰

20. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Vintage, 2015), 251–52.

In other words, for Benjamin, some measure of movement for liberation not only looks forward to brighter utopian horizons, but swears to account for the unpayable debt owed to all those who came before in the struggle. It is this imagination of avenging histo-

ry that provides the proletariat with their greatest strength: the abiding hatred of oppression and a willingness to undertake sacrifice. When a politics of liberation refuses to engage with this 'avenging imaginary', it is easily co-opted and harnessed by reactionary forces.

7.

I don't think there is anything easy or comfortable about this formulation, but it does have some undeniable resonance for today. For my part, I have sought to meditate on what it would mean to cultivate an avenging imaginary around unpayable debts from below. These debts are not honoured or even acknowledged in the utopian ledgers of revenge capitalism nor in public discourse, until, that is, they express themselves in conventional legal and economic terms which allow them to be easily recuperated within that system. These might include demands for compensation, reparations and repatriation for losses suffered due to imperialism, environmental catastrophe, heinous exploitation and more. Today, there are many such efforts occurring around the world, which include attempts to retrieve ancestral human remains and artefacts looted during colonialism, demands by descendants for reparations for the transatlantic slave trade, and the insistence on compensation for the theft of Indigenous peoples' lands and resources.²¹ These movements are vital, especially as they call together a radical constituency of claimants who discover their

collective potential in common struggle and represent a reminder that the high-minded rhetoric and cultural supremacy of the coloniser is built on theft and violence. When these claims for repayment of the debt enter into courts and other official venues, they continue to do this work, demonstrating the decidedly illiberal, racist and exploitative origins of the very ‘liberal’ order that deigns to sit in judgement now of its own crimes. Yet, the great risk is that the official capture of these struggles, which are always hedged with questions of monetary compensation and ‘reconciliation’ of accounts (a closing of the books), sacrifice their greatest and most radical asset: the very unpayability of the debt, its vengeful afterlife.

Writing of the ongoing processes of settler colonialism in North America and the kind of racial ordering it demands, Unangax theorist Eve Tuck, writing with C. Ree, proposes a disturbing rebuttal to the recent enthusiasm, especially in Canada, for a state-led initiative towards reconciliation.

Settler colonialism is the management of those who have been made killable, once and future ghosts—those that had been destroyed, but also those that are generated in every generation[...] Haunting, by contrast, is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society’s assurances of innocence and reconciliation. ... Haunting doesn’t hope to change people’s perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien

21. See, for example, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, 2018); Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Hilary Beckles, *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2013); and Roland P. Salzberger and Mary Turck, ed., *Reparations for Slavery: A Reader* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

22. Eve Tuck and C. Ree, 'A Glossary of Haunting', in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams and Carolyn Ellis (London: Routledge, 2013), 642–43.

(to settlers) and generative (for ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving. For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved. [...] Haunting is the cost of subjugation. It is the price paid for violence, for genocide. [...] Erasure and defacement concoct ghosts; I don't want to haunt you, but I will.²²

What would it mean to refuse payment, or to insist that the debt cannot be repaid in the stolen coin of empire? What would it mean to refuse to forgive as there is no evidence that the conditions and structures that led to violences of the past have substantially changed? What would it mean to suggest that there is not enough money in the world to pay back the debt – the same money, no matter in whose pocket, only perpetuates the very atrocities now being assuaged? What would it mean to cultivate an avenging imaginary in which the closure of the debt is the abolition of the economy as such?

CHILE:
SHATTERING THE
NEOLIBERAL
SPELL
JOY AND DESIRE
AGAINST
ECONOMIC
OBEDIENCE

Miguel A. López

1. Cecilia Vicuña, diary excerpt from *Otoño* [Autumn], Chile, June 14, 1971. Reproduced in *Cecilia Vicuña. Otoño. Autumn* (Exh. Cat.), Santiago, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2007, p. 27.

A work dedicated to joy is not apolitical because it wants to make people feel the urgency of the present, which is the urgency of revolution.

– Cecilia Vicuña¹

The social unrest that flared up in Chile in October 2019 severely rattled the social and economic frameworks that were developed in Latin America during the previous decade. The election of right-wing governments in countries such as Argentina (Mauricio Macri in 2015), Peru (Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in 2016), Honduras (Juan Orlando Hernández in 2017), Chile (Sebastián Piñera in 2017), Colombia (Iván Duque in 2018), and Brazil (Jair Bolsonaro in 2018), and the overthrow of democratically elected governments by parliamentary coups in Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012), and Brazil (2016), signaled the ebb of the ‘Pink Tide’ and the return of the neoliberal model accompanied by ultraconservative views and religious discourse. As the bewitching promise of neoliberalism has spread, however, it has been met with fierce resistance in some places; the recent uprising in Chile sent a powerful social, creative, and artistic message to the rest of Latin America.

For many years, neoliberalism’s champions have pointed to Chile’s apparent financial growth as proof that true societal improvement can only be achieved by a free market economy, lowered public expenditures, and State support of the private sector. But that false narrative of a calm, prosperous nation began to fall apart on October 14, 2019, in Santiago, when hundreds of students balked at the new metro fare, which had been increased by 30 pesos (US\$ 0.03) five days earlier. Public

outrage erupted in a country where wages are among the lowest in the region, and the cost of food, medicine, and education is among the highest. Over the course of the next few days the turmoil escalated and led to street battles with the police, looting, arson, and riots. On October 20 a frightened president Sebastián Piñera appeared on national television to announce that: “We are at war with a powerful, ruthless enemy,” seeking to condemn the material damages and, most of all, downplay the legitimacy of the citizens’ demands.

A state of emergency was declared, and a curfew imposed in most state capitals. The military was authorized to use violence—which included human rights violations—against any uprisings or cases of civil disobedience. This decision spoke volumes, given that the ‘state of exception’ had been widely used during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1989). Many student, worker, and feminist associations had criticized the country’s economic policies during the previous two decades, but such high levels of public dissatisfaction had not been seen in Chile since the 1980s. Everything finally collapsed in the country that most financial analysts had viewed as an oasis of safety and stability, one of the West’s first laboratories for neoliberal experiments.

Though the effects, *modus operandi*, and limits of neoliberalism have expanded in myriad ways in recent decades, they always seem to be under the protection of the allied forces of finance and (neo)fascism. They were further refined in Latin America following the military coup d’état in Chile (September 11, 1973) that overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende, thus dashing revolutionary hopes spawned by the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The coup reflected the fear among the ruling classes that the winds of emancipation blowing through Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s—bringing guerrilla uprisings, peasant movements,

CHILE: SHATTERING THE NEOLIBERAL SPELL,
JOY AND DESIRE AGAINST ECONOMIC OBEDIENCE



John Dugger, *Chile Vencerá, Trafalgar Square, London, 1974*. Photo: © John Dugger Archive
courtesy England & Co Gallery, London

2. Operation Condor was run by the CIA, Chile's Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) commanded by General Augusto Pinochet, and Argentina's Triple A (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina [Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance]). It was authorized on November 25, 1975 in Santiago, Chile at a meeting of the military intelligence chiefs from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, and Bolivia, called by the head of DINA, Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda. See: J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, Lanham and Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

anti-colonial discourses, and feminist revolts—might further decimate the economic and political power long held by the region's oligarchs.

The Chilean dictatorship's goal was to reimpose the biopolitical structure once used to control human bodies that had begun to slip from the oligarchy's grip in the twentieth century—a system of exploitation, developed on haciendas and coffee plantations, that was derived from slavery and inspired by European colonial companies operating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The reorganisation of the methods used for domination led to the development of a two-stage programme: one stage delivered a shock by unleashing the free market economic model; the other involved an elaborate necropolitical initiative that launched a low-intensity war waged by foreign interests in cahoots with the military leadership of the Southern Cone countries (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia). That initiative, created in 1975 and dubbed Operation Condor, was responsible for covert actions and executions designed to eliminate social organisations, labour organisers, journalists, students, leftist activists, guerrilla fighters and their families; it represented the institutionalisation of State terrorism through the murder and disappearance of tens of thousands of opponents over the course of a decade or so.²

The politics of economic obedience and military control were thus an updated version of the legacy of imperial and colonial

The politics of economic obedience and military control were thus an updated version of the legacy of imperial and colonial

CHILE: SHATTERING THE NEOLIBERAL SPELL,
JOY AND DESIRE AGAINST ECONOMIC OBEDIENCE



Cecilia Vicuña at her installation *A Journal of Objects for the Chilean Resistance*, 1974, Meeting Place, London. Precarious objects, miniature sculptures, quipus, weavings, hand-bound booklets, newspaper cuttings, papers on paper, prints on paper, fabric, feathers, other materials, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist

systems for the accumulation of capital based on extractive logics (the exploitation of people and natural resources). In the last few decades, the neoliberal paradigm has developed sophisticated methods for inserting itself into the social fabric and influencing even the most intimate areas of people's lives. Neoliberalism is clearly not just a financial narrative; it is deeply embedded in the State machine and directly impacts feelings and social and emotional practices.

Ever since the neoliberal promise was introduced in Chile, many artists and activists have taken a critical approach to this concept of life based on consumption and accumulation. For some of them, the dictatorship was more than just an interruption of the democratic process; it represented the expropriation of joy and of the desire for social change. It involved the violent imposition of a docile lifestyle and an economic narrative on the population.

A Healing Aspect

A few months after the military coup, Cecilia Vicuña, David Medalla, John Dugger, and Guy Brett were in London, where they created Artists for Democracy. The group took part in the demonstration jointly organised by the United British Labour Movement and the Chilean Solidarity Campaign, in Trafalgar Square and, at one defining moment, unfurled a huge piece of fabric emblazoned with the message *Chile vencerá* [Chile Will Overcome], a work by Dugger inspired by Vicuña's account of the violent overthrow of the Allende government. Artists for Democracy had already proposed the international "Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile" (October 1974) in solidarity with people fighting for freedom all over the world. The festival was a success thanks to hundreds of volunteers and artists who came together to speak out against the dictatorship.

3. For a broader discussion on this matter see my essay “Cecilia Vicuña: A Retrospective for Eyes that Do Not See”, in Miguel A. López (ed.), *Cecilia Vicuña. Veróir el fracaso iluminado. Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*, Mexico City, MUAC-UNAM, and Witte de With, 2020, pp. 24-41.
4. Vicuña quoted in Lucy R. Lippard, “Spinning the Common Thread,” in M. Catherine de Zegher (ed.), *The Precarious/QUIPOem*, Wesleyan University Press, 1997, p. 9.

Vicuña had just created a series of works called *precarious* that were designed to make strong statements on behalf of the political and creative resistance. Under the title *A Journal of Objects for the Chilean Resistance* (1973-1974), some of them were presented at the festival, where they contributed to the global spirit of anti-imperialist struggles. Vicuña’s *precarios* are small, delicate sculptures made of bits of wood, rocks, feathers, pieces of string, fabric, and discarded vegetable and mineral debris that she found on the street. Their material form evokes sacred offerings and the remains of native peoples, indigenous settlements, and Andean *wak’as* (sanctuaries, idols, temples, and graves).³ The pieces in

her installation underscored the medicinal, healing, and shamanic aspects of art, whose function is neither to colonise nor to possess but to *foster* change in structures both microscopic (invisible phenomena) and macroscopic (perceptible physical experiences). She describes her *precarious* in eloquent terms: “Politically, they stand for socialism; magically, they help the liberation struggle; and aesthetically they are as beautiful as they can be to comfort the soul and give strength.”⁴

Using found materials—what she calls *basuritas* [little rubbish]—was a way to unearth the meaning and energy of things marked as disposable by a profit-driven society; it was also a way to establish a dialogue with the sea, the wind, and the natural world. Vicuña takes a cyclical approach to the creative act—she considers works of art to be trial runs, metamorphoses, or poetic transitions rather than final objects—that was

derived from indigenous ontologies and an understanding of sacred beliefs that challenged Western ideas about time, such as the Andean philosophy that views the past and the present as part of a single non-evolutionary concept of time called *pacha*.⁵

5. Regarding the concept of *pacha*, see Atuq Eusebio Manga Qespi, "Pacha: un concepto andino de espacio y tiempo" [Pacha: An Andean Concept of Space and Time], *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*, num. 24, 1994, pp. 155-189.

Her explorations at a material and poetic level hinted at a subtle but tremendously potent idea, which was that modifying language could unleash changes in the structures of desire and open escape routes from the mechanisms of power. Vicuña imbued debris and discarded items with dignity; she honored the balance, complementary nature, and reciprocity of the natural world without submitting it to violence of any kind. Her works focused the question on how to reconnect the scattered parts of what today might be called *ecological justice*—an assembly of many different worlds and multiple forms of awareness.

Her view of the world we share, therefore, does not privilege human society above all else; on the contrary, her work rejects the anthropocentric and hetero-patriarchal fantasy that anoints human beings as the dominant species on our planet (superior to plants, animals, and other organisms) by suggesting symmetrical, symbiotic relationships between different forms of life and various elements. Vicuña undermined and thwarted the promise of neoliberalism by the animation of joy as well as the healing or magical aspect of art, reclaiming non-Western poetics and knowledge that the dictatorship's pragmatic policies sought to demolish and obliterate at all costs.



Cecilia Vicuña, *Venda* [Bandage], from the series *Journal of Objects for the Chilean Resistance*, 1974. Stick, thread and fabric. Courtesy the artist.



Cecilia Vicuña, *Chamán herido* [Wounded Shaman], 1987. Precarious object, mixed media, wood, cotton, and twigs. Courtesy the artist

The Liberation of Desire

Responding to that devastation from a ritual and sensitive perspective rather than a purely rational one allowed Vicuña and many artists to show how the military's authoritarian regime led to the imposition of a patriarchal mandate, a religious-family model, the repression of indigenous knowledge, and the Westernisation of society. Converting long-subordinated, exploited, and enslaved people into consumers was a way of institutionalising the neoliberal concept of State, society, and market by introducing individualism, privatisation, and entrepreneurship as the country's prevailing values.

The artist Francesco Copello, who was also living in self-imposed exile, created works that protested against the regime's attempts to expropriate the meaning and power of human bodies. In May 1975, at the Galleria Diagramma in Milan, he presented *El mimo y la bandera* [The Mime and the Flag], a choreographed piece featuring a bloodstained Chilean flag. With his head shaved, his face painted white, and his body partly naked, he performed a cathartic dance that turned the symbol of Chilean identity into a metaphor for mourning. Giovanna Dal Magro's photographs show Copello miming a narrative of the military coup d'état. His decision to use mime rather than words seems to allude to the relationship between pain and language—the inability to verbalise trauma—that demands an approach to communication and memory that goes beyond the limits of conventional writing.

His performance, with the flag wrapped around his shoulders, could be interpreted as a subtle exercise in cross-dressing. Copello turned the fabric into a cloak-fiction-territory from which to transcend the boundaries imposed on human bodies by the violent standards of national identity. With his own

body partly naked and partly adorned with makeup, his delicate movements gave shape to a way of being that was the antithesis of the dictatorship's concept of an ideal neoliberal citizen; that is, a heterosexual, Christian, healthy, highly productive, obedient, market regulated person whose moral imperatives are driven by an economic view based on a cost-benefit analysis.

The flag draped across Copello's naked body hinted at the fragile nature of the concepts of citizenship and nationality—the extensions of a law that draws the line between decent and obscene, civilised and primitive, healthy and sick. He performed a sort of mating dance in which both protagonists (the mime and the flag) seemed to be flawed and incomplete meanings that did not meet the official standard. Copello carried the flag on his back to look like wings or spread it on the floor as if to hide something or wrapped himself in it and adopted ironic or heroic poses. As an alternative to the protocol of patriotic and military submission demanded by the country's national symbol, he offered the rebellious sensuality of his own migrant, homosexual body. It was like a “cathartic assault on the nation's sacred flame,” as he so eloquently expressed it several years later: “a brave move, that scared me to death, in my constant wanderings, in and out of hotels/always on the move, looking for the best option.”⁶

Copello knew that if he'd lived in Chile in 1975 his body would have been subjected to violent discipline by the military heterosexual regime and, sooner rather than later, would have been marked for death. He was the embodiment of what the neoliberal system considered disposable. Like those who are

6. Francisco Copello, *Fotografía de performance. Análisis autobiográfico de mis performances* [Performance Photographs. Autobiographical Analysis of My Performances], Santiago de Chile, Ocho Libros editores, 2002, p. 84. Many thanks to Paul Birke and Agustín Pérez Rubio for providing access to visual and bibliographic material about Copello.

7. Performed with Carlos Leppe and Nelly Richard at the Instituto Chileno Francés.
8. Fernanda Carvajal, "Cold Ecstasy," in Miguel A. López (ed.) *Un cuerpo ambulante. Sergio Zevallos en el Grupo Chaclacayo (1982-1994). A Wandering Body. Sergio Zevallos in the Grupo Chaclacayo (1982-1994)*, Lima, Museo de Arte de Lima, 2014, p. 45.

seropositive, undocumented, transgender, sick, imprisoned, or have cognitive and functional diversity, Copello inhabited a body that refused to satisfy the productive demands of the capitalist system. His works of art seemed to attempt a dissident exorcism of the government's model of the exemplary, decent Chilean citizen in a head-on confrontation with the false narrative of the country's moral, reproductive, and sexual wellbeing.

Dramatisations of political power and their queer upending of authority offered crucial opportunities to challenge the regime's discourse. In 1982, in his performance of *La biblia* [The Bible],⁷ Juan Dávila presented two images in which he used the Chilean flag to engage in a potent display of cross-dressing. In the first image he appeared wearing the flag as a veil, portraying himself as the Virgen del Carmen—the patron saint of the army and an icon of military culture—while making a raised fist with his right hand as a nod to left-wing struggles. Wearing lipstick and with his face painted white, along with a statement that said: "Queen of Chile. Our Bread," Dávila sought to show how the dictatorship's policies of starvation and extermination were hidden behind a veneer of religious approval. According to the researcher Fernanda Carvajal, the clenched fist was also a reference to a promiscuous "link between the national Catholic visual discourses and those of the left (both with their heteronormative violence and inherent homophobia)".⁸ The second image shows Dávila with no makeup on his face, wearing the veil-flag around his shoulders, above the statement: "Liberation of Desire Social Liberation." He is naked, holding his left arm against his head in a gesture of confrontation and



Francesco Copello, *El mimo y la bandera*, 1975. Photo credits: Giovanna Dal Magro. Courtesy Rosa Copello and Die Ecke.

defensiveness, his hand tightly bunched into a clenched fist.

In response to the spread of the national-Catholic hegemony in educational, medical, and police discourse, Dávila offered a (homo)erotic portrayal in which the flag was used as a sort of sexual shroud to cover and uncover a homosexual body. The transvestite Virgin's veil and the flag-shroud also alluded to the violent measures the Christian religion took to "impose a colonial gender ideal throughout the Americas" and become "the symbol of indigenous genocide."⁹ Offering joy and magic alongside serious politics (as in the case of Vicuña) and unleashing forms of non-normative desire (as Copello and Dávila did) were ways of disrupting the entrepreneurial spirit and the prohibitions imposed by Western patriarchal authoritarianism. These aesthetics and modes of affective affiliation were considered a symbolic threat to the country's economic and moral order.

9. Carvajal, *Ibid.*, p. 37.
10. Created in 1989 and backed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States Department of the Treasury, the Washington Consensus was a set of ten economic policy prescriptions promoted as the best program to address the crisis in developing countries in Latin America.

Human Bonds and Shared Experiences

Forty years later, the neoliberal narrative is still driving social planning in Chile. It was, in fact, the post-dictatorial democratic transitions in the Southern Cone countries that introduced the neoliberal model as a false synonym of democracy. That model took root all over Latin America on the heels of the 1989 "Washington Consensus" and its programme of reforms designed to weaken the State, deregulate markets, and give the private sector a strong hand in the management of local economies.¹⁰ The social upheavals that rocked Chile in October 2019 were once again, as in earlier years, a protest



Juan Domingo Dávila, *La Biblia de María Dávila*, ca. 1982. Photo by Martin Munz. C-print on paper, 120 x 80 cm. Colección Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), Universidad de Chile. © Juan Davila, Courtesy the artist and Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art

against the hijacking of the State by financial interests with the tacit approval of a judiciary that obstructs the due democratic process—a Constitution that was approved during the dictatorship. “It’s not 30 pesos, it’s 30 years” was a trenchant slogan that resounded in many parts of Chile.

As happened during the dictatorship, neoliberalism has brought about a dismantling of the organisational structures of the social movement, which is constantly being accused of carrying out terrorist attacks. A good example is the Piñera administration’s recent use of the reformed Antiterrorism Law—originally enacted in 1984 by dictator Pinochet—to criminalise and target Mapuche indigenous activists. The October riots were the latest in a long succession of citizen demonstrations that included the marches organised by university and high school students in 2011 to protest a deficient and privatised educational system; the long-standing complaints of the Mapuche community and other indigenous peoples who are demanding that the government return expropriated territory sold off to businesses and calling for a constitutional acknowledgement of their rights and their communal use of land; the demands of workers who protest against the privatised pension system; and the rise of feminist and sexual dissidence movements that clamor for abortion rights and bear witness to institutional hetero-patriarchal violence. The images, slogans, and performances used in many of the recent demonstrations have sought to reconnect with aesthetics at a political and therapeutic level, appealing to the sensitive structure of human bodies and working to break the dominant male, political, and religious order.

These creative statements, arising from art groups and civil society, show a preference for process-based, ephemeral, and craft forms. This can be understood as a desire to have a direct impact on the body, on how we look (at ourselves), and on

language, gestures, and habits, giving rise to collective conversation and new ways of coming together. The political power of these actions and representations is also based on their ability to build spaces for recognition and empathy. Neoliberalism, however, has also sought to develop strategies of control and production originating in the area of feelings and emotions. Dealing critically with these sophisticated modes of re-territorialising capital has prompted multi-disciplinary artists and activists to come up with tactics to fracture the fabric of submissive subjectivity encouraged by the dictatorship. These actions have been altering public space and using language to say 'we' in new ways, reclaiming care and joy as undomesticated expressions of political conflict.

11. Rita Segato, *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad* [Counter-Pedagogies of Cruelty], Buenos Aires, Prometeo Libros, 2018, p. 18.

The latter trend has been repeatedly pointed out by feminist activists. In the history of capitalism, the historical work-oriented exploitation of women's and racialised and enslaved people's bodies is closely aligned with a willingness to treat nature as a form of merchandise. Neoliberalism can therefore be seen as just another name for an obedience to an ecocide, patriarchal, heteronormative order that is committed to racial supremacy. The feminist anthropologist Rita Segato defines it very well in her description of a confrontation between two opposing views of wellbeing: on the one hand, a *historical project focused on things*, that controls life and creates individualism; and, on the other hand, a *historical project focused on bonds*, that fosters reciprocity and creates community.¹¹ What can create genuine human bonds when finance and fascism are allied and the neoliberal 'entrepreneurial self' has been successfully socialised as common sense?

CHILE: SHATTERING THE NEOLIBERAL SPELL,
JOY AND DESIRE AGAINST ECONOMIC OBEDIENCE



LASTESIS, *Un violador en tu camino* [A Rapist on your Path], November 29, 2019. Collective action in public space, Valparaíso, Chile. Courtesy LASTESIS



12. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sbcU0pmViM>

Shattering the Spell

“The rapist is you / and the cops, / the judges, / the State, / the president. / The oppressive State is a macho rapist.” These lyrics are from the song and performance *Un violador en tu camino* [A Rapist on your Path] by the feminist group LASTESIS (Sibila Sotomayor, Daffne Valdés, Paula Cometa Stange, and Lea Cáceres), originally created as part of a theater piece. The song draws on ideas expressed by feminist activists, theorists, and organisations to condemn the normalisation of violence against women; the title subverts the motto “Un amigo en tu camino” [A Friend on Your Path] that was used by Chilean police in the 1990s. On November 20, 2019, the LASTESIS group first performed the song in front of a police station in the city of Valparaiso, Chile.¹² The piece was recorded and uploaded to their YouTube account. With their eyes blindfolded, the women stood in rows imitating how they are treated by police officers and soldiers, condemning the impunity and responsibility of institutions in the systematic murder of women. From the moment it was performed in Chile, the song launched an unstoppable wave of street protests around Latin America and the world—public actions with hundreds and sometimes thousands of women denouncing femicide and reclaiming female sexuality. The lyrics have since been adapted to local concerns, and translated into many languages, including Mapuche, Quechua, Portuguese, Greek, Catalan, German, Turkish, Hindi, Arabic, and sign language.

The impact of this fiery performance further fueled the social unrest directed at Chile’s Piñera administration. The song *Un violador en tu camino* was propelled to notoriety by the power of recent feminist struggles all over Latin America, such as the *Ni Una Menos* [Not One (Woman) Less] movement in Argentina in 2015 and the campaign in support of legal, safe, and free

abortion launched in 2018, symbolised by the green handkerchief that was also used by the LASTESIS group in their performance. Their song was an affirmation of a feminist togetherness, transforming public space into places for collective care and political education. The event can be seen as part of a long history of social and creative protest marked by the prominent public role played by women—whose aesthetics have, however, frequently been dismissed by men as having little cultural value.

13. For more on the stealth tactics used by *Mujeres por la Vida* during the military dictatorship, see Fernanda Carvajal and Jaime Vindel, “Acción relámpago” [Lightning Action], in Red Conceptualismos del Sur (ed.), *Perder la forma humana. Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina* [Losing the Human Form. A Seismic Image of the 1980s in Latin America], Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012, p. 37-42.

For example, in Chile in the 1980s the feminist and human rights group *Mujeres por la Vida* [Women for Life] staged fleeting protests against the dictatorship, such as *No me olvidas* [Don't Forget Me] (1988), consisting of black posters with silhouetted human shapes and provocative messages addressed to people on the street; or in April 1986, women marched with their eyes blindfolded, carrying banners and holding white canes in imitation of the blind. *Mujeres por la vida* sought to disrupt the sense of normality being fostered by the Chilean military regime, and to keep alive the memory of those who had been tortured, detained, and disappeared.¹³ Recent mass demonstrations by young women demanding legal abortion and control over their own bodies and reproductive rights are part of the long history of opposition to the ongoing fascist campaign of cruelty and terror that allows extreme arguments for capitalist production to demand obedience to male domination.

The confluence of demands by women and indigenous communities—especially the struggle of the Mapuche peoples—has

CHILE: SHATTERING THE NEOLIBERAL SPELL,
JOY AND DESIRE AGAINST ECONOMIC OBEDIENCE



LASTESIS, *Un violador en tu camino* [A Rapist on your Path], November 29, 2019. Collective action in public space, Valparaíso, Chile. Courtesy LASTESIS



shown that the wave of protests has not just tried to rupture the political and economic paradigm; it has also sought to undermine the male, religious, Western, and colonial cabal that has perpetuated a violent history of subordination. The new grammars of social protest have made giant strides in terms of what can be imagined and said, severely weakening the image of the Chilean neoliberal model and forcing the government to negotiate on a range of issues that even include changes to the Constitution.

Since mid-March, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the imposition of social distancing rules that are being used by the Piñera government as a reason to redeploy the military into the streets. The government's presence in places such as the Plaza Dignidad—the epicenter of Chile's recent social upheaval—has angered citizens and social movements. In Chile, as in Brazil, the government's first reaction was to support the neoliberal argument that it was necessary to safeguard the country's economy and private interests. Though the pandemic has provided the government with a temporary lifeboat by stopping the public protests, the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequities caused by the failure to invest in social infrastructure—the basic rights to health, housing, education, and water—will show that citizens' complaints are well founded.

Despite the forced truce, social unrest is still widespread and is being expressed via images shared on social media, in slogans, and through demonstrations that put pressure on the government—on March 20, Chileans banged on cooking pots outside their homes, calling on Piñera to institute a country-wide quarantine in response to COVID-19. The deepening of inequalities will no doubt fuel new upheavals; images, songs, and street events will liberate people's bodies from the state of obedience and shatter the neoliberal spell that was cast in the 1970s. Their demands are clear. Control and obedience

are to be replaced with collective organisation. The debt-financed lifestyle is to be replaced with an economy released from the game of competition. Instead of the fantasy of individual freedom, they call for a political system devoted to the common good. Instead of extractive policies and extreme profiteering, they demand the deployment of skills that belong to no one and are therefore everyone's to share. Demands that still echo in the bonds and the energy of the crowd that will return to the streets when the time has come for us all to come together.

March 2020

Translation by Tony Beckwith. The original version in Spanish is available on www.internationaleonline.org

CHILE: SHATTERING THE NEOLIBERAL SPELL,
JOY AND DESIRE AGAINST ECONOMIC OBEDIENCE

SONGS FOR PETALS

Ayesha Hameed

for the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the
National Register of Citizens in India



I

October 31 1984

I pull myself up
 eyes at the horizon of the back seat window
Watch cars slick on rubber band roads
 through graphite clouds of night
Grey white buildings swing round an older one
 fuzzy and broken and old.
Kristallnacht broken glass sure
 sparkling stars on the asphalt
Rings on the Ring Road there are broken
 Olympic Os scattered on the street
Rings of fire
 burning tires
And our Ambassador two Sikhs inside
 boomerangs fast and slow
Passing men quietly smashing car windows
Standing contemplative around thickening fires
 oozing black rubber
 graphite into the night

26 000 1833

the half-life for salt to disintegrate into the sea is 260 million years. this is a measure of how sea meets salt in bodies crushed into the water from slavers on ships. a half-life as margin of witness. what else. the sea is in our blood and the sea is our blood and we are exiled from the sea and so we staccato attack with anchovy machine-gun fire what is not us in the sea. but we are the sea and this is our obsolescence. what else. there is blood in the breeze. what else

II

songs

#1

december 2019. when they crash into the library at jamia millia islamia first they smash the cyclops security cameras. then they take out the eye of mohammed minhajuddin reading in the library. an eye for an eye. they round up protesting students, beat them to the ground and make them sing

#2

i am too young to understand when someone comes home with a cassette recording of iqbal bano singing a banned poem by faiz. i listen more to the sound of the 50,000 people in the audience. they are so loud that the tabla player changes their tempo to the crowd shouting *revolution* i don't understand but its timbre onomatopoeia enough *we shall see & shake the earth/ crackle lightning/ turn mountains of oppression into dry cotton*

#3

february 2020. mobs shouting/ shoot the traitors/ throw petrol bombs into homes in ashok nagar/ knocking men to the ground making them sing/ again

#4

"The hours pass. The sun beats down. The great white herons spread their wings like the swan enrapturing Leda as we float downstream through the floating verdure. He sings of the paramilitaries and the terror they create, chopping up bodies and heaving them into the river we are floating on with its vivid flowers."

*

There is litter in the foreground. The crane is red. Its long arm draws an arc around a black shore around it. Water ripples in a white sheen reflecting the grey sky and the halo of a suggested sun behind the clouds. Cars pass by behind. Ordinary. Brick buildings line the road behind the cars. The camera follows the crane moving in circles, pulling its matter to shore.

*

a half life of singing

singing lying on the ground
blood trickle
soldiers above ready boots
smash a cctv camera (eye number 1)
and then the eye of a man (eye number 2)
singing on a river full of bodies
& flowers
cranes humming through sewers for bodies disappeared
singing faiz under tents with old women sitting vigil
singing on a cassette tape worn old and through

vā

songs slick leaving time
span the space between
 grains of air
scale lush trade winds
angry
gust retribution waiting
 return

seablood as a spinning of
air-plus-water
flood-plus-famine
twine past into future
a half-life of vibrations
water-into-air
bodies-into-song
tremble the undertow of the in-between

III

26 000 2020

we share the sea but this brings to us our annihilation. fascism: to multiply the self and destroy the other. to destroy the self so that the sea can return. but we can't return. when we bleed it is (a) minute in the archaic immensity of the sea.

*

imago

#1

taken from above. a parking lot full of burned cars covered in white dust. there are no windows or tires. twelve men and a women are walking in between. a shed at the back painted a pale pink. in the front what looks like a cart is also burned. the cars arranged in a tidy grid.

#2

smashed cars piled on one another over a layer of rubble. the bottom car a bright emerald. another folded like an accordion. a boy stands to the right of the pile, leaning on the pile with one hand, a stripe on his tracksuit leg, his other hand on his hip. two women look to the right, off camera, wearing red, yellow, orange. someone's turquoise knapsack and a bit of sun. most of the photo is of the cars that everyone has their backs to.

#3

a teenager and an older man. the boy has his hand on the handlebar of a twisted bicycle frame. there is no second handlebar. white rubble at his feet. boy looks to the right, man looks to the left, arms crossed in front of him. he is wearing a sky blue shirt. the boy is wearing an army shirt. both in rubber slippers. leaning. behind them shredded cables radiate up the wall.

#4

grey cement. the textured paint print of a hand. white, with long fingers, their outlines wavy. the thumb is thin, its tip round like a comma. four lines radiate away from the palm from left to right. is this print on the wall or ground? why was paint on someone's hand. what happened. sedimentation of haste of a body no longer there. what happened

*

*On a bus going from Jamia Nagar to Old Delhi
December 7 1992 (part 2)*

the bus stops at the terminal
ok so 20 minutes more to walk
the light is purple and black
there's blood in the breeze and we both know it.
just say: we're almost safe
steady now, i'm far from home and it's dark.
my shadow hidden by the black

ok so we are at the house
porch light on cyclops beacon
safe haven hurrah no mob this time suck it.
inside steel eyes on us
without looking at me r introduces me by
another name.

a desert full of silence and not safe
& shit we better get out of here soon

utopia

what shakes the earth shakes the sky
sure but then
the air between is thick with
what

potential is a stupid word
but so are words in general
and you can't point to the tip of language
without falling back in.
let me try again
utopia could be the trembling of a grain. maybe just one
between the continents
or you and me
or the idea of movement
or something falling
or as ocean never anywhere
or particles of seablood
or bits of nightmare left tarnished
and soldered into refusing form
and itself

or let me split this atom between you and me
and count the difference
or count my blessings
or count how many times I forgot to see
or stupidly cried instead of looking
forgot the snakes tumbling out of lightning bolts
or ships tipped like lightning in lava seas
and time on a loop looking straight at me
and tried instead to find a shiver
in the decay of a song
we sang once
and remembered.

IV

one. we walk in lodhi gardens after meeting for a cup of tea. december's late afternoon stretched out. the grass dug up brown and turned over. we pass two men arguing while pushing carts full of roasting nuts. the light gets more oblique. the ruins more inscrutable. swans and ducks fluttering in the ponds. the air a chalky zigzag in our throats. the brown arms of the smog settle around our shoulders. under a tree a man sits contemplative on a bench wearing a mask over his nose and mouth.

two. under a rose gold tent that stretches back without end. a bright winter sun hovers at its margins. it draws a neat line across the thousands of women sitting underneath, their faces painted fuchsia by the light. hundreds of men and women standing crowded around them. outside there is the law. inside the old women sit on the ground and hold it. this is day fifty. flying across the tent in every direction are millions of rose coloured petals. thousands of voices shouting

they will fight with bullets, we will reply with flowers

SONGS FOR PETALS

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

songs for petals refers to:

Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem "Va Yabqá Vajhu Rabbika" (1981) (more popularly known as "Hum Dekhenge") performed by Iqbal Bano in 1986, the transliteration is my own. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxtgsg50Vy4>

'song #4' is a quotation from pages 512-13 of Michael T Taussig's "Excelente Zona Sociale" in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 27, Issue 3, pp. 498-517.

Chandan Gomes' Facebook videos posted 2 March 2020 and 2 February 2020. The final line of 'songs for petals' is a quotation from the caption for Chandan Gomes' video posted 2 February 2020 of the 50th day of the sit in by women in Shaheen Bagh, New Delhi, protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in India.

Ram Rahman's Facebook pictures posted 29 February 2020. The reference to Kristallnacht is inspired by his description of photographs posted on March 1 2020 of the destruction of two schools during riots in Delhi in the preceding days.

Christina Sharpe's description of the disintegration of sodium from the bodies of the enslaved in the middle passage in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016

Italo Calvino's "Blood, Sea" in *Cosmicomics* NY: Penguin Classics, 2010, pp.190-202.

Arundhati Roy's speech at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, published as "This is our version of the coronavirus. We are sick" in *scroll.in*, March 01, 2020 <https://scroll.in/article/954805/arundhati-roy-on-delhi-violence-this-is-our-version-of-the-coronavirus-we-are-sick>

Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor's description of Vā in "Beyond "Migration": Samoan Population Movement (Malaga) and the Geography of Social Space (Vā)." *The Contemporary Pacific* 21, no. 1 (2009): 1-32.

Images of utopia in Amar Kanwar's *The Sovereign Forest* ed Daniela Zyman. Berlin; Vienna: Sternberg Press, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2015.

Thank you to Lizzie Homersham, Henri Gunkel and Katie Earle for support and advice on early drafts of this piece. For my Khalas.

BIOGRAPHIES & COLOPHON

Marwa Arsanios is an artist, film-maker and researcher of mid-twentieth century politics, with a particular focus on gender relations, urbanism and industrialisation. She approaches research collaboratively and seeks to work across disciplines. Select solo exhibitions include: Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2018); Beirut Art Center (2017); HammerMuseum, Los Angeles (2016–17); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2016); Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015); and Art in General, New York (2015). Her work has also been shown in group exhibitions, including Biennale Warszawa (2019); Sharjah Biennial (2019); Gwangju Biennale (2018); Home Beirut: Sounding the Neighbours, MAXXI, Rome (2017–18). Arsanios was awarded the Georges De Beauregard International Award at FID Marseille in 2019. She is the co-founder of the research project 98weeks. Currently, she is a PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

Athena Athanasiou is Professor of Social Anthropology at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (Athens, Greece). Among her publications are the books: *Agonistic Mourning* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017); *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (with Judith Butler, Polity Press, 2013); *Crisis as a 'State of Exception'* (Athens, 2012); *Life at the Limit: Essays on Gender, Body and Biopolitics* (Athens, 2007); *Rewriting Difference: Luce Irigaray and 'the Greeks'* (co-ed. with Elena Tzelepis, SUNY Press, 2010). She has been a fellow at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, at Brown University, and at the Center for the Study of Social Difference, at Columbia University. She is a member of the editorial advisory board of the journals *Critical Times*, *Feminist Formations*, *Philosophy and Society*, and *Journal of Greek Media and Culture*.

Rubén García-Castro is a graphic designer specialising in editorial projects, artist books, display boxes and visual systems for cultural events. He holds a Degree in Fine Arts and developed a professional career in Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Madrid, where he currently lives. Among other important projects with editorials, curators, and artists, some notable ones include *A RAPA*, with Juan Baraja and Gonzalo Golpe; *LA FIN*, with Nicole Herzog and *Jardins de Lisboa*, and *DHAKA. A Pavilion by Dan Graham*, with Jesús Moraime. Since 2012, Garcia-Castro has been a part of the collective ANFIVBIA with poet María Salgado, co-creating the graphic material of her work and the visual aesthetics of her audiotextual work with composer Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca.

Max Haiven is Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice at Lakehead University in Northwest Ontario and director of the ReImagining Value Action Lab (RiVAL). He writes articles for both academic and general audiences and is the author of the books *Crises of Imagination*, *Crises of Power: Capitalism, Creativity and the Commons* (2014), *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* (with Alex Khasnabish, 2014) and *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2014). His latest book, *Art after Money, Money after Art: Creative Strategies Against Financialization*, was published by Pluto in Fall 2018. His book *Revenge Capitalism: The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debts* will appear in May 2020.

Ayesha Hameed lives in London, UK. Since 2013 Hameed's multi-chapter project Black Atlantis has looked at the Black Atlantic and its afterlives in

contemporary illegalised migration at sea, in oceanic environments, through Afrofuturistic dancefloors and soundsystems and in outer space. Through videos, audio essays and performance lectures, she examines how to think through sound, image, water, violence and history as elements of an active archive; and time travel as an historical method. Recent/ current exhibitions include Liverpool Biennale (2020), Gothenburg Biennale (2019), Lubumbashi Biennale (2019) and Dakar Biennale (2018). She is co-editor of *Futures and Fictions* (Repeater 2017) and co-author of *Visual Cultures as... Time Travel* (Sternberg forthcoming 2020). She is currently Co-Programme Leader of the PhD in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London.

Nav Haq is Associate Director at M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp – where he is responsible for the development of the artistic programme. Haq has organised numerous monographic exhibitions with artists such as Hassan Khan, Cosima von Bonin, Imogen Stidworthy, Otobong Nkanga and Cevdet Erek, as well as significant overviews of work by Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, Joseph Beuys, Kerry James Marshall and Laure Prouvost. Has was curator of the *Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art 2017* and *Contour Biennial 2007*, Mechelen, Belgium. At M HKA he co-curated the group exhibition *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics* in 2014, and the interdisciplinary exhibition *Energy Flash: The Rave Movement* in 2016. For Summer 2020, he is organising the exhibition *MONOCULTURE – A Recent History*. In 2012 he was recipient of the Independent Vision Award for Curatorial Achievement, awarded by Independent Curators International, New York.

Miguel A. López is writer, researcher, and Co-Director and Chief Curator of TEOR/ÉTica in San José, Costa Rica. His work investigates collaborative dynamics and feminist re-articulations of art and culture in recent decades. He has published in periodicals such as *Artforum*, *Afterall*, *ramona*, *e-flux journal*, *Art in America*, *Art Journal*, *Manifesta Journal*, among others. He has recently curated “Cecilia Vicuña, a retrospective exhibition” at Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2019, and MUAC-UNAM, Mexico City, 2020; and “Victoria Cabezas and Priscilla Monge: Give Me What You Ask For” at Americas Society, New York, 2019. In 2016 he was recipient of the Independent Vision Curatorial Award from ICI (Independent Curators International), New York.

Pablo Martínez is educator and researcher. He has worked as head of programmes at the MACBA since 2016. He has been in charge of Education and Public Activities at the CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Móstoles, Madrid (2009-2016) and associate lecturer in the History of Contemporary Art at the Fine Arts faculty of the Complutense University of Madrid (2011-2015). He edits the *et al.* series of essays (MACBA-Arcàdia). His lines of research include educational work with the body, as well as research into the power of images to produce political subjectivity. He is editorial secretary of the academic research journal **Re-visiones** and a member of the research and action group on education, art and cultural practices Las Lindes. He has edited published publications including *Arte actual. Lecturas para un espectador inquieto* (“Art today: readings for a concerned spectator”, CA2M, 2011) and *No sabíamos lo que hacíamos. Lecturas para una educación situada* («We didn’t know what we were doing: readings for a situated education», CA2M, 2016); he has curated exhibitions by Werker (2014) and Adelita Husni-Bey (2016).

Emilio Santiago Muño is Doctor of Social Anthropology, member of GinTrans2 (Socioecological Transitions Interdisciplinary Research Group) from Autonomía University of Madrid. Philosophy professor in Zaragoza University and PEI lecturer in MACBA, Barcelona. Member of the Mas Madrid political party Technical Group in Madrid Assembly. Writer of “No es una estafa, es una crisis”, “Rutas sin mapa”, “Opción Cero” and “Qué hacer en caso de incendio” among others. Ecosocial activist and member and co-founder of ITREC (Transition Institute Rompe el Círculo.)

Maria Salgado and Fran MM Cabeza de Vaca have worked together in Madrid since 2012, setting out from the idea of *audiotext* as a junction between poetry, language, sound art, music and performance. Together, they have developed an important body of work through two main areas of investigation: *Hacia un ruido* (2012-2016), focused on the cycle of political disobedience that spanned the globe after 2011, and *Jinete Último Reino* (2017-2020), researched sexual and gender dissidence. Their investigations have taken form in multiple formats: live performances (touring to several venues in Madrid, Barcelona, Guadalajara or New York, among others), graphic art publications (posters, pamphlets, scores), books, recordings, instrumental pieces, and sound art installations.

Corina Oprea has been the Managing Editor of L'Internationale Online since January 2019. Corina was the former Artistic Director of Konsthall C (2017-2018) with a programme on Decolonization in the North and she holds a PhD from University of Loughborough-UK, with the thesis ‘The End of the Curator - on curatorial acts as collective production of knowledge’.

COLOPHON

COLOPHON

Austerity and Utopia

eBook publication

PUBLISHED BY

L'Internationale Online

www.internationaleonline.org

PUBLICATION DATE

2020

ISBN

978-91-519-3169-2

Editorial Board

Nick Aikens, Farah Aksoy, Rose Borthwick, Sara Buraya, David Crowley, Meagan Down, Nav Haq, Ida Hirsensfelder, Pablo Martínez, Jyoti Mistry, Corina Oprea, Mabel Tapia.

Editors of Austerity and Utopia

Nav Haq, Pablo Martínez, Corina Oprea

Managing Editor

Corina Oprea

Assistants Managing Editors

Rose Borthwick, Samuel Girma

Copy Editor

Laura Preston

Contact

Corina Oprea

Corina.oprea@internationaleonline.org

Graphic Design

Christophe Clarijs

General Coordinator

Valand Art Academy – Gothenburg University

Project Leader

L'Internationale

'internationale

MG+MSUM Ljubljana, **Museo Reina Sofía** Madrid, **MACBA** Barcelona, **M HKA** Antwerp, **SALT** Istanbul & Ankara, **Van Abbemuseum** Eindhoven, **MSN** Warsaw / **NCAD** Dublin, **HDK-Valand** Gothenburg

OUR MANY EUROPEES

General Coordinator web project:



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

**Attribution- NonCommercial-
ShareAlike CC BY-NC-SA**



This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms.

**With support of the Culture Programme
of the European Union**

Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Cover image: still from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 3* (2020) by Marwa Arsanios;
set concept and design by Vinita Gatne; Photography: Mahmoud Safadi