

JOURNAL OF CRITICAL SOUTHERN STUDIES



Volume 1. Summer 2013.

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Questioning the Logic of International Relations: (neo)-Realist Theory,
War and Globalization**

Abdoulaye Saine

**The Philosopher's Elusive Subject: On the Problem of the 'Present' in
the 'Political'**

Jayan Nayar

**Morals and maladies: Life histories of socially distributed care among
Aaumbo women in Namibia, Southern Africa**

Jill Brown

Globalization and African Studies: The Case for Pluralization

Baba G. Jallow



Editorial Board:

Editor: **Dr. Baba G. Jallow**, Creighton University

E: babajallow@creighton.edu

Associate Editor (special issues/commissioning): **Dr. Abou Jeng**, Centre for Research, Development and Social Justice Advocacy.

E: abou.jeng@gmail.com

Associate Editor (compliance and copy editing): **Sam Bamkin**, De Montfort University.

E: sbamkin@dmu.ac.uk

Africa Editor: **Dr. Nathan Carpenter**, Lehigh University

Asia Editor: **Dr. Michael Hawkins**, Creighton University

Book Reviews Editor: **Dr. Joanna Tague**, Denison University

Gender & Childhood Editor: **Dr. Jill Brown**, Creighton University

Latin America Editor: **Dr. Thomas Kelly**, Creighton University

Religion Editor: **Dr. Jay Carney**, Creighton University

Editorial Advisory board:

Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne, Gender and Development Consultant, Gambia

Dr. Sara Motta, University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia

Dr. Jayan Nayar, University of Warwick, UK

Prof. Vanessa de Oliveira, University of Oulu, Finland

Dr. Don John Omale, Salem University, Lokoja, Nigeria

Prof. Abdoulaye Saine, Miami University, Ohio, USA

Dr. Momodou Sallah, De Montfort University, UK

Dr. Perry Stanislas, De Montfort University, UK



Contents

Journal of Critical Southern Studies

Volume One. August 2013

Editorial	5
Questioning the Logic of International Relations: (neo)-Realist Theory, War and Globalization	7
Abdoulaye Saine	
The Philosopher's Elusive Subject: On the Problem of the 'Present' in the 'Political'	23
Jayan Nayar	
Morals and maladies: Life histories of socially distributed care among Aaumbo women in Namibia, Southern Africa	60
Jill Brown	
Globalization and African Studies: The Case for Pluralization	80
Baba G. Jallow	

Editorial

Welcome to the *Journal of Critical Southern Studies*, a journal dedicated to the promotion of critical southern studies in the northern academy and beyond. As we publish our first issue, we invite you to join and support us in giving voice to scholars and views that have for so long been almost drowned by the roaring of hegemonic northern voices. We feel that privileging what are generally considered the views of the underdog is vital to promoting counter-hegemonic discourses on globalization, political theory, gender, and cultures among many other areas of scholarly enquiry and human endeavor.

New beginnings are not always as easy as they sound. There are any number of logistical and other challenges that face and threaten to overwhelm the founders and initiators of projects like the *JCSS*. We, however, were quite aware of this difficulty from the very beginning. And so we have been prepared to meet the challenges head on and determined to overcome them and bring our project to fruition. We are happy that the publication of this first issue is testament to the fact that we can and we will grow and achieve our aims and objectives. We are determined to raise the profile and quality of the *JCSS* to the highest possible standards in the world of academic publishing. We recognize that this is no easy task; but we know we have what it takes in our contributors and our editorial boards to succeed.

In the face of time and resource constraints, we have been fortunate to find peer reviewers for all the articles published in this first issue. We thank our reviewers for their kind support and the insights they shared with the contributors to this issue. That said, time constraints and initial oversights do not permit us and our contributors to strictly adhere to the submission guidelines now posted on the *JCSS* site. These guidelines were created after our first call for papers and so contributors cannot be blamed for not following them to the letter in this first issue. We are happy that all the contributions have gone through the peer review process and been okayed for publication by our reviewers. From the second issue on, the submission guidelines especially regarding citation style will be followed to the letter.

In ‘Questioning the logic of International Relations Theory,’ Abdoulaye Saine likens academic disciplines to planets ‘bounded by worldviews, theories and epistemic structures’ that, overtime, ‘become fossilized or insulated to maintain a distinct interest and purpose. That is, they become fiercely defensive sub-systems that seek to blunt criticism or sometimes absorb challenges into its logic.’ Proceeding from this premise, Dr. Saine delivers an insightful critic of International Relations Theory and its sub-discipline, International Political Economy. His study seeks to demonstrate how

IRT, especially its 'realist/ neo-realist perspectives are deeply implicated in the violence and injustice that permeate relations between countries, communities, peoples, cultures, and religions of the world.'

In 'The Philosopher's Elusive Subject' Jayan Nayar argues for the negation of the political. He suggests that the present 'is defined not by absence/inexistence, not by Non-Being/Nothingness outside of the political, but by Other/Different-Being whose Exteriority is that which continues to be negated in theory-practice. Such a perspectival shift points to the decolonial necessity of the negation of the 'political' itself, of the struggle for *desubjectification*.'

In 'Globalization and African Studies,' Baba Jallow examines various perspectives of area studies scholars on the question of globalization and its relation to the production of knowledge on the global south. He argues for a plurality of globalizations rather than a single hegemonic globalization taken to be synonymous with the westernization of the non-west or the unidirectional flow of things from North to South. Eurocentric and hegemonic conceptualizations of globalization are no longer adequate to the task of capturing the very complex intersections and interactions of peoples, ideas and artefacts that flow to and from all parts of the world today.

In 'Morals and Maladies,' Jill Brown brings an important dimension to the north-south debates and perspectives on child care in the two hemispheres. Studies of fosterage traditionally do not include the views of the foster children themselves. Jill fills this gap by examining the live histories of eleven Aaumbo women in Namibia who were themselves foster children. She argues that the 'cultural complex of socially distributed childcare' in Africa represents 'a unique example of a culturally specific practice with its own emic logic.'

Together, the four studies in this maiden issue of the *JCSS* represent a coherent statement on the ongoing transformation of epistemic spaces to further accommodate views from and on critical southern issues. We hope to build on this foundation in our future issues. Again, welcome to the *JCSS*.

Questioning the Logic of International Relations: (neo)-Realist Theory, War and Globalization

Abdoulaye Saine

ABSTRACT

Academic disciplines have planet-like qualities to them. Like planets in a galaxy they revolve around pathways that engender routine and sometimes predictable outcomes. These are made possible by domesticated modes of academic analyses, knowledge construction, production and “truth” verification. Academic disciplines also privilege topics, questions and frames by which to ascertain what is worthy of intellectual inquiry. In sum, they are bounded by worldviews, theories and epistemic structures into which current and future generations of students are socialized. Overtime, academic disciplines become fossilized or insulated to maintain a distinct interest and purpose. That is, they become fiercely defensive sub-systems that seek to blunt criticism or sometimes absorb challenges into its logic. In this paper, I argue that International Relations Theory (IRT), and more specifically realist/ neo-realist perspectives are deeply implicated in the violence and injustice that permeate relations between countries, communities, peoples, cultures, and religions of the world. And, its sub-discipline, International Political Economy (IPE) has similarly contributed to a process of “globalization” that favors the rich and like realist theory uses war and violence to maintain itself. Together, they have constructed a global political economy that is deeply colonial and predicated on age, a youth-driven culture, class, gendered and racialized hierarchies and disparities.

Introduction

International relations theory (IRT), and Euro-American theories, in particular, having been born in the inter-war years of World War I, and World War II, are predicated on a Hobbesian “state of nature” presumption. In doing so, IRT has succeeded in constructing an image of a discipline and a world whose logic is driven by the quest for “power” against a backdrop of “self-help,” “anarchy,” and a conflict-prone, survival-based international system. Accordingly,

“states” become the most important actors in a “state of nature” political environment where rational political actors struggle over “power” in pursuit of national security interests.

In this paper, I argue that IRT, and more specifically realist/ neo-realist theories are deeply implicated in war, violence and injustice. And, that war and violence against formerly colonized and now marginalized peoples in the global economy remain distinct attributes of international relations - even international law is implicated in this campaign (Jeng 2012: 24). I also argue that international political economy has similarly contributed to a conceptualization and process of globalization that favors the rich and likewise uses war and violence to maintain itself. Together, they have erected a political-economic edifice predicated on age, a youth driven consumer-culture, class, gendered and racialized hierarchies and disparities.

Scholars of IRT, I contend, must rebuild/ re-conceptualize IRT to embrace at its core the quest for social and economic justice and an epistemology/ ontology that gives voice to the voiceless. In other words, listening to native, as well as other silenced voices, without mythologizing or essentializing a constructed “other” not only offers us a critique of realist and neo-realist theories of IR but helps frame an alternative discourse that contradicts realist claims concerning survival, anarchy, and conflict as constitutive of international relations (Chowdhry and Nair 2002: 27). Consequently, IRT must recognize its elitist, classist, racialized, gendered and colonial dispositions and question a system-wide logic that makes male domination and violence against women possible. This has resulted in contemporary forms of resistance, and recovery that include the “One Billion Rising” protests, anti-globalization protests, as well as other forms of agency and resistance expressed peacefully and through oppositional political violence, worldwide. To a large degree these alternative voices and visions proceed from postcolonial perspectives. Coates argues:

Out of the struggles of peoples from diverse backgrounds, in diverse geographical and diverse political situations- a new discourse of oppression was born. This new discourse cannot be subsumed into a single monologue, but is indeed a discourse of many voices and, thus, visions. On one side, this vision is born out of an attempt to understand the diverse histories of postwar anti-racist and post-colonial movements. These revolutionary discourses, generated by the oppressed themselves, articulated an anti-racist -anti sexist perspective that viewed racism and sexism as intricately interwoven by race and gender as essential aspects of being. This particular discourse linked the struggle to class based struggles. (Coates 2013:1).

IRT and IPE have been particularly dismissive of these discourses and where it paid attention, it was to assess them for their lack of theoretical and empirical rigor. For the most part, these discourses were dismissed for being purely driven by ideological considerations, and as a result contributed little to the study of IR and IPE. Informed by the Behavioral movement of the 1960s, many scholars in IR and IPE emphasized a search for patterns to highlight differences and to discover similarities (Feste 1994:43). Thus, Behavioralism and its proponents employed the quantitative approach or “scientific method” to arrive at verifiable, falsifiable and ultimately generalizeable conclusions and findings.

Rather than an emphasis on moral prescriptions or policy recommendation, scientific inquiry sought to explore, describe, explain and predict events in the world through properly gathered and widely supported empirical evidence- using correspondence with the “real world” as the ultimate test of any proposition (Feste 1994: 43). Consequently, students of IRT that utilized the “scientific method” to study global political and economic relations, for the most part, did not focus on women or investigate the gendered, racialized, classist and colonial structures of world politics and its oppressive effects. Rather, the focus and pride of place in political science and IRT, in particular, remained *power, rationality, a self-help* international system in a “state of nature” and anarchical political landscape. In this dog-eat-dog political environment self-interested *unitary* states pursued national security goals.

It is argued that IRT’s emphasis on the aforementioned social constructs of international politics (*Power, rationality, self-help, anarchy, unitary state, and security*) legitimize violence, war, domination and control of the constructed “other.” These so-called attributes of the international system were and are also closely tied today to the systems of neo-colonial oppression in that they silence even erase social and political organizations and narratives of the colonized (Beier 2002: 83).

This has to do, in part, with the low representation of women, Hispanic, black and other groups in the academy, generally, and in international relations, specifically. And even where representation of these groups and women increased marginally in recent years in the U.S., many because of training or quest for recognition and a conscious effort not to rattle the cage remain (ed) trapped in dominant and not dissenting theories and methods of inquiry (Feste 1994: 51).

Paradoxically, the behavioral revolution of the 1960s coincided with the rise of feminism, the modern civil rights movement in the US, as well as Africa's decade of independence. Publication of Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique*, Malcolm X's autobiography and works by other black activists that included W. E. B. Dubois, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi- all precursors of the 1950s and 1960s anti-colonial revolutions never attracted the attention it deserved in IRT. Rather, IRT was concerned with and or engaged in violently containing or suppressing these movements and ideas.

IRT's fixation on order in an anarchical system, especially in distant colonial or semi-colonial outposts where "anarchy," obtained contributed in no small measure to the Cold War, the Algerian War of independence, Vietnam and formerly held Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. These wars would persist into the so-called post Cold War era to implicate IRT, as a status-quo theory concerned primarily with control, domination and use of war and violence to maintain socially and economically constructed hierarchies.

Almost forty-five years ago, Roy Preiswerk had noted:

It is as legitimate and necessary today to study race as a distinct factor in international relations as it has been in the past to isolate other basic forces which determine the behavior of groups and result in conflict (Persaud 2002: 56).

Since then analysis of race had been increasingly broadened to include problems of gender, identity, culture, ethnicity, and even nationalism. What appears to unite these perspectives, among others, is their emphasis on their social construction. Yet Western Feminist, and orthodox IR scholarship, as well as other critical approaches in IRT have also been critiqued in as far as they articulate a particular cultural perspective, and as a result become important planks of Western hegemony. Another connective tissue in recent scholarship is the broad-based attack on essentialism, foundationalism, universal rationality and epistemic hegemony in IRT (Persaud 2002: 57).

Coates sums it well when he said:

An alternative vision was articulated by both feminist and activists, again born from and within the anti-colonial and civil rights movement which were just the opposite. According to this discourse, race and gender based cultures were created by groups in their efforts to resist and counter racism and sexism. Hence, these cultural forms were

central in combating the negative identities and realities constructed by racist and sexist epistemic processes. These alternative models provided stigmatized groups vehicles for recreating social relationships and social identities that served as buffers to the harsh realities of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, Jim Crow, and segregation (Coates 2013:1).

In sum, academic disciplines, like theories, are lenses or frames that provide scholars a means by which to make sense of the world or construct it. Academic disciplines also suggest ways of organizing data, topics- topics such as family, power and equality. These are defined and situated differently relative to other topics and relative to their centrality or distance from key concerns of the discipline (Wilson and Frasure 2007:7). To a large degree, Sociology and Anthropology focus on group dynamics, whereas Psychology focuses on the individual just as political science focuses on power, the state and not so much on youth. Allow me to address the issue of youth since it is an important part of the proceedings.

IRT and IPE subsume youth within categories that include but not limited to workers, soldiers and students. Why is there not a youth focus in IRT? After all, given IRT's focus on the causes and consequences of war and since it is the youth rather than the old that are warriors, understanding their location in the armed forces (and informed by race and gender concerns) and their output of violence must be carefully analyzed. This is because it is typically the young, poor, and less educated who flock to the lower ranks of the armed forces not your well-to-do, educated and of higher socio-economic standing. It is this demographic and poor youth, in particular, that are more likely to face combat, die or sustain harrowing lifetime injuries.

Questioning the Logic of IPE and Globalization

It is in the economic sphere and more specifically in IPE where youth as a category are deemed important. First, as workers, consumers of goods and services; second as producers of fashion; and thirdly, as symbols of all that is desirable in a consumption-youth driven global capitalist economy. It is the youth in countries like Bangladesh, India, and China that toil at sweatshops at slave-wage rates to produce the Nike shoes, banana republic, and Gap clothing that their wealthier counterparts in the West and elsewhere wear, and in doing so, help sustain high profits margins for these companies, Wal-Mart and companies like them.

It is the youth and young women, in particular, who work the Economic Processing Zones (EPZs) of Latin America and the Caribbean and who are routinely subjected to sexual assault and violence. It is older men sex traffickers that prey on innocent young girls, women and boys in cities throughout the world. It is young women from Colombia who transform from being workers in flower shops and factories into drug-mules (carriers) by swallow pellets of cocaine which they excrete, sanitize and deliver to consumers through middlemen in the US. It is young girls and women the world over like Malala from Pakistan who suffer unthinkable violence for simply wanting an education, or sexually violated for wearing a dress. It is also innocent young girls who are routinely circumcised in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The logic of patriarchy that privileges males over women, rape and other forms of physical and psychological violence, must be questioned and halted. I suggest that these are not separable from economic and cultural globalization.

Yet it is also the youth that inspired and continue to inspire social change in society. Take “Occupy Wall Street,” the Anti-globalization Movements, for example. It was the young who openly began conversations on the negative effects of hyper-globalization, greed, endemic inequality, violence and war, just as their earlier counterparts did against the Vietnam War, the Gulf Wars and others like them. These wars, in later decades would be justified on the basis of Huntington’s “clash of civilization” thesis.

The questions we must raise and hopefully answer are: how sustainable is the underlying and overt logic of a global capitalist economic that is predicated on war, race, class and gender inequality? How much longer must the logic of globalization require the routine sacrifice of the young to the gods of war in order to maintain high profit margins and economic hegemony? Young people the world over continue to question and problematize a process of globalization that favors the rich and marginalizes the poor. It is the youth who remind us of income inequality and the increasing concentration of wealth generated by market exchanges and the need for governments and institutions to address redistribution of wealth, resources and opportunity (Sobel 2013: 9).

In this so-called liberalized global economic environment, it is transnational corporations that have come to dominate global commerce. The 500 biggest of these TNCs have a combined income of over 15 trillion dollars, while daily currency flows easily exceed 2 trillion. The impact of these exchanges is that the economic prosperity of all countries more than ever is

heavily dependent on what they import and export, the flow of investments in and out of these countries, and exchange rates of currencies (Rourke 2008: 3).

Economic globalization, according to the “Washington Consensus” is a tidal wave that potentially lifts all countries into prosperity. When countries reform, i.e., restructure their economies to enhance comparative and competitive advantage, reduce trade barriers, devalue currencies, remove subsidies and increase exports against a backdrop of privatization, and a minimalist state system, they stand to prosper. There is little evidence to suggest that “conditionalities,” led to improved economic policy or performance. Rather, they have had adverse economic and political effects the consequences of which include indebtedness, dependency, unemployment and capital hemorrhage (Stiglitz 2006: 46).

Economic globalization with its tremendous potential for good, and it has been good for some, has been hijacked to serve special interests. It professes an “End of History” ideology that rationalizes a global, as well as national economic systems that are driven by hyper consumerism, hegemonic control, and unequal exchange. It is maintained by a strategy of divide and rule, war and violence, especially against those who oppose it (I will return to this theme later). Rather than interdependence, it has increased dependency; rather than development, globalization has deepened the divide between the North and the South, as well as restructured poverty to transcend the traditional North/South divide into a new Global North and Global South configuration.

Rather than the peace dividend expected after the Cold-War, globalization has inspired war and violence, captured best by the current campaigns of the “war on terror,” which proceeds from ideological justifications provided by some scholars of IRT including Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations,” and notions of the “West against the Rest.” Today, Islam has emerged as the only transnational force able to resist America’s homogenizing power on a global scale (Baker 2012: 519). Thus, Liberal theories of IPE, as well as theories of international relations are complicit in the construction and justification of current and past global political orders.

Yet concerns over globalization extend beyond its economic consequences. War, the global “war on terror,” and the surge in violence against women, as well as prostitution, human-trafficking, and domestic work may very well represent the underbelly of economic globalization. Together, they represent a prominent feature of globalization, as well as the commodification and racialization of women’s bodies (Agathangelou 2002: 143). Thus, the

sexual labor and use of women's bodies and their violation cannot be viewed in isolation from the global political economy and responses against it. Yet in spite of the increase in the global sex trade and tourism, the two major schools of IPE, Liberal internationalism and Gramscian political economy, by focusing on the upper circuits of the global economy, similar to Realist theory's focus on the state, have ignored the movements of female workers and their relationship to international tourism, military bases worldwide, and capitalism (Agathangelou 2002: 143).

Questioning IRT/IPE and the “War on Terror”

The First and Second Gulf Wars against Iraq in early 1991 and in 2003 were efforts at reasserting U.S. hegemony in the region, even if the more obvious outcome was access to Middle East oil (Ssenyonga 2009: 36). The “war on terror” indeed represents continuity in the post- 9-11 era of insidious and ubiquitous war machinery in which so-called terrorists and innocent civilians are killed, sometimes by remote-controlled drones- some call it collateral-murder. The 9-11 attacks, unconscionable as they were, have been used to redefine U.S. foreign policy along neoconservative lines. The Bush policies emphasized unilateralism, unlimited objectives and the transformation of U. S. foreign policy strategy into global political-military imperialism (Janowski 2008: 39).

While President Barak Obama has softened both the conduct, if not the content, of U.S. foreign and military policies, his deployment of drones, and Guantanamo Bay's (GITMO) continued use as a detention facility for so-called “terrorists,” points to the continuity and preservation of the Bush policy, specifically, and Western policy, generally. It is, therefore, important to understand that the “war on terror” is seen by many in the Muslim world, as part and parcel of a hegemonic global political economy infrastructure- a realization of the “West against the rest,” thesis, generally, and the “West against Islam,” specifically. It should be noted, however, that President Obama's decision to end the Iraq war, and his exit strategy in Afghanistan by way of gradual troop withdrawals to culminate in the end of the war in 2014, is a bold attempt at reigning in U.S unilateralism and unlimited objectives under his predecessor.

While communication technologies have had a tremendous impact on economic globalization- global trade, financial and currency transactions, as well as income inequality,

concerns have also arisen over its other non-economic outcomes. One such outcome is globalization's potential of homogenizing identities and cultures worldwide. The spread of major U.S. food chains, music, fashion, movies and English, in sum, American capitalism and culture, has produced two outcomes. The first is outright resentment and rejection of American culture because of its assumed de-culturalizing and corrupting effects on cultures and peoples. And, the second is one of embrace of these same American cultural artifacts. Thomas Friedman captures this phenomenon well:

Globalization in so many ways is Americanization; globalization wears Mickey Mouse ears, it drinks Pepsi and Coke, eats Big Macs, does it computing on an IBM laptop and Windows 98. Many around the world can't get enough of it, but others see it as a fundamental threat (Ssenyonga 2013: 34).

Dubbed American cultural imperialism, these reactions are clearly in response to the unprecedented export of American culture worldwide. The backlash has been tremendous and ranges from bans on English words in the French Language, as well as limited airtime devoted to American music, to violently targeting Americans and anyone perceived to symbolize "Western values." The violent attack against Malala, the young school girl from Pakistan for simply advocating girls' education, to acts of violence against Christians by Boko Haram (Western education is evil) in Northern Nigeria and other forms of oppositional political violence in the Middle East, are cases in point. These acts of violence, in particular, are perhaps the most obvious manifestations of deep-seated resentment against globalization and arise, in part, from U.S. economic dominance, as well as its foreign policy.

It would be misleading, however, to assume that resentment against U.S. economic hegemony and cultural imperialism is limited to religious zealots in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The "Occupy Wall Street Movement," as well as the numerous demonstrations waged by anti-globalization protesters against globalization at G-8 meetings; the apparent loss of American prestige and resentment against Americans, in general, among U.S. strongest allies in Europe, especially during the Bush era, and the War against Iraq, suggest that these perceptions of American imperialism are real. Jack Lang, a former French minister of culture warned: "the disappearance of languages and cultural forms is the great risk today. Diversity threatens to be replaced by an international mass culture without roots, soul, color, or taste" (Sobel 2013: 8).

Another aspect of American cultural imperialism that has also generated resentment, especially in Muslim-majority states, and to some degree in countries where Christians form part of a complex, and sometimes tense religious mosaic is the ubiquitous growth and increasing presence of Christian churches, missionaries, faith-based NGOs, and televangelists. What is perceived as a constant barrage of activity to “save” non-Christian “heathens” from their ungodly religious practices through Jesus Christ, as the only “savior,” is deeply troubling even among liberal Muslims and traditionalists. Yet ironically, the quest to convert non-Christians is occurring at a time when there is a raging “war on terror” in which Muslims and Muslim countries are targeted for attack, demonized and constructed as the new “enemy.” The convergence of these anti-Muslim/Islam waves is seen in the wider *Ummah* as calculated.

Today, in fact, there is a visceral association between Islam and Muslims, on one hand, and “terrorism/ terrorist,” on the other. And, while both President Obama and his predecessor, President George W. Bush have argued to the contrary, the reality of U.S. and Western attacks on Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel’s continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the saber-rattling/ chest-pounding that greeted Iran’s nuclear program, is not lost on many Muslims. The less well-known cases of Muslim attacks in India, Thailand, Philippines, and Myanmar (Burma) add to the perception of a global “war against Muslims.”

In the same vein, the U.S. is a secular state and a country with deeply enshrined constitutional principles, that include the “separation of church and state,” and a tradition and practice of religious freedoms and tolerance. These deeply held American freedoms complicate U. S. relations abroad partly because many Muslims and Muslim-majority states do not subscribe to the separation principle or worldview. Thus, commercial media creations in the U.S. or the West, in general, that are seen as denigrating Islam and its Holy Prophet, Muhammad, are misconstrued as part and parcel of U. S. policy, specifically and U.S. cultural imperialism, generally. Therefore, perceived U.S. Government inaction, over and beyond condemnation, may well have added fuel to smoldering fires that accompanied the violence.

What is clear from this brief discussion is the fact that the U.S. is the single most dominant hegemonic power on the global stage even if other sites of power like the EU, China, India and Brazil exist. U.S. military might, economic dominance, political democracy, its communication conglomerate giants, as well as its iconic cultural institutions that include the Oscar Awards, the Super Bowl, its great institutions of higher learning, represent the most visible signs of American “hard” and “Soft” power. Primarily shaped by the U.S, following the

end of World War II, these economic and political features are what have shaped this stage of contemporary globalization.

Therefore, the Americanization of globalization and American values, in particular, during the 20th and in the early decades of the 21st centuries, are the source of admiration, imitation (the highest form of praise), and resistance. At the same time U.S. economic power has also generated unprecedented wealth, improved lives, reduced economic and cultural barriers, optimism in American democratic ideals, traditions, and practices, as well as a belief in a better future.

Concluding thoughts

I want to close by briefly suggesting that the understandable fascination or revulsion with and against American-led globalization is not new or unique in the history of human affairs (Sobel 2013: 9). Significant cross-border economic cultural exchanges have existed for many centuries. Muslim control of the Arabia Peninsula, Islam's spread into Andalucía to Central Asia, Africa, to name a few, was a form of globalization in itself. The spread of Islam and Arab-led globalization had both good and not so good political, economic and other consequences just as American-led globalization does today. In the West, the Dutch became the first commercial and financial hegemon in the 1600s. They propelled the expansion of global trade and market exchange making Amsterdam the international financial center just as New York is today (Sobel 2013: 8).

Britain and London would replace the Netherlands and Amsterdam as the center of global economic interaction by the 1700-1800s. In subsequent years, and lasting over a century, Britain dominated the seas and succeeded in building a vast global empire. The British at the time, like Americans today were loved, feared and resented. British hegemony would fall, in part, because of overreach, internal economic dislocation, and challenges to its economic dominance by no other than the U.S., and the rise of nationalism in its colonies. And from the ashes of the British Empire was born U.S. hegemony of the early 1900s to now.

Therefore, the mixed responses to a U.S. led globalization, is neither new nor unexpected. They are outcomes of systemic forces that are not inherent to America or Britain and yet still, American culture, per se, but are part and parcel of a capitalist logic that thrives on unequal

exchange, power asymmetries, incentives, rewards and sanctions that include war and violence. A less obvious plank of the infrastructure of hegemony and globalization are the cultural artefacts and ideology, more importantly, to rationalize and provide cohesion, manufacture consent (Chomsky, 2003) for the status-quo. Euro-American theories of IR arose just around the 1900s as the U.S. ascended to global prominence to make sense of its new role in the world.

Theories of liberal political economy are not any different. They are part and parcel of the infrastructure of American-led globalization following World War II just as earlier rationalizations of the “White-man’s burden,” made popular by Kipling were spurred by Darwin’s “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest.” These ideologies were used to justify and legitimize enslavement of Africans and others deemed less human. These theories were inspired by philosophers like Hegel, who like Fukuyama spoke of the “End of History” (Saine Aidoo, Hess 2012).

In sum, theories of IR and IPE are for a purpose and for someone (Cox 1981). The epistemological questions that spawn topics and issues they privilege, i.e., the quest for knowledge driven by the “scientific method” to explain, possibly predict, and I might add, “control” are not foreign or extrinsic to the system’s logic for preservation of domination. Indeed, they help regulate, silence, absorb, normalize or neutralize counter-hegemonic narratives and movements deemed threatening to the very existence of the system itself. To this end, state typologies in political science and their economic counterparts that rank countries according to reified economic indicator ensure hegemonic stability, order and predictability. For the most part, “knowledge” production is often driven by these power dynamics - thus the power and knowledge nexus. These often are the basis for academic journal rankings and who gets published in these academic outlets will often depend on how closely the topic(s) and discourses support, to some extent, the dominant frames of a discipline.

In sum, young people throughout the ages serve as the warriors and sacrifice life and limb in defense of states. Yet it is also youth who also serve as agents of change, the moral compass of nations through their agency to recover and widen political and economic spaces and discourses through protest, oppositional violence and self-immolation. The Arab-spring was to a large measure set alight by the courageous defiance of a young man against a repressive state and regime in Tunisia. This act of ultimate resistance was to have a contagion effect that was to engulf North Africa, and the Middle East, the consequences of which are still being felt today.

The implication here is that in both mature capitalist democracies and less democratic and impoverished economies, social policies, some by design or neglect or both, have systematically excluded the poor and young. As a result, young people are overwhelmingly represented in sex work, human trafficking, and suffer disproportionately from personal violence, unemployment and imprisonment (Sallah 2007: 25). Recent killings in Newtown, Connecticut, as well the raging war between rival Black gangs in Southside Chicago, rapes in India, Congo, Russia, South Africa , and racial harassment of black students in British schools call for urgent policy initiatives to arrest this pandemic (Rupra 2007: 100).

Theories of world politics are not isolated from these events and must engage institutionalized, “state violence,” against gendered, racialized, colonized and semi-colonized, as well as advocate for the passage and strengthening of existing laws to curb domestic violence. Equally of importance is the need for IRT and IPE to recognize that peoples, cultures and communities situated in past European and American empires have their own histories and traditions of socio-political organizations and inter-national interactions, which predate the advent of the European colonial state. Thus, the continued and particularly distorted representation in IRT and IPE of these peoples and cultures make both complicit in colonial erasures (Beier 2002: 82).

References

- Agathangelou, A. (2002) "Sexing globalization in international relations: migrant sex and domestic workers in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey," in Geeta Chowdry and Sheila Nair (eds.) *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Readings in race, gender and class*: London. New York: Routledge, 142-169.
- Baker, R. W. (2012). "The paradox of Islam's future," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 127, no. 4. 519-566.
- Beier, J. M (2002) "Beyond hegemonic state (ment) s of nature: indigenous knowledge and non-state possibilities in international relations," in G. Chowdry and S. Nair (eds.) *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Readings in race, gender and class*. London, New York: Routledge, 82-114.
- Chomsky, N. (2003) *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York: Owl Books.
- Chowdhry, G., and Nair (2004). (Eds.) "Introduction," *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Readings in race, gender and class*. London, New York: Routledge 2002, 1-32.
- Coates, R. (January 22, 2013.) "It's more than economic -my friend -slightly revised." TheDrum@Listserv.muohio.edu.
- Cox, R.W. (1981). "Social forces, states, and world orders: beyond international relations theory", in Cox, R.W. and Sinclair, T.J. (eds.) *Approaches to World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Feste, K. (1994). "Behavioral theories: the science of international politics," in Beckman, P. R., and D'Amico, F. (eds.) *Women, Gender, and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies and Prospects*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Bergin and Garvey, 41-54.
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). "The end of history " *The National Interest*, 1-12.
- Janowski, L. (2008) "Neo-Imperialism and U. S. foreign policy," in Rourke, J. T., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World Politics* (13th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill, 36-45.

Jeng, A. (2012). *Peace Building in the African Union: Law, Philosophy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Persaud, R. B. (2002). "Situating race in international relations: the dialectics of civilizational security in American immigration," G. Chowdry and S. Nair (eds.) *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Readings in race, gender and class*. London, New York: Routledge, 57.

Rich, W. (2007). *African American Perspectives on Political Science*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rourke, J. T. (2008). "Is economic globalization a positive trend?" in Rourke, J. T., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World Politics* (13th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill, 2-3.

Rupra, M. (2007). "Racial harassment, black young people and schools," in M. Sallah and C. Howson (eds.) *Working with Young Black People*. Oxford: Alden Press, 89-106.

Saine, A., Aidoo, R., Hess, S. (2012). "The social construction of Africa and Africans in western mass media," in Nnoromele, S., Ogechi, A., (eds.) *Retracing Africa: A Multi-disciplinary Study of African Societies, History and Culture*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Press, 21-36.

Sallah, M. (2007). "Service provision for black young people: linking the historical policy response to praxis," in M. Sallah and C. Howson (eds.) *Working with Young Black People*, Oxford: Alden Press, 21-36.

Shaw, T., (2010). "Theory Talks # 10: BRICS and global south,": <http://www.theory-talks.org/2010/03/theory-talk-37.html>.

Sobel. A. (2013). *International Political Economy in Context: Individual Choices, Global Effects*, Los Angeles, London and New Delhi: SAGE/C Q Press.

Ssenyonga, A. B. (2010). "Americanization or globalization"? in Rourke, J. T., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World Politics*, (15th ed.) New York: McGraw Hill, 33-42.

Stiglitz, J. (2007) *Making Globalization Work*, New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company. 46).

Wilson III, E.J., L.A. Frasure (2007). "Still at the margins: the persistence of neglect of African American Issues in political science, 1986-2003," in Rich, W. (ed.) *African American Perspectives on Political Science*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 7-23.

The Philosopher's Elusive Subject : On the Problem of the 'Present' in the 'Political'

Jayan Nayar¹

ABSTRACT

Much Eurocentric critical political-legal philosophy begins with a disappointment with the present, with totality-as-is and with the subject of the 'political'. The philosophical burden thus understood is to reclaim the 'excess' of totality for the possibility of the 'political' as the 'real' of ruptural subjectivity, as a Becoming out of the closures of present Being/Non-Being; Alan Norrie and Alain Badiou are, respectively, representative of the 'immanentist' and transcendental versions of this critical project of reclaiming the subject of philosophy from the closures of the present. In this essay, adopting a lens of coloniality, I suggest that underpinning this ontologic-epistemology of post-Enlightenment Eurocentric thinking is an assumption of Nothingness that defines the originary-object which requires the invention of the philosophical problem, which requires the becoming-subject-in-the-political. I argue instead that the present is defined not by absence/inexistence, not by Non-Being/Nothingness outside of the political, but by Other/Different-Being whose Exteriority is that which continues to be negated in theory-practice. Such a perspectival shift points to the decolonial necessity of the negation of the 'political' itself, of the struggle for desubjectification..

KEY WORDS: Totality, philosophy in the present, the political-legal subject, Alan Norrie, Alain Badiou, coloniality of ontology, desubjectification.

¹ Associate Professor, School of Law, University of Warwick, UK.

For their critical insights and generosity in conversation on the thoughts contained in this essay, I am thankful to Upendra Baxi, Alan Norrie, Flavia Gasperetti, Abdul Paliwala, Dwijen Rangnekar, Sam Adelman, Anna Puthuram, and Raza Saeed. Thanks also to the many postgraduate students with whom I had the opportunity to engage as these ideas changed shape in discussion; worth a special mention are Alen Toplisek, and Kyla Sankey.

I. The Present as Problem.

[T]he philosopher intervenes when in the situation ... there are things that appear to him as signs, signs that it is necessary to invent a new problem. That's the point, the philosopher intervenes when he finds, in the present, the signs that point to the need for a new problem, a new invention.²

A feature of the writings of the (Westernized) critical Left is the sense of crises, of loss, that permeates much recent contemplations on hope in the face of the present - on democracy, on utopia, on political-legal belonging, on the very possibility of politics itself.³ For the philosopher born out of the Western tradition who invested faith in the 'revolutionary enthusiasm', as Alan Norrie has called it, of the 'modern' age, this has been a gradual but sure disillusionment.⁴ The source of anguish is not simply that 'bad' things have happened in the name of enlightened progress, not just that the conditions for Man's liberation appear ever surely to be deteriorating, but more significantly, that the way out of the prevailing hopelessness does not present itself clearly to philosophical thought as the present is contemplated.⁵ But what of the 'present'?

² Alain Badiou, 'Thinking the Event', in Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek (ed. Peter Engelmann, trans. Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano), *Philosophy in the Present*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 2.

³ I use this term in a broader sense to include what Slavoj Žižek disparagingly labels the 'principled Left' as well as thinkers such as Žižek himself. See, Slavoj Žižek, 'The Ongoing 'Soft Revolution'', *Critical Enquiry*, Vol. 30 (2), 2004, 292-323.

⁴ Alan Norrie, *Law and the Beautiful Soul* (London: Glasshouse Press, 2005), p. 196.

⁵ Concerned 'Western' thought is replete with bemoaning of some lost innocence, it would seem, that give rise to thinking in 'crisis'. A truncated time-line of disappointments giving rise to the loss of the epistemological certainties of post-Enlightenment thought may be viewed as follows. First, the loss of philosophical innocence and hope attached to an assumed Age of Man and of Rights resulting from the two 'World Wars' and the Jewish Holocaust - inflicted upon the peoples of Europe not by some 'barbarian' tribe of the 'uncivilised' world but by the very rational 'civilisation' of Europe herself. Then, the 'evils' perpetrated under the name of the radical utopian project of actually existing state Communisms, coupled with the 'failure' of the almost-revolutions of '1968', marking an irreparable suspicion of all grand Utopian imaginations for a liberation to come. Finally, the witnessed dismantling of 'citizenship' as the Welfare State is relinquished to the neo-liberal discipline of global capitalism whose effects we see vividly unfold today as the Western World becomes victim too to 'structural adjustment'. And so, for example, with this correction by historical actuality of the brief flirtation of the Western mind with promises of a universal Humanity very much at the forefront, Ronald Aronson asks the question: 'Is there reason to hope today?' ('Hope After Hope', *Social Research* Vol. 66 (2), 1999, 471-94, p. 471), and Fredric Jameson: 'Does this peculiar entity [Utopia] still have a social function?'

For the purpose of this essay, the 'present' here signifies two aspects relevant to the philosopher's subject.

First, the present as the totality-that-is, as-is. The subject of philosophy, envisaged as being concerned with revealing (inventing) the truths, be they immanent or transcendental, of collective human perfectibility as the possibility of Becoming - out of irrationality, inequality and domination, to rationality, equality and universal freedom – appears to have been appropriated instead by a liberal democratic consensus where a fetishized present is presented as an already arrived-at future of human Being-ness.⁶ For the critical post-Enlightenment philosopher, it is a difficult admission, a problem even, that the present (post)Modernity of global capitalism, as totality, is the actual, prevailing, historical manifestation of the ideals of the European Enlightenment, notwithstanding the anticipated objection that other 'enlightened' futures remain ever open to the situation of the present. (We will return to this argument later).

Secondly, the present as signifying those who are present as 'political', as the 'subjects' of sovereignty - 'Man', that radical figure of liberty, the (ideal) subject born out of the Enlightenment, the possessor of 'rights' and sovereignty, the carrier of the Enlightenment's project of liberation. The actual, embodied, folk that adorn the mantle 'subject' in (post)Modernity appear ever in precarity under the conditions of modern, global, capitalist freedom in two mutated forms (as actual) in historical time. On the one hand we see the transformation of the (post)Modern rights-bearing 'citizen' as the compliant and complacent, hedonistic, consuming, periodic caster of votes (even if she is occasionally liable to eruption as witnessed in the recent 'riots' in the UK and those ongoing in other 'austerity' zones in Europe, and in the various Occupy movements around the world);⁷ the 'free' subject here

('The Politics of Utopia', *New Left Review* Vol. 25, 2004, 35-54. p. 35). Little of this introspection, however, addresses the violent histories of the 'West' prior to Europe's fall from 'Enlightened' grace.

⁶ For useful general critiques of the liberal appropriation of politics, or more specifically, of the 'political' as the essential feature of what is generally called politics in daily usage, see Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005); Jacques Ranciere (trans. Liz Heron), *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995); and Andreas Schedler ed., *The End of Politics? Explorations into Modern Antipolitics* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1997).

⁷ It would obviously be a mistake to posit some homogenous explanation for or motivation to the various 'occupations' and their participants. Posed as a question, we might wonder if such eruptions 'from below' indicate a demand for subjectivity and rights, or whether they are manifestations of 'desubjectification'; we will return to this point in the concluding discussion.

becomes the object of Foucaultian ‘government of individualization’,⁸ of Rancierian ‘police’,⁹ ordered (in both senses of the term) to ‘live’, disciplined, domesticated, and accounted for, by the institutions of citizenship (of welfare, health, education, the ‘market’) that define the contemporary sites of (re)production and consumption, committed only to a ‘disengaged imagination’, as Zygmunt Bauman put it, as s/he pursues the aspirations of individual emancipation in the market-place of desires.¹⁰ In these times of the post-political, post-ideological consensus, therefore, the ‘future’ is already in the present – the liberated subject, as the present, the counted, stands as the (hopefully) wage-earning, consumer-citizen, obsessed with the promise of individual pleasure, gripped by fear and suspicion, manipulated by the anti-politics of a (neo)liberal democracy as precarious ‘rights’ are sought for and dispensed – the ‘most that we can hope for’, perhaps.¹¹ On the other hand, we find the present (in ‘absence’, as some view it) as the abject rightless of Hannah Arendt, the ‘abandoned’ *homo sacer* of Giorgio Agamben’s sovereign exception, the destitute figures of ‘superfluity’, as Susan Marks has described it,¹² cast aside in the fault-lines of contemporary ‘sovereign’ arrangements of belongings and exclusions. In both cases, ‘Man’ stands pacified if not defeated, if not dispensed with altogether in the most extreme scenarios, in the present of (post)Modernity; a philosophical ideal subsumed, it seems, by the actuals of historical politics, notwithstanding the best Rancierian efforts of rescue.¹³ It is a further harsh reality that the fear-ridden ‘consumer-citizen’, and the ‘rightless’, under conditions of both (post)modern ‘liberal-democratic’ and ‘Third World’ despotisms, are also the actual of the Enlightenment-birthed subject.

For the critical post-Enlightenment philosopher, therefore, thinking begins with the recognition that the present disappoints - both in the sense of the ‘totality’ that has become

⁸ Michel Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8 (4), 1982, 777-95, p. 781.

⁹ Jacques Ranciere (trans. Steven Corcoran), *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), esp. Part 1, ‘The Aesthetics of Politics’.

¹⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Utopia with no Topos’, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 16 (1), 2003, 11-25.

¹¹ Wendy Brown, ‘The Most We Can Hope For...: Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 103 (2/3), 2004, 451-63.

¹² Respectively, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), Chapter on ‘Perplexities of the Rights of Man’; Giorgio Agamben (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford Uni. Press, 1998), and Susan Marks, ‘Law and the Production of Superfluity’, *Transnational Legal Theory*, Vol. 2 (1), 2011, 1-24.

¹³ Ranciere, *Dissensus*, Chap. 3.

the world-as-is, and in the sense of the presence of 'subjects' who inhabit it. Remaining unredeemed by the totality/subject of the 'present' is the philosopher's faith in the possible human futures of universal emancipation portended by the Enlightenment – the original 'white man's burden' as it were. As Costas Douzinas notes with reference to human rights - that most evocative of the Enlightenment's emblematic promise of universal Becoming, '[o]ne could write the history of human rights as the ongoing and always failing struggle to close the gap between the abstract man and the concrete citizen: to add flesh, blood and sex to the pale outline of the human.'¹⁴ The gap between the 'abstract man' and the 'concrete citizen', between rights and rightlessness, between freedom, and unfreedom, between the hope for 'emancipation' and despair of suffering, between the 'rhetoric of (capitalist) modernity' (salvation) and the 'logic of coloniality' (imperial domination),¹⁵ of the inhumanity of Humanity, this gap is in essence the great chasm that defines the rupture between the faith of the (philosophers of the) 'West' and the fate of the rest subjected to a violent world order rationalised and organised by the assertion of 'sovereign' power, even as it increasingly finds purportedly 'cosmopolitan' expression.¹⁶ Cleary, it is a troubled faith, standing as it does ceaselessly accused by the 'failing struggle' to redeem actual fates.

Confronted with such problems *with* the present, we have not been short of critical and creative philosophical responses and attempted rescues. Interestingly, we also witness an apparent revitalized claim of the philosophical and political value of the European Enlightenment as an original point of departure in response to the present in recent critical Western contemplations that seek to rescue the philosopher's subject - this after the suspicions and anxieties, and guilt of early 20th Century critical thinkers who worried about the crisis of the European Man,¹⁷ and the anguish of sceptics such as Arendt, Foucault and Derrida (and Agamben it should be added) who could see little scope of reconciling a

¹⁴ Costas Douzinas, 'The Many Faces of Humanitarianism', *PARRHESIA*, No. 2, 2007, 1-28, p. 3.

¹⁵ Walter D. Mignolo, 'Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity', *American Literary History*, 2006, 312-31, p. 312.

¹⁶ For an analysis and critique of cosmopolitan appropriations of humanity, and relatedly, of human rights, see, Costas Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007).

¹⁷ See Leela Gandhi, 'Postcolonial theory and the crisis of the European man', *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 10 (1), 2007, 93-110.

collective and universal freedom with post-Enlightenment sovereign orders.¹⁸ From the impasse and anguish of the recent critical theoretical past, we instead find a resurgent contemporary engagement within Eurocentric critical theory circles with the following questions: how to contend with the (variously constructed) rightsless ‘Other’ (as non-subject) in an age of human rights?; how to reclaim theories of hope from the ashes of its brutal pasts (and presents)?; how indeed to reclaim ‘democracy’, and to rescue citizenship from its present depoliticisation into a mechanism for negotiating the conservative consensus of neo-liberal politico-economic and social ordering?¹⁹ Reframing these observable preoccupations of current critical thinking in terms of the dual crises of the ‘present’ – of totality and the subject – as presented here, we might understand the underlying concern, and revitalized commitment, of the philosopher as essentially focussed on the following two ‘problems’:

- to reclaim the ‘political’ from the apparent pervasiveness of contemporary global capitalism-under-sovereignty that defines the present as a closed totality
- to rescue the subject from her colonisation as citizen-consumer, or her abjection in exclusion from ‘political-legal belonging’, and to return her to her path of subversive, progressive, ‘political’ Being/Becoming

With respect both these strands of contemporary efforts of philosophical invention, the critical labour, we see, is to reclaim, from the apparent closures of present political discourse, the prized philosophical categories that have defined, for the critical Western mind, the hope that was the Enlightenment.

To cite a few notable examples of these philosophical rescue missions we might refer to Alan Norrie’s re-presentation of Roy Bhaskar’s ‘dialectical critical realism’ as an attempt is to perfect the philosophical tapestry of enlightened ‘constellational’ reason towards an ‘eudaimonic’ society,²⁰ or to Alain Badiou and his insistence that the subject is the

¹⁸ For an interesting narration of critical thought’s troubled engagement with ‘freedom’, see Dianne Enns, *Speaking of Freedom: Philosophy, Politics and the Struggle for Liberation* (Stanford: Stamford Uni. Press, 2007).

¹⁹ The crisis of ‘democracy’ indeed has been at the forefront of much recent lamentation. A compilation of the critical good and the great in a collective contemplation of the present of democracy can be found in Giorgio Agamben *et al* (trans. William McCuaig), *Democracy In What State?* (New York: Columbia Uni. Press, 2011).

²⁰ Alan Norrie, *Dialectic and Difference: Dialectical critical realism and the grounds for justice* (London: Routledge, 2010).

transcendent one who becomes in fidelity to the radical new truth of the ruptural Event;²¹ or to Slavoj Žižek's appeal for the defence of 'lost causes' and a reclaiming of 'terror' and 'egalitarian justice' as the asserted original truths of the Enlightenment;²² or to Jacques Rancière's radicalisation of the subject as the one who becomes as s/he enacts 'dissensus' from the non-part, the non-comprehensible to 'language', against the consensus of the 'sensible';²³ or to Sergei Prozorov's re-reading of Foucault to announce the possibility of a return to the 'sovereign subject' as the one who becomes 'bare life' by the refusal of the embrace of biopolitical care,²⁴ or to Engin F. Isin's reconceptualization of the 'City' as a social geography of contested citizenship through the struggles of insurgent practices of 'becoming-political'.²⁵ In their various ways, they explicitly attempt to recover imaginations of totality and meanings of subject as a possibility of 'Becoming' (a future) out the stasis of (non)'Being' (the present) within the current utopia of non/anti-utopia consistent with the aspirational promise of early Enlightenment thought. In their different ways, they seek to point to the non-closure of 'politics' in the present, and to the possibility, even necessity, of thinking, and acting, beyond the contemporary actuals of the world. This is, no doubt, important and exciting thinking; with such 'inventions' of the contemporary philosophical problem, in the Badiouian sense, is the future not exhausted in the present, and the present not exhaustive of future subjectivity. For the critical thinker who is not content to suppose that the trajectory of progress so promised by the Enlightenment finds its endpoint in the prevailing manifestation of (post)Modernity - of emancipation as the freedom to contract, of the body politic as the free market, of democracy as the periodic election of the same, of the present incarnation of the subject as a domesticated 'consumer-citizen' or *homo sacer* – these philosophical pathways are essential, for they revive the promise of the Enlightenment as a return to some original possibility for human futures amidst the many disappointments in the present.

But, here we arrive at the (different) 'problem' as it concerns this essay. From the many problems *with* the present, we turn instead to an interrogation of the 'present' itself as the problem.

²¹ Alain Badiou (trans. Bruno Bosteels), *Theory of the Subject* (London: Continuum, 2009).

²² Slavoj Žižek, *In Defence of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008).

²³ Rancière, *Dissensus*

²⁴ Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom and Sovereignty* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

²⁵ Engin F. Isin, *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship* (Minneapolis: Uni. Of Minnesota Press, 2002).

What we witness in the contemplative ‘inventions’ of the critical Eurocentric philosopher is, as I see it, but a return to philosophical wombs; the Western philosopher’s perplexity *with* the present finds critical outlet more as a confrontation with the challenge of rescuing ‘philosophy’ itself – the Western tradition and its flowering into the Enlightenment - from the closures portended by the actualities of the present (post)Modern, neoliberal capitalist global order. We see this in much of the literature mentioned above (and we will expand on this argument further below); it would seem that the preoccupation of the critical Eurocentric philosopher (in the diverse articulations offered) relates to the challenge of how to think against/after/beyond the closures of the ‘actual’ orderings of (exceptional) sovereignty so as to rescue the philosophical ‘ideals’ of freedom promised by the Enlightenment. Useful as these contemplations may be to challenge the asserted civilisational ideal-in-the-actual of the (neo-)liberal consensus that defines most political discourse and practice, they still remain the searching thoughts of a critical West asking itself, of itself, and predominantly within itself, questions about the present as it views it.

A perspective which interrogates the problem *of* the present however, begins differently. We return to the quote of Badiou with which this essay began: ‘[T]he philosopher intervenes when in the situation ... there are things that appear to him as signs, signs that it is necessary to invent a new problem. ... the philosopher intervenes when he finds, in the present, the signs that point to the need for a new problem, a new invention.’²⁶ The problem with this statement on philosophical labour proper is that although it points to the necessity to invent a new ‘problem’ from persisting signs in the present, the present itself is assumed as given, as if our viewing of it itself is amenable to a universal and universalising reading of historical experience, as if ontology is not itself subject to epistemic constraints, not open to contestations based on the lenses through which we first look upon the world to see a present as we see it. Mine is not merely a vulgar complaint of philosophy’s ‘irrelevance’ in the face of the actualities of power, violence, ‘politics’, characterised as they are by the perversities of ever more predatory colonial-Modern modalities of global order-ing regimes of ‘governance’²⁷ - such ‘unfair’ accusations might indeed be dismissed as asking of philosophy

²⁶ Badiou, ‘Thinking the Event’

²⁷ For an elaboration of the ‘colonial-modern’ configuration of world order, see Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton Uni. Press, 2000); and Walter D. Mignolo, ‘The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 101 (1), 2002, 56-96.

too much (even if such reminders require some pause and reflection!).²⁸ My argument instead is that these acts of conjuring a rescued subject of philosophy - to reclaim the possibility of the Becoming of the Enlightenment's (Hu)Man-Subject, to restate the possibilities of human futurities - are themselves limited by reason of the ontological errors which found them. A summary of the argument to follow might be useful.

(Post) Enlightenment critical Western thought remains fixated with a Totality of Being/Becoming that is based on an ontological reason of Being-Non-Being. Fundamental to this ontologic-epistemology is *Nothingness*, as a beginning, that defines the philosophical invention: *there is Being and Nothingness in History; the historical evolutionary path of human perfectibility is the Becoming out of Nothingness into Being.*

The result of this original ontological assumption is the resort to a search for an elusive 'excess' that remains open to a future totality of universal truth and to a futurity of Becoming-subject out of perceived present 'absences/inexistences'. And thus, we witness the many philosophical efforts of recovering the 'political' as an ontological possibility of Becoming-in-totality against the conservative efforts to assert the political as a negotiation of the Same. Such efforts by the critical philosopher may indeed be well-intentioned and worthwhile as far as it goes, it may well pose the ontological challenge for the 'Western-ized' colonised subject as s/he desperately seeks to cling on to the myths of 'citizenship' in a transnationalized order of human disposability. This, however, is not the full story of Beingness; the myth of 'citizenship' has little purchase for the majority of human 'subjects' for whom the 'political' has been less an idealized emergence of Becoming, and more a violent imposition of negation and expropriation. I argue therefore that the present is defined not by absence or inexistence, not by Non-Being/Nothingness outside of totality/the political, but by Other/Different-Being whose very Exteriority is that which has been, and continues to be, negated in theory-practice.²⁹ The consequence of such a disruption of Western philosophical ontological clarity is the possibility that rather than a reclaiming of the 'political', of Becoming-in-totality, of Becoming-subject as envisaged by much critical western thinking as the progressive ends of philosophy, the decolonial possibility (and threat) is the negation

²⁸ Critical self-reflection by the theorist as 'theories' as contemplated is always necessary, but less frequently done. I am grateful for the provocations of Upendra Baxi in this regard; Upendra Baxi, *Human Rights in a Posthuman World: Critical Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford Uni. Press, 2007), Chap. 1.

²⁹ For the distinction between totality and Totality, and between exteriority and Exteriority, see Jayan Nayar, 'The Politics of Hope and the Other-in-the-World: Thinking Exteriority', *Law and Critique* (forthcoming)

instead of the ‘political’ itself (with all its post-Enlightenment baggage) and, from this, a necessary recognition of desubjectification.

We first take a brief, and indicative tour through the critical philosopher’s meanderings through the present of totality and its ‘excess’, of the ‘ideal’, the ‘actual’, and the reclaimings of the ‘real’, in order to reveal the ontological assumptions that underpin these attempts to rescue (post) Enlightenment philosophical ideals. We then elaborate on the assumption of the political that defines the critical philosopher’s concern and disappointment with the present and reintroduce a lens of coloniality through which the present might be differently viewed.³⁰ A concluding suggestion is then presented - that perhaps what we witness in the insurgent recalcitrance of so many who are the ‘wretched of the earth’ are the manifold struggles, not for the prize of becoming-subject, but, instead, for desubjectification.

II. Excess-ing Totality.

The present-day critical philosopher begins with a disappointment with her present-as-totality; the philosophical vocation thus is to open up particularist manifestations of the present-as-totality to the truth of an inexhaustible Totality as encompassing the possibility of futures true to the universalist promise of the Enlightenment so understood. As we shall see running through the various attempts to rescue Totality from the totality of ‘sovereign’ presents is a resort to an (indeterminate) futurity of the ‘real’ in which the excess, the remnant of the ‘ideal’, may be redeemed from the ‘actuals’ of history. Always in the future, to come, a

³⁰ A little needs to be said at this juncture on the matter of terminology, of the ‘colonial’ and ‘coloniality’. I am not concerned here with the argument the ‘colonial’ has existed, or differently exists, in multifarious contexts of human engagement, and therefore, that this resort to ‘coloniality’ as a perspectival orientation is flawed – a point which a colleague was keen to raise with me during a seminar considering the ideas in this essay. This argument misses the point. We are not dealing here with issues of colonialisms *per se*, instead we address here a form of politico-economic-socio-philosophical construction of the world as a World, initiated as it was through the colonial experience, and the coloniality of the idea, and ideas, of ‘Europe’ as it was founded upon the negation of Other/Different-Being. It is this attempt to universalize, globalize and totalize worlds into a World that concerns me. For a more sustained discussion of coloniality in terms adopted in this essay, see Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America’, *International Sociology*, Vol. 15(2), 2000, 215-32; Mignolo, *Local Histories*; Ramon Grosfoguel, ‘Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality: Decolonizing political economy and postcolonial studies’, *Eurozine*, 2008, at <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.pdf>

beyond the present, to be born, a Becoming, is resurrected the ideal from the betrayals of the historical present, and reaffirmed, the philosopher's subject.

No doubt, a considerable distance separates the various notions of what constitutes the 'resurrection' in critical post/neo-Enlightenment critical thinking; the 'excess' that awaits redemption is differently anticipated either from within existing sovereign logics of the political or in the arrival of some yet unbeknownst post-sovereign politics; the futurity of excess (as a modality of Becoming) is hence also variously envisaged. Yet, such differences aside, the underlying recourse to a future awaiting redemption remains consistent in much contemporary (progressive Western-ized) critical thinking. Two orientations, broadly speaking – indeed many shades of grey inhabit the spaces within the range - are evident in relation to the attempt to rupture the closure of the present; one, that places faith in the 'immanent'; the second, in the 'transcendent'.

Critical philosophies that seek hope in immanence seek to suggest that the possibility of Becoming into a path to the future is opened up from truths that persist within the present, as latent, awaiting its moment through the historically contingent resolution of the inherent contradictions, of the dialectical tensions, that persist notwithstanding the assertions of ideal-closures. This view holds that within totality (as present) lies its own incompleteness which pushes incessantly towards the possibility of the real (Totality), lies the subject to-come as one who is ever more complete in herself and in her solidarity with the Other. On both these counts, 'immanence' consoles 'absence'. This is an interesting philosophical manoeuvre. On the one hand, the continuing wretchedness of the majority of 'Humanity' is explained as an incomplete realisation of the 'ideal' - as absences, denials, exclusions - that remain open to correction. As a second move, it reaffirms the faith in the 'ideal' itself; Humanity's redemption is still maintained as being contained within the faith-system of the Enlightenment, salvation remaining always as truth within the faith, notwithstanding the 'actuals' that continue to define totality-as-is. By way of example, we refer to Alan Norrie's concluding reflections on hope notwithstanding law's history of 'injustice':

In the face of individual, social and natural alienation, expressive moral demands for self-actualisation and oneness of humankind with itself and nature remain on the horizon of modern life. ... We are aware of the social injustices that law perpetuates, which necessarily work their way into its own systems and practices ... However, when the law seeks in its own terms to do justice, even on a terrain of injustice, when it moves back and forth between the antinomies which constitute it, does it not also reach towards a justice that lies beyond it, and

that echoes inchoately within it? Might this not be the remnant of that expressive morality on which modernity was founded, but which was repressed by being channelled into the social forms through which humankind lives today?³¹

Faith is here retained by the consolation that the ‘remnant’ inherent in the antinomial nature of law (and justice) remains always open to constant recovery, never quite negated by the present totality of law’s temporal justice.³² The political task for the philosopher-activist following from this, by implication, would be to instigate for such contestations, such ‘immanent critique’, knowing full well law’s (totality’s) tendencies towards the conservation of the Same, with the hope that on any given occasion of law’s movement between its ‘back and forth’ may be redeemed the ‘expressive morality on which modernity was founded’, and whereupon may be realised, in that instant, the ‘historically emergent demand for human perfectibility and freedom (the ideal moral pulse or charge of the Enlightenment)’.³³ An obvious question, as Emiliios Christodoulidis rightly asks, is ‘*how long can the law limp along its modality of lack while still holding the promise of responsiveness?*’³⁴

It would appear that for Norrie, elaborating on Roy Bhaskar’s ‘dialectical critical realism’, this although an understandable question, is one which does not fundamentally undermine the project of the ‘ideal’ as a passage of natural necessity towards Eudaimonia. Quite the opposite. The notion of an ever open, ever discoverable truth of Totality (constituted by the many partial, sub, and yet to come totalities), variously subject to the historical negotiations and outcomes of ‘holistic causality’, and mediations between the ‘parts of the whole’, seen as a whole of differences (heterology), means that the ‘scientific’ role of philosophical enquiry pertains to deepening the understanding and possibilities of a ‘constellational ethics’ (one

³¹ Norrie, *Beautiful Soul*, p. 196.

³² Peter Fitzpatrick, notwithstanding his many critical denunciations of modern law’s mythologies and colonial continuities, in similar terms finds (still) in sovereign law’s contradictory tendencies towards ‘determination’ (the fixity of systems and processes), on the one hand, and its responsiveness to its excess, or remainder (the possibility of rupture that remains perpetually latent), on the other, a residual hope for justice beyond law; see Peter Fitzpatrick, “‘New Constitutionalism’: Globalism and the constitution(s) of nations’, *Law, Democracy and Development*, Vol. 10(2), 2006, 1-20; and, ‘Is humanity enough? The Secular Theology of Human Rights’, *Law, Social Justice & Global Development (LGD)*, 2007 (1) at http://www.go.warwick.ac.uk/elj/lgd/2007_1/fitzpatrick

³³ Norrie, *Beautiful Soul*, p. 181.

³⁴ Emiliios Christodoulidis, ‘Strategies of Rupture’, *Law and Critique*, Vol. 20, 2009, 3-26, p. 19 (emphasis in original).

wonders whether as a matter of inevitability) towards an eudaimonic society. This is impressive stuff, consistent in its own internal constructions. Philosophically at least, there is in this argument a clear reclaiming of possibility from present enclosures, however perverse and pervasive present totalities may be. Clearly, Norrie's concern is to chart pathways out of the prevailing philosophical/ideological wisdoms which present a closed totality of the ideal-in-the-actual. Also clear is that the fate of the rest (the Other that is present in totality, for Norrie, as absence) underpins the ethical motivations for an excavations of the ontological depth of the world as contingent relationalities. All this is commendable. Certainly, any rupturing of present complacencies is to be welcomed; Norrie's thinking potentially provokes action in the form of strategic interventions to disrupt the totality of presence/absence, against the fixity of law's present, as it is historically constructed and resisted.³⁵ This said, in this assumption of an 'holistic' viewing of the world as real possibility and historically contingent actuality, the presents of continuing 'absences' and failures notwithstanding such interruptions of immanent critique, interestingly, find an explanation within philosophy itself for Norrie:

Incompleteness, fallibility and inconsistency are part of the messiness of morality ... Nonetheless, the (ideal) road to eudaimonia is not a straight one, and (*actual*) *wrong turnings, not to mention regressions, are to be expected along the way.* ... In a world that is an open system in spatio-temporal process, and subject to detotalising tendencies, *contingencies and effects arise which in the circumstances may lead to, and in a sense justify, 'backsliding'.* ... When they do, backsliding is more than just a failure to act morally. *It is a sign of the limits of, or limited possibilities for, moral advance in a particular context.*³⁶

It would appear that Norrie's dialectical critical realism, for all its progressive hopefulness, for all its insistence that history (as present) is never 'flat', and despite the many instances when such immanent critique of the present might indeed provide glimmers of respite from oppressive circumstances in the lived experiences of individual and communities, serves to provide also a consolation, a respite from discontentment, a philosophical rationalization of failure; Norrie's take on dialectics, critical and (differently) realist though it might be, nevertheless enables the world of the present (totality as is), to be squared with

³⁵ For a more focussed elaboration of the strategic potentiality (and limits) of immanent critique and its implications, see Christodoulidis, *ibid.*

³⁶ Norrie, *Dialectic*, p. 151 (reference omitted, emphases my own)

disappointment, even excused, and a comforting future possibility reaffirmed to philosophy (and the philosopher), despite the persistent ‘messiness’ of the ‘sovereign’ orders that continue to block the path towards eudaimonic futures. This is quite the working of philosophical sophistry – every struggle waged and respite achieved against the prevailing orders of the world may thus be claimed to be a vindication of the immanent truth of the Enlightenment; every continuing order of violence and its inflictions of suffering may be conversely, rationalised with a shrug of a philosophical shoulder, as a Becoming whose time has not yet come, yet remaining immanent always, in perpetuity if need be. This is philosophy which has constructed for itself and its prophets a bunker that keeps it safe from question, from despair, for who can argue against the constant mantra that essentially repeats ‘not-yet, that’s all’?

Transcendental notions of excess provide a very different take on the redemptive futurity of the possibility of the political out of the present. There is no call to patience here as the ‘back and forth’ of liberal institutions are allowed their play, no rationalisations of contingency and backsliding.³⁷ Instead a different, heroic, ‘fidelity’ is demanded, one which would maintain the ever imminent (rather than immanent) possibility of an unknowable, transgressive,

³⁷ Zizek’s criticism of the ‘inherent stupidity of the “principled Left”’, in their ‘compulsion’ to act, to do good, is scathing and worth noting:

If today’s “postpolitics” is opportunistic pragmatism with no principles, then the predominant leftist reaction to it can be aptly characterized as principled opportunism: one simply sticks to old formulas (such as the welfare state) and calls them principles, dispensing with the detailed analysis of how the situation changed – and thus retaining one’s position of Beautiful Soul. The inherent stupidity of the “principled” Left is clearly discernable in its standard reproach to any analysis that proposes a more complex picture of the situation, renouncing any simple prescriptions on how to act. “There is no clear political stance involved in your theory” – and this from people with no stance but their principled opportunism. Against such a stance, one should gather the courage to claim that the only way to effectively remain open to the revolutionary chance is to renounce easy calls to direct action, which necessarily involve us in an activity where things change so that the totality remains the same. Today’s predicament is that, if we succumb to the urge of directly doing something (for example, engaging in the antiglobalist struggle, helping the poor), we will certainly and undoubtedly contribute to the reproduction of the existing order. The only way to lay the foundation for a true, radical change is to withdraw from the compulsion to act, to do nothing – and thus, to open up the space for a different kind of activity.’, Zizek, *Soft Revolution*, pp. 315-16. It is interesting that whilst Zizek is scathing of the order-preserving orientations of the ‘principled Left’, he says little about, appears to have little cognizance of, his own locational complicities with respect the ‘existing order’ (as a ‘professional’, institutional ‘thinker’ permitted voice, and income, by institutions of the order). ‘We’ professional ‘thinkers’, thinking in professionalised locations, are all so implicated.

ruptural Becoming that transcends the limits of present being and knowledge, that is beyond the present; we refer to Alain Badiou by way of example. For Badiou, nothing useful comes from an exposition of the present; neither totality nor subject-as-citizen of the 'world-as-is' provides any direction for a philosophy of the 'real'. 'Repetition' as the application of the 'continuum hypothesis', defines the rationality of sovereign rule, of order, of the conservation of the topology of the Same:

A ruling class is the guardian of the place ... Its aim, both violent and hidden, is to guarantee repetition and prohibit the political subject, through the blockage of interruption.³⁸

The truth of the continuum hypothesis would make it a law that the excess within the multiple have no allocation other than the occupation of the empty place, or the existence of the inexistent proper to the initial multiple.³⁹

Politics in the present, and of those present as the accounted-for, therefore, is a politics of idealism; a conservatism, by an affirmation of the Same as an identity named, and with name, within space, that denies, the fundamental truth of the unnameable, the unknowable, that is the conjoined possibility of Event, and subjectification. Here lies the truth of the 'real' for Badiou: 'the real is no longer only what can be lacking from its place, but what *passes through by force*.'⁴⁰ This is a passing not from absence (known and knowable from within the place of totality) but 'inexistence', not from the known, it is by definition a destruction of the known, of the same, of knowledge: 'A subject is nowhere given (to knowledge). It must be found', asserts Badiou.⁴¹ Thus, we might understand the essence of Badiou's rescue of philosophy from the closure of the present. The 'Event' is the interruption of the sovereign Same, as excess, the 'supplement' that cannot be accounted for or reduced to the knowledge or language of 'what there is';⁴² it is unnameable therefore from within totality, yet, its irruption is the truth of the 'real' as a destruction of the present order and all its structures of being, an imposition of an 'impossibility for it to be otherwise'.⁴³ The subject thus becomes

³⁸ Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, p. 184

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 267

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 23 (emphasis in original)

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 278.

⁴² Alain Badiou (trans. Peter Hallward), *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 41.

⁴³ Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, p. 270.

as this ‘Truth-Event’ is grasped as a decision, ‘the bearer ... of a fidelity, the one who bears a process of truth.’⁴⁴

Badiou’s is a formidable narration of a subversive field of philosophy as an opening up, in thought, of the possibilities of present impossibilities. The historical failures of universal liberation here are almost an irrelevance; lessons may be learnt from them but these lessons themselves say little about the truth that always lies in the excess of the possible as an (im)possibility within the present. In addition to the notion of an inexhaustible excess within present-totality, the crucial philosophical manoeuvre here is the ascription of unknowability to the real of possibility - both as a feature of inexistence (against the hopes of immanentists who purport to know ‘absence’) and of the irruptive, Evental, destruction-reconstruction that marks the situation to come (against those defeatists who might fear the exhaustion, if not the deceit, of the Enlightenment) - as the very basis on which the truth of the impossible future as ‘real’ (always in excess) is asserted. Failure, betrayals, persistent domination and violence, a compliant citizenry, a banal present, all of these may therefore be understood as the result of persistent and manifold ‘infidelities’ perhaps, the failure of the Enlightened spirit it might be said, the consequence of (ever present, unknowable) Evental moments let slip by. Much of this might indeed be valid as a response to both the philosophical and political history of (post)Modern capitalism as it has come to be ‘actual’ following (betraying?) the Enlightenment (if such a ‘true’ belief in the Enlightenment was ever held in the first place). As an indictment against a ‘deserted philosophy’ that defines the present as future enclosed,⁴⁵ and as an unapologetic affirmation of and call for a politics of destruction against the present order, there is much in Badiou’s thought that excites – we might for this reason understand its appeal to many present-day discontents; the language of ‘the Event’ indeed lends itself as a captivating philosophical sound-bite for wished-for ‘revolutions’ (although this would of course be inconsistent with Badiou’s conception of the Event as being outside of knowability). However, as a view onto the problem *of* the present, such a Badiouian rescue remains partial, incomplete – partial because it views the present from the assumption that the locational view of a disappointed European experience is representative of a universal truth of embodied experiences, incomplete because as a partial reading of the present it fails to understand the lessons of the Other-ed experiences of Modernity-Coloniality which open up otherwise unrecognised insights into the truths of Other/Different-Being. As a result,

⁴⁴ Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 43.

⁴⁵ Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, p. xxxviii

Badiou's is an impassioned philosophical position that, once its initial radical appeal is scrutinized, reveals itself to have little to say with respect to the everyday, real, un-Evental presents, and presence, of all who fail to live-up to the heroic 'fidelity' of idealised Badiouian 'subjects'.⁴⁶

Whilst both the Norriean and Badiouian enterprises may be understood as an attempt to overcome the limits of Western ontology, to expose Being to depth and interruption, still a more pervasive ontological limit remains in both. We return to this later. First, we note that for all the differences between Norrie and Badiou, what unites them in their contemplations on the present through the lens of the European experience of the Enlightenment is a fixation with, and an assumption of, the universal truth of a redeemable Enlightened Totality (the real) out of the incomplete totalities of (post)Modernity's actuals; this is all too familiar.

We might understand totality (devoid of the Divine) as the inscription of present reason on time as a manifestation of, and an approximation to, the universal truth of Totality-as-possibility. As such, totality becomes the terrain of struggle between the philosopher-priests of order/Being and the philosopher-prophets/heretics of a different (Be)Coming. For the latter (and it is the latter that concerns us) the (im)possibilities of 'Man's' reason portend the opening to reception (as a secularised Grace perhaps) the present to a different redemption – reason (and by this, following Norrie, is meant not simply a matter of epistemology but theory-practice) 'invents' the passage of movement as a trajectory of 'becoming', from Non-

⁴⁶ Nick Hewlett makes the following point:

... Badiou's portrayal of the subject coming out of the blue, his almost exclusive concentration on the event to explain the way in which movement takes place and on the exclusively retrospective relationship between subject and event, contributes to an unconvincing or at best partial description of the process of change, in politics and in other domains as well. ... [Badiou's approach to politics] largely avoids many political issues, including the questions of what the state does when it rules, the nature of exploitation, the relationship between the capitalist mode of production and liberal democracy, why revolutions happen when they do, and so on. If we do not take a more holistic view of politics then our analysis is bound to be left wanting and be less useful in terms of explaining how to counter the status quo as necessary and move onwards.

Nick Hewlett, *Badiou, Balibar, Ranciere: Re-thinking Emancipation* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 57-9.

Whilst Hewlett's criticism comes from an analytic location and perspective of politics in 'liberal-democratic' contexts where the subject is present in a relationship of public rights antagonisms, a very different perspective of 'exploitation' and its responses can be gained from James C. Scott's understanding of the invisible 'infra-politics' of 'subaltern' groups; *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990).

Being to (new) Being.⁴⁷ This is the possible, the ‘real’ of the ideal so promised by the Enlightenment, the shared faith of both Norrie and Badiou unitedly concerned with charting the passage of the (im)possibility of universal emancipation (Totality-post-God) as a Being-to-come, beyond the consensus of the present (the status quo, the diagram, the sensible etc) that is constantly (re)presented by conservative forces as totality, as the ideal-in-the actual. The dispute between these (and other) heretical prophets is less about the ontology of Totality (Being-as-possibility) and more on the ontological bases of Becoming - on how the passage, the resurrection, may be imagined and effected. Contrasting as the different orientations of Norrie and Badiou are to critical thought, consistent in their respective attempted rescues of philosophy is this underlying presumption that Totality portends a trajectory, a passage, an ontological possibility and necessity, of Becoming as/in Totality. This being so, for both are evident the resort to philosophical techniques that conjures the futurity and unknowability of Totality beyond the ‘present’ (as constructed and viewed through the obscuring lens of post-Enlightenment epistemology) as a means by which is abled the faithful assertion (see the various expressions of ‘fidelity to the immanent/transcendent real) that, even as reality disappoints, the fundamental truths of Enlightened reason itself is redeemed by the ‘coming’ (again) of the subject, resurrected from banality (present (post)Modernity) to herald the ‘new’ age of (Hu)Man’s liberation on Earth.

All this, we can see, follows in the long, post-Enlightenment effort to philosophically extricate Totality from its Judeo-Christian roots and to birth it in Man’s sovereign reason. The problem confronted, and still unresolved, is how to reconcile the dual imperatives of Totality, of order and freedom/emancipation. The burden of ‘invention’ that is the philosophical task proper, *ala* Badiou, is all the more urgent, therefore, as such failure to reconcile order with emancipation is not an option for the present-day critical philosopher; the implication of such a disjunction is the subordination of emancipatory aspirations to the predilections of a present (exploitative) consensus. This, as we have seen, is the crux of the critical philosopher’s disappointment. And we see this problem variously having been confronted by many of the great thinkers of the critical Left/West.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding recent

⁴⁷ A clear statement of this is found in Alan Norrie’s critique of Fredric Jameson in, ‘Who is ‘The Prince’?: Hegel and Marx in Jameson and Bhaskar’, *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 20 (2), 2012, 75-104.

⁴⁸ As examples, we might refer to Arendt, Foucault, Derrida, Agamben, amongst others, as they sought to make sense of the perplexity, the undecidability, the exceptionalism, that inheres in the totality-of-sovereignty, as they each in their different ways sought to envisage the (im)possibilities of ‘freedom’; for an excellent discussion of the problematic of ‘freedom’ in this regard, see Enns, *Speaking of Freedom*.

labours therefore, the inability of post-Enlightenment thought to break free from the theological heritage of Eurocentric philosophy persists; post-Enlightenment philosophy still, it seems, is incapable of truly replacing God with Man – the many '(re)theorizations' of the 'subject' under the present conditions of a duplicitous, or as Shalini Randheria put it, 'cunning', globalised state-sovereignty,⁴⁹ for example, being essentially attempts which continue to seek a satisfactory articulation of a complete vision of Reason, now that of Man over that of God, to resolve the (Enlightened) conundrum of order/freedom. And so, after so many rich and lengthy ruminations, we are returned to the (recognisable) phraseologies and imageries of faith and consolation, to magical assertions, prayer-like; always in an indeterminate future, to come, beyond knowledge-as-is, is the universal liberation promised, as truth, have faith. For the Western critical philosopher, born in the tradition of a Judeo-Christian (and its harking back to some mythic Greco-Roman antecedent) philosophy of Totality and its languages of immanence and transcendentalism, of resurrection as it were, yet drenched in the blood of (post)colonial (post)Modern histories, dissatisfied critical thinking means wishing a 'beyond' that entails an unavoidable return to mysticisms⁵⁰ – as examples, we find an appeal to the 'openness' portended by a Nietzschean 'new dawn',⁵¹ to an Arendtian return to an innocence of a prior age before (rational) sovereign hubris and to the (im)possibility of Derrida's democracy to come,⁵² the remembering of Douzinas's 'utopian end' of human rights,⁵³ the coming one day of Agamben's 'beautiful day of life',⁵⁴ the recall

⁴⁹ Shalini Randeria, 'Between Cunning States and Unaccountable International Institutions, Social Movements and Rights of Local Communities to Common Property Resources', in Violetta Zentai and Andrea Krizsan eds., *Reshaping Globalization: Multilateral Dialogues and New Policy Initiatives* (New York: CPS Books, 2003), 101-34. Although Randeria's focus was on the 'cunningness' of 'developing' states, there is little doubt, especially since the recent crisis of 'austerity' in the face of the demands of global capitalism, that the description is true also with respect hitherto considered 'developed' states.

⁵⁰ Notwithstanding Modern Man's supposed enlightened disavowing of magic from the realm of Human Reason, notwithstanding 'his' attempt to remove God from thinking the ends of human futures, philosophers of the West are not quite reconciled, it still seems, to this attempted deicide, their 'secular' theologies of hope not quite capable of freeing us from grasping at ungraspables; see Fitzpatrick, 'Is humanity enough', pp. 4-5

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 5, 10.

⁵² See, James R. Martell, 'Can There Be Politics Without Sovereignty? Arendt, Derrida and the Question of Sovereign Inevitability', *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, Vol. 6 (2), 2010, 153-66.

⁵³ Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights: Critical Legal Thought at the End of the Century* (Oxford: Hart Pub., 2000), p. 380.

⁵⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 11.

from exile of Norrie's 'Beautiful Soul',⁵⁵ the coming to pass of the Zizekian resurrection of terror and egalitarian justice,⁵⁶ the 'ecstatic' return of Prozorov's sovereign subject.⁵⁷ Such resort to the language of magic - of futurity and excess - is appealing; there is always a tomorrow (a real) that remains untarnished by the betrayals of the pasts and presents of post-Enlightenment sovereign orders, always a possibility of a Humanity of 'justice' yet to come, always the 'ideal' remaining pure from historical actuality. Appealing to the West, perhaps, assuaging to the Western critical philosopher, maybe, but unsatisfactory if we extend our philosophical gaze, not just *to* the Rest from the present, but *from* the Rest to the present.

This leads us to consider the more crucial ontological error that Norrie's and Badiou's attempts to rescue the ('real') universal of the Enlightenment from its (post)Modern actuals. As mono-theist prophets of 'critical' Eurocentric philosophy, both Norrie and Badiou share a blindness to what Anibal Quijano has termed the 'coloniality of power',⁵⁸ the 'colonial difference', as Walter Mignolo names it,⁵⁹ the 'abyssal divide', in de Sousa Santos' terms,⁶⁰ the 'axial agonistic binary', as Festus Ikeotuonye has called it,⁶¹ to the ontological incommensurability between the ideal-'real' Being/Becoming-subject of post-Enlightenment thought and the actual Other/Different-Being of colonial-(post)Modernity, both present as ontologies (of difference) in the present.

III. Re-membering 'Non-Being'.

For the critical post-Enlightenment philosopher, the condition of Non-Being in the present is the source of concern and the injunction to thought. There is of course nothing new in this view of the ideal and the abject, it is part of the 'European legacy' after all;⁶² the presumption

⁵⁵ Norrie, *Beautiful Soul*, p. 196.

⁵⁶ Zizek, *Lost Causes*.

⁵⁷ Prozorov, *Foucault*, Part 2.

⁵⁸ Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power'.

⁵⁹ See Mignolo, *Local Histories*; Mignolo, 'Geopolitics of Knowledge'.

⁶⁰ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges', *Review*, XXX-1-2007, at <http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/AbyssalThinking.pdf>

⁶¹ Festus Ikeotuonye, 'Connexus Theory and the Agonistic Binary of Coloniality: Revisiting Fanon's Legacy', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Special Double Issue, Summer 2007, 205-18.

⁶² Slavoj Zizek, 'A Leftist Plea for "Eurocentrism"', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24 (4). 1998, 988-1009, p. 1007.

of ontological presence/absence derives from an earlier tradition of separation that distinguished a proper human being-ness as a cultivated creature of the public sphere (bios) from the base characteristics of mere human existence (zoe). When translated into the philosophical terms of colonial-modern cosmology, we find this separation articulated in the categories of 'the political' (Being, subject with rights) and the 'non-political' or 'natural' (Non-Being, rightless non-subject) that informed the foundations of political theory onwards from Hobbes and Locke. European post-Enlightenment thought, therefore, following in this Greeco-Roman then Judeo-Christian tradition of dividing the world – bios/zoe, saved/damned – continued to view the world of human-beingness as either falling within the embrace of (its) totality or being in lack. In its 'modern' narration, initially, this was the lack of (the Christian) God's grace.⁶³ Then it was the lack of 'Reason' and 'Civilisation' of the peoples in the pre-political 'State of Nature'.⁶⁴ Later still, the lack of 'development', and recently, the lack of 'democracy' and 'security'.⁶⁵ If the work of philosophers of order has been to naturalize and fix the separation of Being and Non-Being in totality, the work of critical philosophers may be understood as an attempt therefore to open this diagram, this consensus, this totality-as-Totality, to critique and to return emancipatory aspiration and possibility to closed presents. The underlying ontology of Being and Non-Being however remains intact within the framework of critical Eurocentric thought; the duality of the 'either/or' human condition in totality – either Being in the present as 'political' as subject or Non-Being in exclusion (absent/inexistent) as non-subject – defines still the subject of radical rupture in critical theory as it seeks, with all good intention, to redeem, for the wretched, the emancipatory, even revolutionary, content of the 'political' as the possibility (of the truth) of Totality.

⁶³ See the detailed consideration of the matter in the debate between the 'humanist' Sepulveda and the theologian, La Casas as the fate of 'humanness or otherwise of the 'Indians' of the 'New World' was weighed and debated; M.J. Rodriguez-Salgado, "'How oppression thrives where truth is not allowed a voice": The Spanish Polemic about the American Indians', in Gurminder K. Bhambra and Robbie Shilliam eds., *Silencing Human Rights: Critical Engagements With a Contested Project* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 19-42.

⁶⁴ Locke's masterful judgement of such lack in the 'natural' state of the Native American populations being exemplary; see, Roland Marden, "'That all men are created equal': 'Rights talk' and Exclusion in North America", in Bhambra and Shilliam, *Silencing Human Rights*, 85-101.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Mark Duffield, 'Getting Savages to Fight Barbarians: Development, Security and the Colonial Present', *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 5 (2), 2005, 141-159; Margaret Denike, 'The Human Rights of Others: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and "Just Causes" for the "War on Terror"', *Hypatia*, Vol. 23 (2), 2008, 95-121; Douzinas, 'Humanitarianism'.

An assumption of *Nothingness* (or at least nothing worthwhile outside of the totality of the ‘political’) serves therefore as the point of departure, a pre-ontology, for critical Eurocentric thought. To be outside the ‘political’, as understood, is therefore to be in the condition of abjection as exteriority to totality, present only as an absence or inexistence, and not just for Norrie and Badiou; all talk of exclusion as being thrown back into the *natural* human condition *ala* Arendt, or talk of Becoming into the *political* as subject *ala* Ranciere, Zizek, or that of Bare Life as the other of sovereign embrace *ala* Agamben, Prozorov, all reveal variously the problematic of ontology (Being/Non-Being) as the beginning, concern and point of departure, from which the necessities of ‘inventing’ Becoming(-political) are considered.⁶⁶ From this original assumption/error of ontology is the ‘political’ thus thought as the boundary

⁶⁶ It is interesting to observe that the connection here between Arendt and Agamben. The purported abjectness of the ‘natural’ that is ‘pre-political’ life (Arendt), on the one hand, and the destitution of ‘abandonment’ to ‘bare life’ (Agamben), on the other, may be understood as versions of the same presumptions of nothingness outside of the condition proper to Man as subject in the political – the difference between Arendt and Agamben being that whilst Arendt may be understood as a prophet of hope who envisions a passage from nothingness to the political via the right to rights (the right to be subject), Agamben, may be understood instead as a prophet of resignation, nihilism even, who sees abandonment to nothingness as a condition that inheres in the political itself. Against this we encounter the likes of Badiou, Ranciere, Zizek (as examples) concerned as they are with the reclaiming of the Becoming that is the political, out of the grips of both Arendtian hope on the one hand, and Agambenian despair, on the other, with respect the totality of the same. Nevertheless, the fixation with Being and Non-Being (Nothingness) unites these various critical thinkers. On this point, Prozorov, provides an interesting twist. Whilst still maintaining the essential distinction between sovereignty (totality of the political) and abandonment (bare life) as mutually other, his rescue of the philosopher’s subject entails a positive embrace of nothingness as it were – the reclaiming of bare life as foundational sovereignty – as the act of freedom epitomized. In this respect, Prozorov, following as he does a Foucauldian tradition of concern with the capture that is subjectification, to realizing the need to break free from the assumption of subjectivity as emancipation. The problem for Prozorov, coming from the Eurocentric legacy of Totality as he does, is that this rejection of subjectivity, this escape from the embrace of biopolitical care, this “liberation from the future” (Prozorov, *Foucault*, p. 149) means a leap into an unknown, a new, a nothingness. Thus Prozorov, in his desire to rescue ‘freedom’ from the ontologies of subjectivity, stresses the ontological originality of the pre-social/political that is never quite captured by the diagram as the basis from which a post-social/political return of individual sovereignty, away from the ‘diagram’, is possible. This is all reads very much as a Hobbesian argument againtt Hobbes. What Prozorov cannot see, blind to the colonial difference, the abyssal divide of Western ontological assumptions, is that there is no need for such abstractions of possibility from the already existing, that it is precisely the struggle to be free from being made-subject, from colonization, to persist as (Other/)Different-Being, that is the already present of un-colonised human societies around the world.

that divides Being and Non-Being, and Being/Becoming 'political' as the transgressive (immanent or transcendental) act of emancipation.⁶⁷ What is seldom questioned however, are the presumptions that found the ontologies of Being/Non-Being which subsequently informs the philosophical ascription of subjectivity as 'Being/Becoming political'.

A different ontological reading of the present instead presents itself when viewed from a perspective that does not privilege the Same/totality as the point of departure from which Totality may be rescued, one that does not view a present of absence or inexistence from the vantage point of the Same/totality as the truth of Totality is preached. From this vantage point, we see that Being/Non-Being and Becoming are themselves ontological categories derived from an epistemological frame of Eurocentric Totality; the lens that views the present as Being/Non-Being and Becoming, is precisely a colonised and colonising lens. From this follows a different reading of the present from which we might reconsider the 'problem' for critical philosophy: the other of the (post)Enlightenment philosopher's Being/Beoming-subject is not Non-Being/Nothingness (absence/inexistence) but an also present Other/Different-Being.

We begin by remembering that absence and inexistence are already present, accounted for, operations of the regimes of order over embodied (Other-)Beings in 'history'; the absent and the inexistent are indeed already 'subjects' of Totality, enframed in/by Totality, made subject to a totalising narrative of the World in totality-as-present, and these include the various narratives of the critical (post-Enlightenment) thinker. Whilst Totality, as a philosophical invention - and that is all it is - may attempt to both objectify and subjectify bodies (be it in conservative or ruptural terms), and seek to define the closures and possibilities of narrating life-experiences, embodied lives remain persistently recalcitrant. The critical Western philosopher, whilst cognizant of disruption, whilst concerned with the rupture of presents, whilst desiring of a re-viewing of worlds that opens up futures to different possibilities out of/against the present, remains, still, enthralled by what is a mono-optic view of a universal truth of human experience and possibility as portended by the Enlightenment. As such, s/he is incapable of recognizing that not merely 'totality', but Totality itself - that invention of universal truth as conjured up by the Western mind - is the problem, as a problem *of* the present, a problem of both the ontology and epistemology of Being and being-ness in the world. The quintessentially 'modern' philosophical invention of the 'universal' provides a

⁶⁷ Isin provides an elaboration of the argument; *Being Political*. See also, Engin F. Isin, 'Ways of Being Political', *Distinktion*, Nr. 4, 2002, 7-28.

useful point from which some necessary corrections to Western ontological errors may be offered.

Slovaž Zizek, in his unapologetic ‘plea for Eurocentrism’,⁶⁸ asserts that what is really at stake in the advances of contemporary globalization is the Enlightenment’s ideal and truth of universality itself. This claim to the universal, the assertion of Reason as the means of Man’s mastery over nature (and God), the assumption of linear progression towards perfectibility as the march of History, these represent the fundamental tenets of the ideal in ‘Modern’ Western thought, that great universal, timeless, placeless, gift bestowed upon Humanity by the Enlightened inventions of the Western mind. Man’s task therefore is to Master himself towards perfectibility; Man’s destiny, duty even, is to pursue this path, true for all, for all time, universal, eternal. And this ‘European legacy’, as a continuation of classical Greek wisdom, through its Roman translation and its Judeo-Christian incarnations, right through to its present versions heralded by the Enlightenment, is precisely that heavy burden of philosophy in the present that requires, in this time of crisis and forgetting, the (very majestic Zizekian) labours of reiteration and rescue.

We might usefully remind ourselves, again, that the *idea* of universality itself is but a philosophical invention, a postulate for thinking worlds as the World is sought to be imagined and constructed. What happens, therefore, when we interrogate the history and the universalist credentials of ‘universality’ as a philosophical invention in time, and in the presence of those present in the world(s) of infinite variety?

The aspiration towards human perfectibility is not problematic in itself; it would be safe to assume that all cultures, whatever their ontological, cosmological, and epistemological hue, contain within them asserted truths of normality, inadequacy, and perfectibility, ‘universal’ in their assertion, therefore, from within their own particularity. Zizek’s ‘universality’ however is an invention of a particular nature, from a ‘point zero’ perspective, as Santiago Castro-Gomez has called it,⁶⁹ which defines the totalising arrogance of Eurocentric philosophies - a

⁶⁸ Zizek, ‘Eurocentrism’.

⁶⁹ See, R. Grosfoguel, ‘Transmodernity’, p. 4. A ‘point-zero’ perspective refers to a philosophical orientation that privileges the location of enunciation as universal (the ego-politics of knowledge), which conceals the particularity - historical, social, gendered, ‘racial’ - of its enunciation (the geo-politics and body-politics of knowledge). In opposition, Mignolo proposes instead ‘epistemic disobedience’ as a ‘means to delink from the illusion of the zero point epistemology.’; Walter D. Mignolo, ‘Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26 (7-8), 2009, 159-81, p. 160. Whilst the critique

perspective, a presumption, which denies any such contingent reach of its historical, contextual and cultural-cosmological particularity as it espouses its universal claims; as such the 'point-zero' perspective denies, often through violence, the presence of other legacies of knowledge, of other 'Beings' as present in the present of the world. Enrique Dussel is to the point:

What is most frightening is the certitude ... the dominating heroes have of representing the gods on earth – in bygone epochs – and now democracy, freedom, and civilization. ... The conquests of Latin America, the enslavement of Africa and its colonization, as well as that of Asia, are the dominating dialectical expansion of “the same” that assassinates “the other” and totalizes “the other” in “the same”. This huge dialectico-ontological process of human history simply went unperceived by the ideology of ideologies (even though it claims to be the critic of ideologies) – modern and contemporary European philosophy.⁷⁰

Another account, an account from the experience of the Enlightenment's Other-ed, therefore, tells the legacy of 'universalism' very differently.

When understood from the other side of the colonial difference, we see that the invention of universality and the idea of universalism has a very particular and particularist history, and more than that, we see that this modern invention of the 'philosophical problem' served to objectify that historical particularism as truth, as a 'point-zero' from which thought is thinkable, from which thinking itself begins anew. The asserted ideal of universal thinking, when its origins is located not in idealized 'Europe' as an ahistorical and mystical eternity but in a colonial-historical 'Europe' born out of the problem of a lustful, 'deadly encounter',⁷¹ belies the *actual* European legacy, not of universal but of 'abyssal' thinking - thinking which

of zero point epistemology and the call for epistemic disobedience is trenchant as a matter of freeing knowledge from its Eurocentric shackles and blindness, the extent to which such efforts at intellectual decolonization confronts the materiality of violence that defines the encounter between agents of Totality and the Other (as exteriority to Totality) remains unclear in Mignolo. For a discussion of the possible implications of 'illegality' as the material expression of decolonial disobedience, see Jayan Nayar, 'Thinking from the Ban', in Corinne Kumar ed., *Asking, We Walk: South as New Political Imaginary* (Bangalore: Streelekha Pub., forthcoming).

⁷⁰ Enrique Dussel, (trans. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky), *Philosophy of Liberation*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Pub. 2003), p. 52.

⁷¹ See, Zia Sardar, Ashis Nandy and Meryll Wyn Davies, *Barbaric Others: A Manifesto on Western Racism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), Chap. 3.

separates the ideals of ‘emancipation’ and ‘regulation’ asserted as universal on the one side of the colonial divide, from the inflictions of ‘appropriation’ and ‘violence’ on the other, one visible, the other denied visibility. As de Sousa Santos explains,

The division is such that “the other side of the [abyssal] line” vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. ... Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other.⁷²

Revealed here, in contrast to critical Western-ized thinking, is the abyssal *actual* in the mythologised *ideal* of universal reason. In contrast to absence *ala* Norrie and inexistence *ala* Badiou, for example, *is present, already exists* - as a consequence of the inflicted idea of universal Humanity, of the colonial abyssal line - the *made-absent, made-inexistent*, the invisibilized present and presence of Other/Different-Beingness that is recalcitrant Exteriority as the radical other of Totality.⁷³ Put differently, the so-called universal ideals of the Enlightenment, of Being-Becoming, was ‘thought’ as Other/Different-Being was *actually* erased, negated, denied both philosophically and bodily, because of (the necessities for) such erasure, negation and denial. Frantz Fanon understood this well:

Leave this Europe where they are never done talking about Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all corners of the globe ... where they never stopped proclaiming that they were only anxious for the welfare of Man: today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind.⁷⁴

Fanon’s uncompromising indictment against ‘Europe’ and its ‘triumphs of the mind’ is what Enrique Dussel’s more recent statement of the hidden philosophical roots of universal Enlightened reason so effectively exposes: ‘[b]efore the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; “I conquer” is the practical foundation of the “I think”’.⁷⁵ From across the colonial divide becomes visible, therefore, the centrality of ‘I conquer’ as the unspoken, ‘made-invisible’ even if not hidden, other, colonial-Modern truth of the Enlightenment’s universalism - the assertion of reason’s mastery towards universality and perfectibility was born out of an

⁷² de Sousa Santos, ‘Abyssal Thinking’, pp. 1-2.

⁷³ See Nayar, ‘The Politics of Hope’.

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 1963 (2001)), p. 251.

⁷⁵ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, p. 3 (emphasis in original)

experience of mastery as domination, appropriation, and violence against the philosophically Other-ed, the bodily annihilated.

Thus, we see the *actual-in-the-ideal* of Western, modern/enlightened, thought - the 'problem' of universality is invented as the abyssal violence of the colonial divide is effected, in order that it may be so effected; indeed, the philosophers of colonisation/domination/appropriation too were masters of Badiouian invention as they confronted the 'problems' (of Other-Beings) of the(ir) present.⁷⁶ The result is the negation, and the erasure from cognizance, of the co-constitutiveness of coloniality with Modernity, and of the contemporaneity of Exteriority with Totality.⁷⁷

Seen from this other side of the colonial divide, therefore, we read differently the problem of Totality. As Anibal Quijano explains,

The radical absence of the 'other' not only postulates an isolated social existence in general. It also negates the very idea of social totality. As has been demonstrated by European colonial practices, the economic and epistemological paradigm makes it possible to obliterate every reference to any other possible 'subject' outside of the European context, that is, to make invisible the colonial order as part of the totality, at the very moment in which the very idea of Europe is in the process of constituting itself in relation to the rest of the world in colonization. The very idea of 'Europe' and

⁷⁶ For an elaboration on the representation of 'Man' as a manoeuvre that fixes ontology in 'Western' philosophy, see Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument', *The New Centennial Review* 3(3), 2003, 257-337. Also, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'The topology of being and the geopolitics of knowledge', *City*, Vol. 8(1), 2004, 29-56.

⁷⁷ And if it were thought this 'abyssality' is merely one of historical error, a consequence of human fallibility as Enlightened ideals were betrayed by post-Enlightenment political desires, then we might return to the present to remind us of persistent continuities; Upendra Baxi's reminder with respect to this our 'age of human rights' is apt:

[T]he politics of cruelties continues even as onerous declarations on human rights proliferate. A distinctly European contribution to recent history, the politics of organised intolerance and ethnic cleansing has been universalised in the "killing fields" of post-colonial experience. The early, middle and late phases of the Cold War orchestrated prodigious human suffering as well as an exponential growth of human rights enunciations. Upendra Baxi, 'Voices of Suffering and the Future of Human Rights', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol 8, 1998, 125-169, p. 126 (footnotes omitted).

‘Occident’ is already a recognition of identity and, therefore, of the difference with other cultural experiences.⁷⁸

Here lies the crux of the problem of Eurocentric conceptions of ontology, of Totality. As an invention to rescue philosophy from the closures of totality-as-is, Totality remains limited by its blindness to the colonial difference, by its ontological presumptions derived from the European legacy of coloniality which ‘obliterates’, as Quijano puts it, the possibility of Other/Different-Being, as Exteriority to Totality.⁷⁹ It is worth expanding on the implications of such philosophies born of ontological obliterations. We make the following two observations.

First, the radical rescues of philosophy sought by the critical Eurocentric thinker ignores the contemporaneity of the colonial difference in the universal - that totality as present-actual is constructed out of radical Other-ing; that thinking Totality, as the (im)possibility of the present-real, is already implicated by the coloniality of abyssal thinking. We see that for all its progressive intent, therefore, critical (post)Enlightenment thought maintains a self-centredness in narrating the story of the world as ‘its’ story, with its voice, with its imagined beautiful future; its telling of history is History, marked significantly by a divide between a ‘before and after’ of Western Enlightenment;⁸⁰ its truth and aspiration of Humanity is a universal account of human evolution, desires and trajectory; its imagined future is a Future of Humanity towards its universal end.⁸¹ Such is the ‘point-zero’ perspective (Castro-Gomez),

⁷⁸ Quoted in Mignolo, *Local Histories*, p. 213.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of the significance of the decolonial ontology of Exteriority as Other-Being, see, Nayar, ‘Politics of Hope’.

⁸⁰ See Dipesh Chakrabarty’s re-view of Europe’s historiography in, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton Uni. Press, 2000). For a different perspective which interrogates the idea of History itself, see Ashis Nandy, ‘History’s Forgotten Doubles’, *History and Theory*, Vol. 34 (2), 1995, 44-66.

⁸¹ It is interesting to note here Jameson’s observation on ‘the standpoint of dreams’, that all ‘utopian’ thinking is necessarily implicated by the specific ideologic and historical-class positions of its proponents; Jameson, ‘Politics of Utopia’, pp. 46-7. Grosfuegel, however, makes a crucial distinction between epistemic and social locations of thinking, whereby adopting a position of the latter (being socially located against oppressive power) does not necessarily entail being epistemologically so; ‘Transmodernity’, pp. 3-4. However, the reverse is also true – one might adopt epistemic locations against power whilst occupying a (permitted) class location of privilege; might this be the postmodern, ‘postcolonial’, ‘multicultural’ condition of contemporary global capitalism that critics such as Arif Dirlik so forcefully take to task; ‘The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20(2), 1994, 328-56.

the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo), the abyssal thinking (Santos), of still colonial orientations of post-Enlightenment thought. Critical thought might therefore lament the historical rupture between the Enlightenment and (post)Modernity as a result of (global) capitalism, it might grieve the failures and culpabilities of the institutions of Modernity to make actual the fulfilment of Humanity across geographic borders, it might suggest, as Enrique Dussel has termed it, an 'enmity within the totality' against 'the system' as a means to make alternate futures possible,⁸² but through it all, it remains (albeit, for some, increasingly with doubt) within the ontologic-epistemic borders of the Enlightenment, retaining the 'promise' itself as ideal and universal.⁸³

Following from the above, we observe secondly, and more important to our concern with the present, that Other/Different-Being, as Exteriority to the asserted ideal/actual/real World-as-Totality, is an already-present that does not, cannot, figure in the various 'rescues' of philosophy considered above;⁸⁴ aside from immanence (emergence out of absence) and transcendence (eruption out of inexistence), the contemporaneity of the colonial difference, and 'Radical Otherness' as Exteriority to Totality, remain pervasive actuals of and in the

⁸² See Dussel's critique of Derrida in, 'From Fraternity to Solidarity: Toward a Politics of Liberation' *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 38 (1), 2007, 73-92. This notion of enmity within totality, or put differently fraternal enmity, describes well the stance of critical Western thinkers. Dussel's point however is to bring to the fore a perspective of otherness - radical 'ontological enmity' - from the exteriority of Totality, that stands for the negation, rather than the improvement, of Totality.

⁸³ Walter D Mignolo and Madina V Tlostanova, 'Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge' *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 9 (2), 2006, 205-221, p. 208

⁸⁴ Again, Prozorov's is an interesting illustration of the philosophical view obscured by the Eurocentric assumption of Totality; Prozorov, *Foucault*. For Prozorov, after engaging in a rich representation of Foucault's insights on the politics of sovereignty and in the present contexts of the biopolitics of 'care', the 'to-come' of the subject lies in her reclaiming of originary decisional sovereignty through the refusal of prevailing biopolitical 'care'. This, for Prozorov is the radical future, the 'new', sovereignty of the individual reclaimed from biopolitics. What Prozorov is incapable of 'seeing' through this philosophical view is first, that all society (in whatever form) is about the making live and letting die (biopolitics, as it is so defined) of its 'members', and secondly, and consequently, that beside the asserted Totality of sovereign orders exist concurrently, other biopolitical societies of making live (and letting die as a necessary correlate) that entail different orderings of 'care'; see in this regard Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash for their accounts of convivial (other) being-ness; *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

present.⁸⁵ Despite the various colonising efforts of ‘sovereign’ and ‘rational’ negations, notwithstanding the past and present annihilations of colonial civil-ising missions, development projects, and humanitarian intervention for democratisation, undertaken both nationally and internationally, life in all its variety continue to persist as (Other/Different-)Being in the world. With every rejection of the attempted enclosure by the sovereign assertion of the boundaries of totality as the legitimate geography of present life (Being) and the permitted scope of future possibilities (Becoming), and with every rebellious affirmation of persistent and resurgent socialities that challenge both the banality, and the totality, of the present consensus, we are reminded that the task of Order is neither ever complete, nor completeable, not because of the ‘antinomies’ of (contested) law and justice with its ‘back and forths’ as per Norrie, nor due to the inherent eventual possibility of becoming through (unknowable, indeterminable) fidelities as per Badiou, but simply because (Other/Different-)Being *Is*, despite the closures of totality and the coloniality of Totality. This stubborn, rebellious, untamed, uncolonised, *Is* is what Ivan Illich called the wisdom of ‘vernacular values’,⁸⁶ Walter Mignolo termed border thinking,⁸⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos identified as the ecology of knowledges,⁸⁸ Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash report as the rich soil of cultures;⁸⁹ these all remain present, and persistent, notwithstanding the ‘point-zero’ perspectives of Eurocentrism. Philosophical orientations that are, either knowingly or unknowingly, blind to such a present and which apparently seek refuge either in immanence or transcendence in order that the purity of its philosophical truths may be retained in faith are at best an abandonment of her subject to a totalising and limiting imagination of the present, and at worst, an inexcusable arrogant abrogation of philosophical responsibility - Zizek’s ‘plea’ for Eurocentrism is recalled to mind. Instead, we might heed Mignolo:

Modernity ... carries on its shoulders the heavy weight and responsibility of coloniality. The modern criticism of modernity (postmodernity) is a necessary

⁸⁵ The Radical Other stands opposed to the ‘suffering other’ that so obsesses concerned and well-meaning thinkers of hope; see Nayar, ‘The Politics of Hope’.

⁸⁶ See, Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (Boston: Marion Boyars, 1981).

⁸⁷ Mignolo, *Local Histories*; Mignolo and Tlostanova, ‘Thinking from the Borders’.

⁸⁸ Boaventura de Sousa Santos ed., *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London: Verso, 2007).

⁸⁹ Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Post-Modernism*.

practice, but one that stops where the colonial differences begin. The colonial differences, around the planet, are the houses where border epistemology dwells.⁹⁰

By shifting philosophical enquiry, away from an effort to postulate a possible (unknowable, unnameable) 'real' future for the ideal (as it travels its precarious journeys through the actuals of history) to one which de-invisibilizes the actual of colonial difference in the philosophical 'ideal' of Totality itself, might we attend to the (problem of the) present, differently viewed and re-membered.

But what implications follow from such ontological corrections argued for here? The question may be asked (as indeed it has been by colleagues with whom the reflections in this essay have been shared): does this not ignore, or worse deny, the realities of struggles for subjectivity within the 'political' of all those currently denied presence?; is this not mere nihilism that portends no constructive possibility for critical theory-practice?; is not the challenge, ever more pressing, to ensure the opening up of the 'political' to those denied 'voice' and place against the exclusions and Bans that define the present-actual? By way of response, let me be clear that what I am suggesting here is not an abandonment of the imperatives of the present, but a perspectival change on the present itself.

IV. Desubjectification: A Suggestion, by Way of Conclusion.

The perplexities of the critical philosopher are clearly many as the present confounds and disappoints: 'exception' has come to be identified as norm under the present condition of sovereignty;⁹¹ the business of militarism ('security', in doublespeak) and impoverishment ('austerity') continue unchecked by repeated exhortations of 'human security' and 'human development';⁹² the 'war on terror' and its exigencies of manifold 'illiberal' practices of human violation increasingly and unashamedly define the contemporary agenda of national and global governance to restructure the 'constitutional democratic'-state;⁹³ trans-territorial

⁹⁰ Mignolo, *Local Histories*, p. 37.

⁹¹ Giorgio Agamben (trans. Kevin Attell), *State of Exception* (Chicago, Uni. Of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁹² Duffield, 'Savages'.

⁹³ Didier Bigo, 'Globalized (in)Security: the Field and the Ban-opticon', in Didier Bigo ed., *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (London: Routledge, 2008), 5-49; Michael Dillon, 'Governing Terror: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence', *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 1, 2007, 7-28.

materialities of ‘global law’ regimes and transnational professional regimes of management dominate much of the actual workings of national and world orders;⁹⁴ human persons find themselves increasingly expunged of the philosophical-political quality of ‘Man’ as subject-with-rights in the located fault-lines of contemporary ‘political geography’ through the entrenchment of innovative ‘political’ categories of illegal ‘outsiders’ (migrant workers, refugees, etc) and ‘criminal insiders’ (the ‘terror suspect’, the insurgent, the ‘national threat’, the rampant poor etc),⁹⁵ etc.

These then are the conditions of the present from which, out of which, philosophical inventions for the ‘problem’ are sought; from which, out of which, as we have seen, the present is sought to be reclaimed for a different future of presences. And so, ‘critical’ literature abounds with well-intentioned but essentially misdirected contemplations that never cease to ‘think’ emancipation, never cease to postulate so many ‘shoulds’ for the wise and the good and the powerful to adhere to, and for the ‘critical’ theorist/activist to excite over, to urge and to agitate for. If only, we did this, if only power did that, if only our institutions were to follow these (enlightened) pathways that ‘we’ critical thinkers have illuminated, our world of misery would be enhanced, brought out of darkness into light, the many promises of past and on-going presents fulfilled.⁹⁶ We here pause.

For too long we, ‘critical philosophers’, have been enthralled by the existential imaginary and conceptual vocabulary of ‘Western’ ontologic-epistemology, by the enduring promise of universal Becoming and the post-Enlightenment assumption, or more appropriately, appropriation, of ‘Being’, as only existent, only worthwhile, within the ontological frame of the ‘Modern’ with all its trappings – to Be is to be that philosophically constructed, then existentially subjected, (Hu)Man that is the rational-individual, who begins sociality with the

⁹⁴ Andreas Fischer-Lescano and Gunther Teubner, ‘Regime Collisions: The Vain Search for Legal Unity in the Fragmentation of Global Law’ *Michigan Journal of International Law*, Vol. 25, 2004, 999-1046; Bigo, ‘Globalized (in)Security’.

⁹⁵ Nicholas De Genova, ‘The Production of Culprits: From Deportability to Detainability in the Aftermath of “Homeland Security”’, *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 11 (5), 2007, 421-48; Anne McNevin, ‘Irragular migrants, neoliberal geographies and spatial frontiers of “the political”’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33, 2007, 655-74; Peter Nyers, ‘The accidental citizen: acts of sovereignty and (un)making citizenship’, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 35 (1), 2006, 22-41.

⁹⁶ For a critique of ‘global justice’ thinking in this regard, see, Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey, ‘Resisting ‘Global Justice’: disrupting the colonial ‘emancipatory’ logic of the West’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (8), 2009, 1395-1409; also, Nayar, ‘Politics of Hope’.

cognizance of individuality as a sovereign original as the antagonisms of relationships are confronted, as the vicissitudes of Becoming - of finding place, voice, as a sovereign original - are sought to be overcome. From this ontological condition, as understood, we 'think/invent' the problematic of the individual and the collective, we labour the problem of the One and the Many, the particular and the universal, the private and the public, all familiar themes in post-Enlightenment attempts to reconcile the perceived contradiction between freedom and order, of individual sovereign-subjectivity and collectivised state-sovereignty. Thus, we have the philosophical invention of the 'political' as the possibility of ontology, the assumed/imagined location-moment of Becoming-individual-in-the collective. Thus, we have the philosophical invention of the 'subject' as ontological possibility, of the Being-individual-in-the collective. Through this lens then is the present viewed, and 'lack' – absence in the Same, inexistence in the light of the Same – sought to be overcome as an emancipatory ideal, thought of as the possibility of Becoming-Being. For the 'Western-ized' mind, colonised (and I use this term purposefully) by the philosophical and material actuals of post-Enlightenment Modernity as a Being-subject-ed, this aspiration, this burden of 'thinking', this assumption of Being, this grasping at the 'political' as the (only) known conduct of Becoming-Being, is understandable – we 'see' lack from our locations of presence in the Same; we interpret struggles against the oppressive machinations of the Same as struggles to be subject in the Same, even if for the Same transformed.

Yet, whilst we 'philosophers' continue chasing our elusive subject, and whilst we profit (in our permitted institutional locations) from such critical labours, we know that the world also continues along its present trajectory of globalised exploitation and violence in the name of 'inclusion' - for freedoms (of compulsory consumption) for all. We also know, and we are concerned to celebrate and validate no doubt, that within this world as ordered exist, despite its order, because of such ordering, ongoing and persistent realities of disruption – both of 'subject-citizens' as they daily engage in the politics of rights, and of the purportedly 'uncounted' and the 'Banned', as they unpredictably erupt in confrontation against the consensual public space of the present. However, it is at this juncture that the critical gaze onto the present requires correction.

First, we mostly ignore an inconvenient subject; only a rare few have paid any considerable attention to this truth of the present, and even so, with little philosophical import. Totality-as-present – a present thought out of, and effected as a result of, the colonial-modern past – is constituted not just by the presence of subject-citizens or abject-absences/inexistences, but by

licentious and *exemotional* traversers of globality – those elusive figures of the contemporary that variously emerge in ambiguous guises as the ‘investor’, the ‘market’, the ones with no fixed-abode, unbounded by territorial constraints, the welcome ‘guest’ the world over. This is to say, the presence of ‘rights’, and absences of ‘exceptions’, are contemporaneous with the theoretically/philosophically elusive exemptions of the licentious; we are confronted with a mutual co-constitutiveness of totality in this respect. Simply put, rights and Bans are negotiated as the exigencies of licence are weighed and its necessary compulsions for order imagined and effected. Totality, and its exclusions, with its lacks, its absences and inexistences as conventionally viewed, therefore, is precisely constructed in order that such abjections serve the desires of licence, enable the freedoms of exemptional appropriation. The place of these exemptional subjects – the ‘transnational capitalist class’ as Leslie Sklair identified them – appear little to be incorporated into the critical philosopher’s contemplations of the present.⁹⁷ The enchantment with the (post)Enlightenment assertion of the political-‘We’, of a collective public-‘belonging’, thus persists, even whilst the many clues of its falsehood are often identified.

And this continuing enchantment contributes to another view that becomes, therefore, obscured, perverted. What I have in mind here is the view on the ‘decolonial’, a view which requires the abandonment of the enchantment with (post)Enlightenment ontologic-epistemology and a remembering of the ontological implication of colonialism, however outdated it might be regarded by contemporary fashionistas of critical philosophy. What if we understand the foundation of historical colonisation, the operation of the colonality of power, precisely as the appropriation of (the philosophy of) Being-Becoming, as the theory-practice

⁹⁷ Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001. A recent take-up and revision of Sklair’s analysis can be found in William K Carroll, *The Making of a Transnational Capitalist Class: Corporate Power in the 21st Century*, Zed Books, London, 2010. The sociological analyses of Sklair which detailed the transnationality of the ‘capitalist class’ and which pressed for the need to re-view ‘class’ from a global perspective appears to have little filtered through to critical philosophical circles as such favorites as ‘sovereignty’ and the ‘political’ are unendingly pondered over. Of the few interesting theoretical considerations of the ‘actuals’ of exemptionalism as I put it (and I make no apology for excluding so-called theories of ‘cosmopolitanism’), particularly provocative is Andreas Fischer-Lescano’s and Gunther Teubner’s theorization of ‘Global Law’ regimes; see, ‘Regime Collisions’. However, theirs is less a critical engagement with the possibilities of ‘resistance’ to global power, and more an accurate description of the actual operation of post-territorial ‘Law’ systems.

of 'being-made-subject', both in its forms of presences and absences?⁹⁸ What if, thus, we open the possibility that we have mis-read the present of all struggles as struggles of the absent/inexistent to Become,⁹⁹ and instead begin to ask if the struggles of the present may be viewed as those of radical Other/Different Being, uncolonised in their ontological Beingness even if not in their existential made-to-be-ness, to resist being 'made-subject' as absent/inexistent/Banned?¹⁰⁰ What if we have indeed been obscured from understanding the very foundational, ontological bases for 'decolonisation' as a liberation from the colonisation

⁹⁸ We might understand Foucault as being, amongst thinkers of the Western tradition, one who comes close to such an interrogation of the present. Indeed, Foucault realized that to understand the present it was more useful to investigate the manifold, actual, embodied operations of power - as relationships of discipline (and knowledge), and biopolitical management - and on the ways in which as a consequence subjectivities are constructed, rather than to recover some truth about the rationalities that inhere in sovereignty (Totality); this task of excavating the genealogies of subjectivity finds repeated emphases in Foucault's writings, as succinctly restated in 'The Subject and Power'. Whilst Foucault's emphases on the materiality of the operation of power/resistance reminds us of the need to return philosophy to the life of power as relation, what is absent in Foucault's excavations of subjectivities is the contextualization of power/sovereignty in the colonial difference. This said, it would appear that if Foucault, through his identification of biopower as an innovation of governmentality in place of the previously regarded assumption of government through sovereign power, usefully pointed to important clues regarding the rationalities, and implications of 'making-subject', then the subsequent post-Foucauldian delving into 'biopolitics' heralded by Agamben, and latterly Roberto Esposito ((trans. Timothy Campbell), *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Uni. Of Minnesota Press, 2008)), I venture, has served more to obfuscate rather than clarify a reading of the present.

⁹⁹ As a telling example of this tendency, Žižek's dissatisfaction with the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico is illustrative. For Žižek, notwithstanding the positive, ruptural manifestation that was the uprising since 1994, the disappointment is that the movement remains 'ambiguous' in its 'revolutionary' content; see Žižek, *Lost Causes*, p. 310. A corrective to this colonising, and colonised interpretive lens is provided by Ashis Nandy:

These self-expressions [of spontaneous defiance and rebellions of the oppressed] are not usually cast in the language of liberation; even less frequently can they be accommodated in a proper theory of liberation... we, standing outside, can try and translate these self-expressions into our language and construct for ourselves a theory of liberation out of the *primitive, populist* theories of oppression and spontaneous acts of subversion, but these are our needs, not theirs.

Ashis Nandy, 'Shamans, Savages and the Wilderness: On the Audibility of Dissent and the Future of Civilizations', in Corrine Kumar, *Asking We Walk*, p. 228 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁰ No doubt, there may indeed be many struggles which do adopt and aspire for the promise of salvation into Same. That this may be so does not detract from the suggestion offered here.

of the ‘political’ as the imposition of (a particular) Being/Becoming-subject?¹⁰¹ Might we, who assume the burdens of critical philosophy, then begin to consider the implications of releasing Being-ness in all its recalcitrant richness from the colonising clutches of Western colonial-modern philosophies of Being-in-the-political, not just for the wretched of the earth, but for ourselves as we contemplate the purported ‘normalities’, and lacks, of human being-ness, of ontology, as we ‘invent’ the problems of the present for critical philosophy?

The task, of the present, for a philosophy in the present, is as I see it, one of ‘desubjectification’: to view, read, name, desubjectification as the actual and real of struggles against the continuing coloniality of the ‘political’. This is not to say that being-ness does not find expression, as assertion, as struggle, in the locations-moments of the ‘public-political’ spaces constructed in our present actual-totality; these ‘institutions’ of Becoming-Being indeed do represent locations of antagonisms, of rights-assertions, of Rancierian dissensus. What I am suggesting however is that we abandon the assumption that in this public-political instances is properly Being-Becoming expressed, its moments encapsulated and manifested. Rather, I suggest we view these existential emergences into the coloniser’s ontologic-epistemological sites and engagements as *encounters* of incommensurability. For this purpose, it is clear that we need to reconsider our vocabulary; the idea/invention of the ‘political’ indeed is entrenched in the philosopher’s epistemology; to break free from its hold, difficult. Perhaps, it will do for us to somehow reclaim, as many have sought to do, the political as a location-moment of rupture. I think this unsatisfactory. Instead, we require, I believe, a conscious relegation of the ‘political’ from its ontological primacy. The re-introduction of ‘encounter’ as a distinct philosophical invention is necessary, therefore, for a fuller philosophy of the present, to bring to light the presence of the incommensurable ontological conflicts that pertain as actual-in-the-present.

De-subjectification then becomes the critical philosophical problem as we re-view the present.¹⁰² This entails a necessary reconsideration, a ‘de-naming’ as I prefer, of the

¹⁰¹ On this point, Ikeotuonye makes a powerful and timely argument against the misunderstanding, even ‘appropriation’, of Frantz Fanon by (even sympathetic) Eurocentric commentators, translating Fanon’s anger and rejection of ‘Europe’ into the philosophical frames of Being and subjectivity that remain consistent with, and even reinforcing of, Western ontological assumptions. The same, it could be said, is true also of Mohandas Gandhi; see Ikeotuonye, ‘*Connexus Theory*’.

¹⁰² De-subjectification, as suggested here, is quite different from recent ‘Eurocentric’ efforts to free the ‘subject’ from the grips of the sovereign-political domain; we might recall Prozorov in this connection (see above note 83), or contrast Judith Butler’s resort to the notion of some ante-political ‘performativity’ (*Excitable Speech: A*

foundational premises of 'sovereignty' which originates, and as a result of its reinvention by Carl Schmitt, reaffirmed, the ontological error of the 'political' in post-Enlightenment, Eurocentric thought.¹⁰³ This task, however, remains for a future doing.

Politics of the Performative (London: Routledge, 1997; also, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham Uni. Press, 2005). There is nothing pure or prior to the present, as historical reality and materiality, in de-subjection; it is entirely embroiled in the messy encounters of breaking the bonds of subject-in/to-the political.

¹⁰³ Carl Schmitt (trans. George Schwab), *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: Uni. Of Chicago Press, 1985 (2005)); and, (trans. George Schwab), *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Uni. Press, 1976). Indeed, a Schmittian re-turn is a notable feature of contemporary critical contemplations about 'sovereignty' and the (im)possibility of the 'political' in the present. This, in my view, requires a more critical interrogation.

Morals and maladies: Life histories of socially distributed care among Aaumbo women in Namibia, Southern Africa

Jill Brown¹

ABSTRACT

The African cultural complex of socially distributed childcare (Weisner Bradley & Kilbride 1997) is a unique example of a culturally specific practice with its own emic logic. The tradition of child fosterage in Africa, or care for a child other than one's own biological child, is a normative practice. Western research on child fosterage has debated the cost/benefits to children with disparities found that they favor biological children (Bledsoe 1990; Goody 1973; Isugihue-Abanihe, 1991). My own previous work among Aaumbo speakers in Namibia revealed that in 2000 children in fostered arrangements were disadvantaged in height, weight, and education compared to biological children living in the same household (Brown 2009; 2011). Research has not addressed, however, the lived experience of these children as few studies have examined fosterage from the perspective of the child. The current study analyzes 11 life history interviews of Aaumbo women in Namibia who were fostered as children, remembering their childhoods with their biological parents and with their foster parents. Several themes emerged from the interviews that describe the complexity of the losses and gains of fostering relationships and the relative position of children within them. Reasons and motivations to foster were revealed as were protective factors like preserving sibling groups and cultural scripts regarding the arrangement.

Adoption is one of Western societies best kept secrets (Bowie, 2004). Many people in the West know someone who is adopted or have a personal experience with adoption, but the practice remains private and nearly invisible. John Bowlby (1971) argued in the precursor to his attachment theory that human primates have the set goal of remaining in contact with their mother and that infants need a warm, intimate and continuous attachment in order to develop normally. This was envisioned by Bowlby as occurring between a mother and infant

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68198. Phone: 402-280-2434. Email: jillbrown@creighton.edu.

in the context of a nuclear household and particularly in the context of the ‘western industrialized family. This preference in the West for the nuclear family is so self-evident in our schemas of family that it comes as a surprise to learn that this is not the case in large parts of the world. A handful of anthropologists and psychologists like Patricia Draper, Tom Weisner, and Barry Hewlett, and others have challenged the exclusivity of the mother/infant unit through observations in Africa, understanding that mothers were embedded in a wider social network, family life was more variable and dynamic and infants often were cared for by *allopresents*, group members other than the parent who cared for the infants. There are societies in which adoption is not only common, but an essential and often preferred means of raising children.

In fact, the use of allopresents is normative in many communities in Africa through the culturally specific child care practice and tradition of child fosterage. Child fosterage has been defined several ways. Accounts in Africa describe fosterage as a social welfare system revolving around kinship and is defined as the rearing of a child by someone other than the biological parent (Bledsoe 1990). What makes fosterage unique is the semi-permanent yet adjustable nature of the relationship, one of the most distinct elements of African families (Isiugo-Abanihe 1991). In contrast to Western societies, fosterage is additive, not substitutive. Adoption in the West is conventionally used for the transference of full parental rights from birth to social parents. In fosterage, only partial transfer occurs. One dynamic in Western adoption is the ‘either/or’ premise on which adoption is based. The full power of the law is used to persuade adoptive parents that they do indeed become the legal mother and father of the child and to ensure that adopted children are treated as if they were biologically born into their substitutive family, (Bowie, 2004). Other societies handle the biological/social distinction differently by removing the ‘either/or’ part of the equation. By constructing an additive model, both biological and social relatives are in the frame simultaneously. Adoptive parents can be real without replacing the biological parent. Open adoptions in the West are beginning to include elements of this system but full legal rights are still a prerequisite. In non-western societies this practice is widespread. Ester Goody (1973) was one of the first to describe the practice among the Gonja of Cameroon. She remembers her first entries in her field notes was the Ganja word [kabitha] “a girl given to someone” and [kaiyeribi] “a boy given to someone”. Understanding the nuances of fosterage still proves to be a complex task.

The motivations of the recipient family and the donor family are often multifarious (Brown 2011) and encompass the desire to teach discipline (Bledose 1990) to provide a better

education for a child (Isiugo-Abanihe 1991) gifting and sharing between families (Madhavan 2004), establishment of social bonds (Bledsoe 1990), enhancement of fertility (Isiugo-Abanihe 1991; Pennington, 1991), the need to be childless when entering a new relationship with a man (Pennington 1991; Vandermeersch 2002) and times of crisis, like sickness and famine (Madhavan 2004). Payne-Price (1981) sampled 45 cultures using the Human Resource Area File (HRAF) that reported adoption practices. Of the 45, 35 reported adoption or fosterage practices. The three primary motives for fostering in a child were the need for a helper, either short or long term; the need for an heir; and tokens of friendship. The need for a helper was identified as the primary motivation. Motivations to foster out a child included illegitimacy, poverty, too many children, death of one parent, and death of both parents.

The Namibian fostering system is a recognizable variant of the more general customs that surround fostering throughout Africa. In fact, northern Namibia represents a unique case with the highest rates of fosterage in all of Africa. Up to 36% of children in Namibia report having their birth parents alive but residing with someone else (Brown, 2009).

The predictions regarding child fosterage conducted by most researchers trained in western paradigms of developmental psychology usually question how this practice could not harm 'nonbiological children'. Disparities do exist between fosterees and biological children. Oni (1995) sampled 1,538 Yoruba households in Nigeria in order to understand the effects of fosterage from both the foster parents and the child's perspective. Her findings reveal differential treatment of foster and non-fostered children. The mother was the first person to notice a child's illness 89% of the time if it was her biological child but only 42% of the time for foster children. Foster children reportedly complained in 29% of cases, compared to 4% for biological children, before an illness was noticed. The mean duration of time between awareness of illness and treatment also favored biological children. In follow up case studies, adults who were fostered out as children overwhelmingly describe the experience as one filled with pain and favoritism (Oni 1995).

Similarly, Bledsoe and Brandon (1992) found children fostered were at greater risk for death and fell sick more than their biologically related counterparts. The authors conclude that this may be due to discrimination and deprivation in times of food shortages. Anderson (2005) utilized a demographic survey to examine whether the coefficient of relatedness predicts greater household expenditures on food and education for 11,211 black South African children. Controlling for characteristics that might vary between households, he found that the more closely related a child is to the household, the less likely he/she is to be

behind in school. Similarly, being more related to the household is a positive predictor of expenditures on food, on health care, and on clothing. In rural samples, however, increased relatedness was associated with reduced expenditures on food and health care. The nature of the relationship between families plays a role in the treatment of children (Brown 2011; Verhoff & Moreli, 2007). The cultural script of 'all children are treated equal' is found throughout parental accounts of fostering in Africa (Brown 2011).

But longitudinal data that takes into consideration the ecological implications of child care practices is missing in studies of child fosterage and normal development has often been characterized through a western lens. This western hegemonic view of development leaves little room to do anything but critique fosterage as only child labor and 'of course' harmful to African children. What appears missing in the literature is a deeper understanding of the lived experience of children in the fosterage system and the tensions between the 'equality' cultural script and personal experience.

Life history is one place to begin, not with families that are at the breaking point but with women in their everyday recollections of this practice. To understand the normative cultural rules of this practice may eventually help in times of crisis. I have chosen to take a somewhat different angle on fostering in comparison with approaches taken by other researchers. I attempt to emphasize the fosterees by asking women to recollect, as adult informants, about their own experience of being fostered as a child. This study explored the central question of what was the experience of living as a fostered child among Aaumbo women in Namibia.

The Aaumbo Context

The Aaumbo people live primarily in two regions in Namibia. Their traditional homeland is located in the North of the country and is home to the majority of the 400,000+ Aaumbo speakers in Namibia. Traditionally, the Aaumbos are agro-pastoralists having both subsistence plots of millet [omahango] and herds of cattle [eengobe] and goats [eekombo]. A large number of Aaumbos have migrated to Windhoek, the capital, in search of work and education and live primarily in Katatura, the settlement created on the outskirts of Windhoek during the apartheid era.

Aaumbo societies during the pre-colonial and colonial periods were predominantly matrilineal agro-pastoralist societies demarcated from each other by large areas of forest and savanna in the North of the country (Salokowski 1998). Until 1840, these areas had remained

almost totally free from European influence. When the first Finnish Missionaries arrived in 1870, the majority of Aaumbo societies were headed by “kings.”

German South West Africa was the name given to Namibia when the northern Europeans arrived in the territory in the early 1880's. In 1948 the Afrikaner led National Party gained power in South Africa. Namibia exchanged one colonial experience for another. During the apartheid era, blacks were relegated into traditional homelands. For the Aaumbos, this was the north of the country where the majority still live today. Aaumbos not living within the boundaries of the newly created ‘Ovamboland’ were relocated and required to carry a work pass when leaving Ovamboland. Namibia gained its independence in 1990 after more than a century of colonial rule, first by Germany and then by South Africa. Much of the struggle for independence between 1966-1988 was carried out in Ovamboland. English is the official language with several other indigenous languages spoken. Aaumbo speaking people represent the largest portion of Namibia’s population, nearly 50% (CIA Factbook 2006).

Kinship is an organizing principle in Namibia holding more importance than class and playing a critical role in decisions regarding socially distributed child rearing (Hayes 1998). What class does in advanced capitalistic societies like the U.S., kinship does in Namibia—shaping peer relationships, choices about marriage, and with whom one could be raised. Matrilineal descent systems are found among Aaumbo speakers (Hayes 1998).

Children traditionally belong to their mother’s family and men do not pass on their matrilineal membership to children. The mother’s brother often plays a pivotal role in the care of the children, including providing care through fosterage. Even within this system, however, there is significant variation and complexity. In the matrilineal inheritance system the husband’s matrilineal kin traditionally have rights to all of the wife’s possessions after his death. This has changed in recent years as widows have been seen as primary caregivers to many orphans. The rising number of orphans has forced both paternal and maternal kin to raise children. The Oshikwanyama word for raising of a child other than your own is [oluteka]. The cultural script of fostering among Aaumbo caregivers includes the unfaltering belief by caregivers that all children are treated equal in their house (Brown 2011). Fostering children elevates women to more respected status within families and communities. It is also a normative child rearing practice.

Data and Methods

The data from this study came from 11 life-history interviews collected in Namibia from September-November 2006. The women were selected from two sites, one rural and one urban. The women in the rural sample (n=6) all resided in the Oshana region in the North of Namibia. The urban sample (n=5) all resided in the capital city of Windhoek, specifically in the township of Katutura, however, all were raised in the rural North and several had kinship connections or social connections to the women interviewed in the North. All but one participant was Kwanyama, one tribe of the Aaumbo people whose homeland extends into Angola. The sampling was done intentionally to look deeply at the experiences of one specific cultural group and to avoid complicating the issue of understanding the meaning of fosterage among different Aaumbo peoples. The one participant that was not Kwanyama was Ndonga, another Aaumbo group.

I have been conducting field work in the North of Namibia since 2000. I first became acquainted with some of the women in the study when I was a Peace Corps volunteer in the North between November 1996 and January 1999. In fact, I resided in the family house of Cece, a participant, for my entire Peace Corps tour. While not a researcher at the time, my involvement in the family life of Cece's family was the impetus for my most recent research into child care practices in Namibia. I have made several return trips to the community, most recently in 2009

The women were sampled through a snowball technique starting with Cece in the rural North and by referrals of other women in the study. Women from a wide age range were interviewed. This was also intentional as the motivations to foster children are complex and often change as women stop having children of their own to foster to others. Participants ranged from 25-67 years of age. Table 1 provides demographic information about each participant. The goal of the sampling was to include a diversity of experiences with fosterage.

I approached all participants and asked them if they would share with me some memories and stories about childhood, specifically, about living away from their biological parents. I explained to the participants that my interest in their childhood stemmed from my own experiences of being adopted in the US, a similar yet different system of raising a child that is not biologically your own. I was accompanied to six of the interviews by an Aaumbo woman who had referred me to the participant. This happened when I was not well acquainted with the women to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in English with excerpts in

Participant	Age when Fostered	Relationship with foster family	Reason (primary arrangement when multiple)	Number of arrangements	Years in Fosterage (out of 18)
Melia	3 months	Relative of paternal grandmother	Namesake, childless woman	1	12
Katarina	6 months	Maternal great aunt	Mother working couldn't afford childcare	2	17
Emelia	1	Maternal grandmother	Young mother	1	17
Silka	1 ½	Non-kin	Mother went into exile due to war	7	13
Cece	3	Maternal grandmother	Help mat. Grandmother pound mahangu	1	15
Mona	5	Maternal aunt	Orphan	2	18
Francina	7	Maternal aunt	Mother died, went to childless woman	1	8
Lina	7	Paternal aunt	Namesake	1	11
Kavenna	7	Maternal grandmother	Education	1	6
Ndapewa	13	Maternal cousin	Wedding gift	1	5
Berta	Young (before school)	Paternal relative	namesake	1	2

Oshiwambo when the women felt it was easier to explain a concept. These excerpts were later translated into English by a native Aaumbo speaker, a student at the Polytechnic College in Windhoek. A core set of questions were gathered that inquired about their experience as children, their relationships with their foster and biological parents, and how these experiences may or may not have influenced their own choices about the care of their children. For example, “What was the very first day and night like after you moved to your new house?” was one of the questions. The interviews lasted on average one and a half to two hours.

Transcripts were then analyzed by myself and a research assistant using qualitative data analysis techniques (Creswell 2007). Coders initially read the transcripts in their entirety in

order to familiarize themselves with the questions and the overall flow and content of the interviews. Both coders then identified units of the text that were pertinent to the central question. Coders met to discuss and resolve discrepancies in their identification of pertinent textual units.

As part of this first step, coders worked independently to label the textual units identified above and collapsed synonymous codes. Coders then discussed their codes and resolved discrepancies. This step was done repeatedly until codes could no longer be collapsed. This iterative process resulted in refinement of codes. The second step involved linking the coded units into broader categories that better capture the phenomenon of interest. In this step, codes identified in the first step were examined together with the intent of looking for underlying themes or broader categories into which the codes might be subsumed. A total of five themes were identified. In the final step, relations among themes were discussed and positioned within a theoretical model. A larger story was developed from the interconnections among themes and compared across interviews based on the women's discussions regarding the relations among those issues. Validation of this final phase was done by searching for confirmation and disconfirmation in the transcripts (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Coders continued discussion and comparison of their procedures through these final steps. I will present three of the themes here.

Life histories are just what they say: a history of a life, chronicled by an individual, not hard data, but memories. In this study I utilized a discursive psychological perspective (Edwards 1997) that treats the accounts not as definitive facts about peoples' lives and past events but places importance on the context of telling the story. The interviews were not only focused on gathering accounts of fostering but also on the consequences of the women's participation in the fostering system. In some cases women were fostered 55 years ago. I am interested in what the women 'did' with living away from their biological parents. The issue here is not to judge whether it was a good or bad experience, or whether the women are 'normal' in their adult attachment patterns, but rather to uncover the texture of how this experience fit into the broader context of their lives.

The Women

I intentionally interviewed women of different ages at different developmental stages of their life and their reproductive careers. This created a richness of themes and many avenues in

which to begin to describe and extrapolate meaning from this group the women. Not only did women remember their own childhoods but the study was able to explore linkages between the women's childhood and their later choices for their own children. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants. Ndapwea, Kavenna, Lina, and Cece (not real names) are all post-menopausal and all were fostered from their biological family between 38-55 years ago. They have subsequently fostered out some of their own children, fostered in their grandchildren as well as additional children. In comparison, Mona and Emelia are in their mid-twenties and fostered as infants only 20-22 years ago.

The age at which these women were fostered varied. Melia, Katarina, Emelia, Mona, Cece and Silka were all fostered as infants or toddlers. The other women were fostered in middle and late childhood. Much is known about the cognitive, social and emotional development of children and one would also expect that the developmental stage in which the foster arrangement happens might affect how one remembers growing up as well as how one processes the emotional implications of leaving one's birth family.

The literature on child fosterage has not explored multiple arrangements for a child. It is often assumed because of the nature of the field work that children are only fostered once and remain in the recipient household. Among the women interviewed, eight of 11 were only in one foster arrangement. However, Katarina and Mona were fostered twice, and Silka was fostered seven times. Remembering across experiences made for extended interviews and often qualifying the memories with phrases like "this isn't always the case" or "it was very different with the next family." Women who had been in more than one foster situation often distinguished among the different arrangements and made comparisons between the households.

The interviews could also be examined according to the kinship relationship the child had to the foster family. Seven women were fostered to the maternal kin; of these women Kavenna, Cece and Emelia were fostered to maternal grandmothers. Three women (Melia, Berta, and Lina) were fostered to paternal relatives. Silka was fostered to non-kin. Some research has pointed to the implication of being fostered in culturally inappropriate ways (Nyambedha Wandibba & Aagaard-Hanse 2003). For example, within a matrilineal decent system like Aaumbos what are the consequences and experiences of people fostered to paternal kin? Finally, the reason that children are fostered varied among the women's accounts. Mona and Francia were fostered because of being orphaned. Lina and Berta were fostered to their namesakes which is a common practice among Aaumbos. Melia was also given to her

namesake who was childless. Ndapewa was given to the family as a wedding gift and Kavenna remembered being fostered to be closer to a school. Katarina and Silka were fostered for economic and political reasons.

Thematic Analysis

The San in Namibia have a saying that other people's children are like dried mucus: useless and a bit disgusting. Among the Aaumbo's however, raising other people's children is a complex social phenomenon. Several motivations exist to explain these foster arrangements. It has been noted in the literature regarding child care in Africa that discipline is imperative (Whiting & Edwards 1998). In fact, it is one of the most important characteristics that a good child would possess. Childcare in Africa has been described as a socially distributed cultural complex (Weisner Bradley & Kilbride 1997). One particular aspect that Weisner notes is that there is little negotiation between child and parent. Goody (1973) also accentuates the absolute obedience that Gonja children display. She notes that she never heard a child speak back to an adult.

In line with past accounts of childrearing in Africa, all the participants explained that as a child you are unable to communicate your treatment to your biological families. If a child chooses to, it often falls on deaf ears. Kavenna acknowledges that "you know, as Africans, we do not listen to our kids." She remembers living with her grandmother who 'treated her like someone she didn't know'. She recalls that she received less food, and didn't have blankets to sleep under while the other children had both food and blankets. She did not tell her biological mother out of fear of her grandmother and fear of the older children in the house.

So when we go for holiday at Christmas I am together with my parents and they treat us nicely and every time we want to talk to our mother and father about our problems, like I have this problem and that problem, I had to keep it inside myself. Even the bad treatment I get from my grandmother I have to keep it strictly to myself.

Keeping it strictly to herself, however, meant the only people she could tell was her biological siblings who were still living in her natal home. She remembers,

when I came back to visit it was only my sister who would listen. We would stay up late and when it was time for me to gather my things and hike back to my grandmothers, you couldn't pull us apart.

Fostering relationships between families, however, were maintained and honored. Silka remembers that the relationship between her foster mother and her biological mother was most important.

Aaumbo children do not have choices. I remember in that year she [biological mother] came for holiday to visit myself and my brother and we were both crying to her because we were hurt and mistreated but she couldn't move us and I remember asking her and begging her to take me to my grandmother's but she couldn't move us and she always said, it is just a few more months and I will come and get you.

There is a common saying that '*children are not people, they are children*'. In Aaumbo tradition if you come to a house and only find that children are home you return and say that you didn't find anyone home. But it is not to say that children are of little value, quite the contrary. A woman without children is looked upon with sadness and it is only the arrival of children that will alleviate the feeling of despair. This tension is found throughout the memories of the women, especially as they move from children themselves to adults bearing and raising their own children.

Fosterage is often thought of as a semi-permanent arrangement (Goody 1973). This is exemplified in the accounts that women tell of running away from or revealing abuse. Silka says, "When I went home and told my mother that they do this to me and they do that to me, my mother tells me 'hush, that is your home. Live with it. Here you are just a visitor.'"

Families trust that children will be raised as they wish under the governance of the new family; however, they do not use children's assessment of their treatment to judge. Katarina explains that "You must trust the family, but you don't have power over it. Even if the child is telling me about the treatment, we are the adults and we do not listen. To adults it is just talk."

The necessity that these women felt to keep their maltreatment a secret might translate into the resiliency and perseverance that many thought was born from fostering arrangement.

Sisters and Brothers over Others: Dissolution and Preservation of Sibling Groups

Talk of siblings dominated women's recollections of childhood. Women placed a large emphasis on the preservation of the relationships between themselves and their biological siblings after being fostered. When fostered children were able to maintain healthy and stable relationships with their biological siblings, the transition into the new family occurred without problems. The direction of this finding, however, is questionable. Often times it was more difficult for siblings to uphold their relationship as a result of the distance placed between them. Some, however, were able to maintain relationships despite the distance between them both physically and psychologically as a result of fosterage.

Cecilia was able to maintain a positive relationship with her biological siblings because she lived in very close proximity to them. Cecilia said that the relationship with her birth siblings was not affected in any way because they were able to see one another each day. They lived only 0.5 km from each other. She says:

We played together. The time we are fetching water we can yell for each other. 'Come on Olivia 'let's go'. The time we go to pick up omauni [fruit] or evanda [spinach] in the bush we are together. We go to church together. And we go to Sunday school together. It was very good.

In addition to the sustained relationship with her birth siblings, Cecilia is also able to note the difference between herself and her biological siblings who did not grow up in the care of her grandparents as she did. She says:

I feel I am lucky being raised by my grandparents because my attitude compared to my brothers and sisters who were raised by their own parents is quite, quite different. I can't say that I am better than them but I have different ideas. I think I am stronger in the mind.

Franscina, though not able to keep consistent contact with her biological siblings because they lived farther apart from one another, remembers staying deeply attached to them from afar. She did have the opportunity to visit on holidays and said that when she stays there that they are still "loving each other, playing and so on." Although all of her other siblings remained with her biological mother, she felt no resentment and still feels close to her siblings.

Katarina who was fostered as an infant notes how her relationship with her siblings is there but lacks the love found in other sibling relationships. She was not able to see them often

growing up and says, “We know each other just by looking at each other but to really love each other like sisters, it is a bit more tough. Regret is what I have about that.”

The complexity of maintaining sibling relationships was also noted. Emelia was fostered to her grandmother in a rural village in the North while her mother schooled in Windhoek. She remembers meeting her sister for the first time when she was 18 years old.

At first it was very difficult. I am oshivele (firstborn) and it is difficult because the one that came after me, I saw her when she was grown up. I wasn't even thinking she is my sister. They said, yeah this is your sister, but it didn't feel like it. I was happy to meet her but it didn't feel like she was my sister.

Emelia is now fostering this sister's 1 year old baby and believes her sister asked her so they can also become closer, thus strengthening a sibling relationship that was weakened in fosterage. Lina remembers how she was separated from her family for 11 years and finally reunited with them at age 18; after having a baby of her own. She returned home to the North and recalls approaching her homestead.

When I came up to the gate I see someone from the house fetching water. When I go there I said, ‘hello’. She [my biological sister] just looked at me and threw the pale and ran away to home. My sister, the one born after me, was scared of me.

After the eleven years that had passed, her sister's reaction did not surprise her. Lina questioned if that was the house that she use to know as home or if her memory had faded.

But then I saw my father, and the whole house is coming out. We are all crying. My brother and sisters say ‘we don't know you, we just hear about you and when you came I was wondering, ‘who is this girl?’

Morals, and Maladies: The Loss and Gain of Fosterage

What is gained by foster arrangements in the eyes of the women fostered? This study as well as past research has well documented the reasons and predictors of fostering from an adult perspective (Brown 2009; Vandermesch 2002). Women, however, seemed to characterize what they personally gained by being fostered. Cece gained a sense of cohesion and specialness. She was fostered to her grandmother's house which was full of people. She remembers,

For grand, grand children, I was the only one. Memekulu [great grandmother] was alive. And I was feeling very special. Because we have a lot of aunties looking after me and my grandparents and god children. The house was so, so full of people but you didn't even know who was biological and who was not. I felt like we were all brothers and sisters. Very much it was wonderful.

Cece credits her moral strength and development to being fostered to her grandparents.

I think about me myself. I am lucky when I compare my attitude to that of my brothers and sisters who were raised by my parents. It is quite, quite different. I can't say I am better but I have different ideas. I do think I am stronger in mind. It is true they are talented but poor in mind.

Many women reported that children suffer when not living with their biological parents. Women also hoped for their children to learn the lessons that fostering teaches. While Cece felt she did not suffer in her arrangement, for Ndapewa suffering was closely linked to moral development and a sense that suffering made you stronger. Ndapewa was fostered to maternal kin and remembers,

My mother died earlier so I got that love but not too much let me say that if you are staying longer with your mother then you have to learn more, how to suffer, how to survive. That is what I used to tell my kids "don't think you will always stay with your biological parents.

Fosterage affords parents a culturally appropriate outlet to prepare children for the death of a parent or to acquire the emotional survival skills they need to face loss. Ndapewa reflects on her own parenting by saying:

And I think it is good to not treat kids like more special because if you pass away they will suffer, always thinking "if only my mother was around." You can give them food as they wish but they have to work and they have to learn how to live in peace. It is how it was for me. I learned a lot about the world but not squeaky clean with real dirt and pain.

Loss constituted a major theme in women's stories but personal loss took on many facets. Silka spoke poignantly about her loss of trust in relationships. She had been fostered in 7 different arrangements during the war and reflects on her own relationships as an adult by saying,

It really affects my relationships now. I mean I was talking to a friend who was also fostered in the way I was and we are not in healthy relationships. It has affected my trust. You trust and then you leave and it is out of your control as a child. What I have noticed is that lots of kids that came from exile are very unstable emotionally.

As children, the women found themselves at the mercy of their foster families' good will as they were the liaisons between themselves and their biological family. While some women maintained open relationships with their family, Lina lost all communication with her family in the North. She remembers "my namesake didn't want me to go home and visit my mother. Even I missed my family, my sister, my father but I was just stuck crying as a 9 year old, but nothing. She didn't even let me communicate with my oldest brothers who were in Windhoek with me." Both Lina and Katarina believe their foster families discouraged communication to hide their harsh treatment and child labor practices.

Cece spoke of loss on the other side of the familial coin. She has very warm loving memories of her experience being fostered to her grandmother and the fair treatment she received, however, when returning to her biological home, she received harsh treatment from her mother. "My mother was cruel. She always complained about me and not my brothers and sisters. When I came to the house she thought everything I was doing was wrong. Sometimes when I was to visit for a week, I could only last two days."

Discussion

The practice of child fosterage binds and strengthens families through socially distributed care and resource sharing (Brown 2011) but to view the practice alone does not fully capture the ecology of African family life. Child fosterage is one practice among many in the cultural complex of socially distributed caregiving (Weisner Bradley & Kilbride 1997). Through his research on sibling care giving in Kenya, Thomas Weisner delineates the core characteristics of socially distributed child care in terms of a cultural complex—a set of loosely interwoven ecological circumstances, beliefs and practices that coexist and contribute to one another. Socially distributed child care includes but is not limited to: (1) Child caretaking often occurs as a part of indirect chains of support in which one child assists another, who assists another. Support is not always immediate and not necessarily organized around exclusive relationships between parent and child. (2) Children look to other children for support as much or more than they look to adults. (3) Mothers provide support and

nurturance to children as much by securing that others will support their children as by supporting their children directly. Fostering and other forms of child sharing are common. (4) Care often occurs in the context of other domestic work. (5) Aggression, teasing, and dominance coincide with nurturance and support and come from the same people. Dominance increases with age.

The findings of this study reveal a richer understanding of the psychological realities of the tenets of socially distributed care. As Weisner delineates, in African families, “Elaborate verbal exchanges and question-framed discourse rarely accompany support and nurturance for children. Verbal bargaining and negotiations over rights, choices and privileges between the caretaker and child are infrequent (24).” Women remembered their lack of voice and choice in negotiating fosterage situations. Another tenet of socially distributed care is that “children look to other children for support as much or more than they look to adults (24)”. The preservation of sibling groups was an emotionally protective factor for the participants as proximity and access to siblings was remembered fondly.

A set of complex memories of caregiver’s motivations, painful and joyful interactions with both biological and fostered families, and a sense of meaning making about how the experience of fostering fit with their current sense of self emerged from the study. The morals and maladies of fosterage were interwoven; linked together is the idiom that ‘suffering makes you stronger’. Perseverance was achieved through enduring living without your birth parents. This has not changed in a generation and many of the women believed it would be best for their children to also learn to live without their mother.

But does this study help clear up any of the disparate findings? Women spoke of painful memories. Others spoke of their childhood with fond recollections of care and trust. Most spoke about a mix of the two but attributed painful memories to being away from siblings and birth parents. To provide context to the memories of these women it is important to not overlook what we know about African child rearing. Africans are concerned with the welfare of their children. The mere practice of child fosterage does not challenge that fact. Adults are doing what they believe to be appropriate for their children both by keeping with traditions and adapting to the changes that education and modernity have brought. I do not know what the outcomes would have been for these women had they not been fostered as children and I did not interview eleven women who were raised by their biological parents. Perhaps they would have stories of childhood dissatisfaction similar to the women in the study.

The pragmatic debate in much of the child fosterage literature centers on whether the family in sub-Saharan Africa is past the tipping point of providing good care through indigenous systems of care (i.e. fosterage). This has been measured by looking at educational outcomes (Anderson 2005; Brown 2009), household expenditures (Anderson 2005) access to health services (Bledsoe Ewbank & Isiugo-Abanihe, 1988) child labor (Verhoff & Morelli 2008) and infant death (Oppong & Bleek 1975). But the texture and quality of the experiences that ultimately lead to disparate treatment of children has not been explored. Fosterage is embedded within a web of other socially distributed practices that in its entirety need to be better understood in order to address the needs of children in sub-Saharan Africa.

This study helps to question the logic of western ideas of child rearing and attachment and universally appropriate. John Bowlby (1971) and other scholars of early childhood theorized that it is the quality of our relationships and the attachments we form that predict later psychological health. We know that children in child fosterage are taken from their primary attachments and placed in the home of another caregiver. Primary attachments are often broken and new attachments are hopefully formed. The experience of foster children has elucidated that sibling relationships, not just maternal, are often the one relationship that remains consistent and crucial to their psychological well-being while living away from their biological parents. Remembering siblings in the practice of fosterage is an important piece to the puzzle of how African families are maintaining care for over 10 million orphans through this system of fosterage (Sewpaul 2001). By understanding how fosterage is experienced by Aaumbo women and how it fits into the ecological niche of raising children to survive and thrive in Africa one truly extends hegemonic western views of development.

References

- Anderson, Kermyt. 2005. "Relatedness and investment in children in South Africa." *Human Nature* 16(1):1-31.
- Bledsoe, Carolyn. 1990. "The Politics of Children: Fosterage and Social Management of Fertility among the Mende of Sierra Leone." In *Births and Power: Social Change and the Politics of Reproduction*, ed. W.P. Handwerker, 81-100. Boulder Co: Westview Press.
- Bledsoe, Carolyn. and A. Brandon 1992. "Child fosterage and child morality in sub-Saharan Africa: Some preliminary questions and answers." In *Mortality and society in sub-Saharan Africa*, eds. E. Vande Walle, G. Pison, & M. Sala-Diankanda, 279-302. Oxford: Claredon Press.
- Bledsoe, Carolyn, D. Ewban & Uche Isiugo-Abanihe, U. 1988. "The effect of child fostering on feeding practices and access to health services in Sierra Leone." *Social Science & Medicine* 27(6):627-636.
- Bowie, Fione. 2004. *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Adoption*. London: Routledge.
- Bowlby, John. 1971. *Attachment*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Brown, Jill. 2007. Child Fosterage and Developmental Outcomes of Children in Namibia, Southern Africa: Implications of Gender and Kinship. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska.
- Brown, Jill. 2009. "Child fosterage and the developmental markers of Aaumbo children in Namibia: A look at gender and kinship." *Childhood in Africa: An interdisciplinary journal*, 1: 4-10.
- Brown, Jill 2011. "Child fostering chains among Owambo families in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37: 155-176.
- Caldwell, John. 1997. "The impact of the African AIDS epidemic." *Health Transition Review* 7(2): 169-188.
- Creswell, John. 2007 *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- CIA Factbook 2006 Namibia: The world factbook. Retrieved: May 15, 2007, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>.

- W. Clarence-Smith and Richard Moorsom. 1975. "Underdevelopment and Class Formation in Ovamboland 1845-1915." *Journal of African History* 16: 35-46.
- Goody, Ester. 1973. *Contexts of kinship: An essay in the family sociology of the Gonja of northern Ghana*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Goody, Ester. 1982. *Parenthood and social reproduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hayes, Patricia. 1998. *Namibia under South African rule: mobility and containment 1915-1946*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Isiugo-Abanihe, Uche 1985. "Child fosterage in West Africa." *Population and Development Review* 11(1): 53-73.
- Isiugo-Abanihe, Uche 1991. "Parenthood in Sub-Saharan Africa: Child fostering and its Relationship with Fertility." In *"The onset of fertility transition in Sub-Saharan Africa."* eds. T. Locoh. and V. 163-174. Hertrich. Belgium: Derouaux Ordina Editions.
- Lebert, Joanne 2005. "Inheritance practices and property rights in the Ohangwena region. In *The meaning of inheritance: Perspectives from Namibia*", ed. Robert Gordon. 71-94 Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Center.
- Madhavan, Sangeetha. "Fosterage Patterns in the Age of AIDS: Continuity and Change". *Social Science & Medicine*, 58: 443-454.
- Nyambedha, Erich, Simiyu Wandibba & J. Aagaard-Hanse. 2003 " Changing patterns of orphan care due to the HIV epidemic in western Kenya." *Social Science & Medicine* 57: 301-311.
- Oni, Jacob 1995. "Fostered children perception of their health care and illness treatment in Ekiti Yoruba households, Nigeria." *Health Transitions Review* 5(1):21-34.
- Oppong, Christine and Wolk Bleek. (1975). Ecomonic Models and Having Children: Some Evidence from Kwahu, Ghana. Africa: *Journal of the International Africa Institute* 52(4):15-33.
- Payne-Price, Arvilla. 1981. "Etic variations on fosterage and adoption." *Anthropological Quarterly* 54(3): 134-145.
- Pennington, Renee. 1991. "Child fostering as a reproductive strategy among southern African pastoralist." *Ethology and Sociobiology* 12(2): 83-104.

Salokoski, Marjorie. 1998. "An analysis of the Big-Bird Ritual and its relation to the consolidation of kingship during the mid-1800s in the Aaumbo societies of northern Namibia." Working paper.

Sewpaul, Vishanthie. 2001. "Models of intervention for children in difficult circumstances in South Africa." *Child Welfare* (5):571-586.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, John. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

UNICEF 2007 *Children in the Brink, 2007: A joint report of new orphan estimates and a framework for action*. Washington, DC: TvT Associates.

Vandermeersch, Celine. 2002. "Child fostering under six in Senegal in 1992-1993." *Population*, 57(4/5): 659-685.

Verhoff, Heidi and Gilda Morelli. 2007 "A child is a child": Fostering experiences in Northwestern Cameroon." *Ethos* 35(2): 33-64.

Weisner, Thomas, Candice Bradley, and Philip Kilbride. 1997. *African families and the crisis of social change*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Whiting, Beatrice and Carolyn Edwards. 1988. *Children of different worlds: The formation of social behavior*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

.

Globalization and African Studies: The Case for Pluralization

Baba G. Jallow

ABSTRACT

This paper examines some of the positions taken by area studies scholars on the question of globalization and its relationships and relevance to the production of knowledge about Africa. It argues for a plurality of globalizations rather than a single globalization more or less taken to be synonymous with westernization and the movement of things from the North to the South. As a descriptive term for the movement of things, globalization represents multi-directional flows that contribute to the emergence of the “global village.”

African studies scholars have argued that globalization, like its many Eurocentric cousins, is an ideology “subject to contingency and contestation” (Zeleza 2003). It is a historical and social construct that “remains subject to countervailing social forces and struggles” whose “historical and ideological registers” and whose links with Africa must be differentiated (Zeleza 2003). Neither the strengths and rapacities of globalization nor the weaknesses and resistances of its supposed victims should be underestimated. Africanists are urged to produce “analyses that are not disabling, that do not stifle our rationality and imaginations” and that eschews “the totalizing pretensions and presentist periodization of globalization discourses” Zeleza likens globalization’s “explanatory vision” to “a jetliner high in the clouds” from which “spatialities and temporalities on the ground are collapsed into fuzzy fragments and stripped of their complexities and specificities” (2003: vi).

This article argues that from a Southern studies perspective, it is just as important to globalize Africa as to Africanize globalization. Africanists should challenge and contest globalization both as an intellectual concept and an ideological construct to the extent that it purports to describe concrete conditions and prescribe particular futures. Its triumphalist pretensions should be challenged, and its inevitability contested because it “reinforces global economic inequalities, political disenfranchisement, and environmental degradation” (Zeleza 2003:1). For some scholars, “globalization is seen as a destructive phenomenon and a coercive ideology from the North that, despite its novelties, is only slightly different from

previous forms and phases of capitalist imperialism” (Zezeza 2003: 8). Globalization “is first and foremost a cultural project and then an economic and political one . . . which has meant structural adjustment programs which have derailed post-independence efforts and led to ‘the third colonial occupation’ distinguished by the downsizing of the postcolonial state and downgrading of democracy” (Zezeza 2003: 7).¹ It has also been suggested that globalization is yet another manifestation of the perennial “insufferable arrogance of the North to conflate its own model of society with the ideal state of being. . . it is the hierarchization of the world economically, politically, and culturally – and the crystallization of a domination constituted essentially by economic power” (Ake, quoted in Zezeza 2003: 9). For Africa, globalization “represents an old problem in new contexts: the overriding hegemony of northern processes, practices, and perspectives” that attempt to provincialize the non-western world and write non-western histories as merely transitional to modernity, “as histories of absence, of lack, of becoming” (Zezeza 2003: 11).

For some scholars, humanities and social science research in the United States, including African studies, is being challenged and eroded by “a new academic globalism” which threatens to “restrict critical examination of wider globalist ideologies, leaving more room for U.S. policy that is harmful to Africa” (Lowe 1997: 297). Lowe suggests that the positions of Africanist scholars like Robert Bates, Ron Kassimir, Pearl Robinson, Priscilla Stone and Jane Guyer that African Studies are too particularistic and insufficiently scientific and therefore cite the need for creative synergy and a shift towards globalism, while forceful and wise, may lead African studies scholars “to accept some changes as inevitable when we should instead fight to prevent or reshape them” (Lowe 1997: 298). While locally grounded and historically situated analyses are a source of strength in African studies, it is not true that Africanist research has been oblivious to global processes and relationships. On the contrary, “most Africa scholarship in the United States since the 1950s has been conducted under the rubric of globalizing frames of reference, including modernization theory, the African diaspora, articulation of modes of production, structural adjustment, theories of globalizing markets and democratization, and theories of postcoloniality,” through which such issues as colonialism, decolonization, state formation and many other global phenomena have been addressed (Lowe 1997: 299).

¹ From this author’s perspective, globalization could only marginally be blamed for “the downgrading of democracy in Africa.” We must look primarily to the post-colonial state, and especially to failure by the African state to transform its people into a democracy-friendly society.

For Africanists, therefore, the problem is not a lack of global theory or perspective. It is the need to fight off “the reductionist and dehumanizing tendencies of global theory, which have repeatedly reenacted the deep historical propensity of ‘Western’ science and high culture to make flattened, dehumanized portrayals of Africans and African humaneness” (Lowe 1997: 299). The stereotype of the savage African still maintains an unhealthy presence in western societies. And the fact that U.S Africa scholars are centered in the North creates a problem of connection with the subjects of their research and poses the danger of “being sucked so far into the institutional criteria of the career at home as to lose sight of what justifies the effort” (Lowe 1997: 299). One can only hope that this does not happen among the many Western Africanists poring over summer archives in Accra and Dakar, among many other places.

Africanizing Globalization

The case has been made for the Africanization of globalization with the caveat that “how African things become new African things, and what African people are doing to make it all happen” must also be taken into consideration (Lowe 1997: 302). Zeleza and Lowe contend that globalization is simply a new name for an old phenomenon. A neo-capitalist, neocolonial ideology that exalts “market forces as all-knowing and all-beneficent” and “dogmatically and anti-intellectually rejects all historical and contemporary evidence that untrammelled market forces are humanly, socially, and ecologically destructive as well as economically unstable”; and that promotes “an imperialism of free trade” almost identical to that propagated by Britain during the heydays of British empire (Lowe 1997: 303-304). They thus cite the need to resist the temptation “simply to go along to get along.” Africanists must engage “the challenges of the new global order by pursuing African Studies within a critical Global Studies” where “local and regional orientations” are “the place on which to put the fulcrum for our lever” (Lowe 1997: 305).

Carefully weighted, many proponents of the Africanization of globalization tend to reinforce the very claims of globalization they oppose. Most seem not to critically question the usefulness of globalization as an analytical category. And just like globalization, most tend to erase important historical, spatial, cultural, and epistemological specificities and processes that constitute key features of global society. Africanizing globalization assumes connections and continuities between past processes and present realities that simplify the

complex nature of the world historical record; and that grants legitimacy to Euro-centric configurations of contested geopolitical formations such as the nation-state.

The call for an Africanization of globalization pits a geopolitical formation – Africa, against an amorphous mass of mobility and process – Globalization. We may think of globalizing Africa, Asia, Europe, America, or any region or area of the world; or we may think Africanizing Europe or Asia, or America. But it is difficult to think how globalization can be Africanized or Asianized. By arguing for the “areanization” of globalization, scholars assume a defensive position that is practically untenable. They accept the proposition that there is only one single globalization, whose source is the West, with the Rest, as usual, on the receiving end of the process.

The case for a synergy

Pearl Robinson assumes a position that is slightly opposed to the kind of Africanist discourse on globalization advocated by Zeleza and Lowe. She argues that an obvious synergy exists between the local and the global in the study of Africa that should be promoted through the joint efforts of African scholars on the continent and Africanist scholars in the North, particularly the United States. Robinson suggests the need to recognize that African studies started in historically black American colleges and universities long before the onset of the cold war. According to Robinson, the cold war paradigm has lost its power to explain global politics. Granted that funding priorities associated with the cold war for African and other area studies have sharply declined in the United States, the synergy between local and global spheres of knowledge production remain relevant. Robinson warns against the “widespread proclivity to devalue area studies as a narrow, parochial, and often atheoretical enterprise” (1997: 170). That kind of thinking, she argues, should be stood on its head “by calling attention to an eclectic mix of local/global linkages” that emphasize engagement rather than “talking past one another” (Robinson 1997: 170). The assumed dichotomy between area studies and global studies and the corresponding assumption that the triumph of global studies means the death of area studies has no basis in fact. The two are not mutually exclusive and could very well collaborate in the production of useful knowledge about Africa.

To buttress her arguments Robinson cites two projects in which she was directly involved as director of the International Relations Program at Tufts University and chair of the Joint

Committee on African Studies of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) from 1994. A collaborative effort between her program at Tufts, the SSRC, the ACLS, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University Abdou Moumouni in Niamey, the OAU's (now AU) Center for Research in Oral Tradition and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) culminated in the convening of a conference in the Nigerien capital Niamey. The Niamey conference took place just four months after Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara "seized power in a coup d'état that was the first to topple a democratically elected African president in the post-Cold War era" (1997: 172). The Niamey conference, Robinson argues, was highly successful because it "culminated in a succession of local/global linkages that reached out to the Nigerien academic community, drew them into the SSRC's orbit, supported their budding efforts at institutional development, and led to an election study that is serving as the genesis of a larger CODESRIA project on electoral campaigns" in Africa (1997: 173).

Robinson's second example of a collaborative venture to demonstrate the synergy between the local and the global in the study of Africa was a "Jazz and International Relations" conference launched from Tufts University with exclusively U.S.-based participants. According to Robinson, as a global phenomenon jazz, "an African American music born of resistance and struggle . . . constitutes a unique realm of cross-cultural creativity that transcends the boundaries of race and place to meld with the landscapes of group identity around the world (1997: 174). Robinson reports that "scholars of diverse backgrounds" (who by the way did not include a single African) "were invited to Tufts to explore the role of jazz in world events, its reception in disparate ethnoscaples, and its contribution to globalizing cultural currents that reach both within and beyond the state" (1997: 174). For Robinson therefore, the future of African studies lies in exploring synergisms, making connections, and venturing into somewhat different terrain: "Collaboration with partner institutions in Africa, research that addresses globalization processes from below, reconfiguration of the landscape to include African diaspora communities" she concludes, "are just a few of the possibilities that suggest a new vision of African studies" (1997: 175).

It could be argued that Robinson, like Zeleza and Lowe, proceeds from the premise that globalization is real and is taking place now. The question is not whether globalization is in fact merely a fad, whether its claims to universality are authentic, or whether the scholars and institutions she reaches out to in Africa share views on the currency of globalization.

Working as they do from institutional frameworks concerned with how area studies may profitably be incorporated into a new international studies, some scholars are understandably concerned with citing synergies and points of mutuality between the global and the local. This confirms the corporate position that things might be worked out to salvage at least fragments of the edifice of area studies being consumed by the new internationalism. They therefore insist that there was never a dichotomy between area and global studies, and that all the noise about the death of area studies is meaningless. Such a line of argument seems to validate the very homogenizing tendencies of globalization that it implicitly rejects in affirming the existence of particular areas of study.

More seriously perhaps, the fact that the Niamey conference took place only four months after Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara overthrew an elected government in Niger lent legitimacy to one of the most intractable problems faced by Africans. It raises the question as to just how serious Africanist scholars take the plight of the people of Niger, and of Africa if they could hold such a conference within four months of a military coup in Niger. Promoting international networking among Africanist scholars in Africa and the diaspora is undeniably a valuable exercise. Doing so in ways that compound the problems of the African people smacks of surprising insensitivity. Suspending or relocating the conference would have been a powerful message against military coups, even though sad to say, they are often the only hope for any change of power.

Robinson's second collaborative venture organized around jazz music also raises questions. In the first place, it was odd that for a conference dealing with music rooted in African origins, none of the major participants were African. One of the conference participants discussed not how African American musicians acquire musical skills using African role models, but "how African musicians acquire musical skills using African American role models" (Robinson 1997: 175). This statement simply stands reality on its head. It merely represents the usual compulsive proclivity to decenter and place Africa on the receiving end of whatever there is to share.

De-Marginalizing Africa

The issue of Africa's marginality in the so-called new global order has also received considerable attention among Africanists. Some have argued that contrary to popular claims, Africa or its representations loom large in the western imagination. Considered "a degenerate

entity” on one hand, Africa represents “a source of regeneration” for the West on the other (Amselle 2003: 1). While the shadow of “the ancient curse of Noah” magnifies the image of Africa as a place of material and intellectual depravity, this same image of Africa as “primitive” and “feline” is crucial to the “charity business” in the West, “an enterprise that relies on mobilizing and instilling guilt in large portions of the European and North American population.” Poverty in Africa results from the continent’s marginalization from the world economy, and not from any Biblical curse or “culturized” corruption they argue. State corruption exists as much in Europe as it does in Africa and scholars should pay heed “to the transcultural nature of the forms of appropriation and redistribution of resources” that are not unique to Africa. Similarly, the idea of a tribal Africa should be placed alongside the idea of a tribal Europe. If tribalism caused genocide in Rwanda, it caused genocide in Nazi Germany and Bosnia (Amselle 2003: 1).

But in contrast to Africa’s image as a degenerate continent is an image of Africa as “a fountain of youth and a source of regeneration for all of humanity” (Amselle 2003: 1). This combination of decadence and renewal causes the “delicious fright” with which Europeans regard Africa, whose libidinal and virile image is in direct contradistinction to the image of Europe “as a sterilized, anemic, disembodied continent.” The African’s warm personality is in direct contrast to the westerner’s and westernized African’s “cold interactions” (Amselle 2003: 6-7). Unlike Europe, where Nietzsche had long declared God dead and Christ is now little more than a museum piece, Africa is a place of spiritual vitality where it is impossible to draw a line between the physical and the spiritual worlds. Africa’s energy, virility, and masculinity are a source of awe and inspiration for a debilitated Europe. “As against an emasculated, deodorized Europe, Africa stands out as deliciously nauseating, peopled with Leopard-men who devour body and soul” (Amselle 2003: 8). The French writer Michel Houellebecq is reported as writing that “we (Europeans) envy and admire the Negroes because we wish to follow their example and become animals again, animals endowed with a large dick and a small reptilian brain” (Amselle 2003: 12). It is this persistent image of the African as a savage animal that threatens Europe, partly explains western racism and eugenics, and accounts for “governmental forms of surveillance and continuous tracking . . . a repressive apparatus destined to tame a reptilian libido welling up from the depths of the past” (Amselle 2003: 13). One can only wonder if Amselle is not himself victim to the tempting tendency to romanticize Africa as a continent of excessive virility exceptional in its animalistic difference from Europe.

It is an interesting paradox that the concept of globalization itself complicates the idea of marginality. The ubiquity of globalization precludes the possibility of exclusion. The division of the world into distinct geopolitical units is challenged by an “unprecedented volume of flows of capital, people, commodities, microbes, cultural images, technologies, religious and political ideologies, weapons, drugs, and pollution – all cutting across political and cultural borders” (Kassimir 1997: 155). According to Kassimir, some “facile constructions” of the phenomenon assume “that globalization is primarily a homogenizing process, producing isomorphism among local economies, polities, societies, and cultures” and “that the active agent of this process is an omniscient center imposing itself on a passive periphery” (1997: 155). The assumption of peripheral passivity suggests an absence of agency that does not measure up to the realities of life in the South.

The case for pluralization

Contrary to homogenizing constructions of the kind discussed above, globalization may be read as a multi-way process in which the universal local acts on the global even as the global acts upon the universal local. It is this mutually constitutive approach to global knowledges and phenomena that the SSRC sought to promote in its new program in the late nineties. The SSRC’s position was that scholarly innovation requires “a comparative perspective and attention to transnational flows” and that “both global knowledge and local knowledge are necessary for contemporary scholarship” (Kassimir 1997: 156). The SSRC’s new International Dissertation Research Fellowship emphasizes that while area-based knowledge is rooted in local specificities, it must be represented “in ways open to translocal interconnections and comparisons” even as translocal interconnections and comparisons must be represented in ways open to area-based knowledge (Kassimir 1997: 157).

Both Amselle and Kassimir propose that Africa holds a complex position in the global system. Marginal in one sense, it remains central to how the global system constitutes itself, “whether as a harbinger of doom . . . the moral focus of humanitarian concerns; a laboratory for peace-keeping, epidemiological, and environmental interventions; or the source of pride and commitment for diaspora communities” or even as the power behind debates on migration and multiculturalism (Kassimir 1997: 157). For this reason, among others, Africa remains relevant to the SSRC’s agenda for knowledge production. This explains why after the decommissioning of the Joint Area Studies Committees after the Cold War, the SSRC

moved to create the Regional Advisory Panels and Collaborative Research Networks which seek to nurture “an international scholarly community whose members can learn from each others’ perspectives and experiences” including formerly excluded Africanists in Japan and India, so as to effectively “engage issues of international capacity building and research infrastructure more systematically than in the past” (Kassimir 1997: 159). According to Kassimir, the SSRC was aware that African studies is contested from within and that “much work is needed on all sides to create an equitable and fully international conversation about the substance of research on Africa and the way it is carried out” (1997: 160).

Some scholars seem to be faced with the difficult task of both acknowledging the continued relevance of Africa and African studies while justifying the SSRC’s agenda for the internationalization of area studies. Creating “an equitable and fully international conversation about the substance of research on Africa” will require that the autonomy of African studies is not diminished, that adequate funding is available to those who work on Africa, and that research agendas on Africa are driven by scholarly interests and academic relevance, not by deterministic institutional policies. Of course, all this can only happen in a perfect world. Perhaps in the realm of ideas at least, one may safely hope for that perfect world.

Studies on spatiality in a global world demonstrate how area studies are criticized for their “pervasive cultural essentialism” (Jackson 2003: 1). While post-structuralist theories tend to ignore the significance of spatiality and difference, “field research continues to reveal the persistence of fundamental forms of cultural difference under globalization” (Jackson 2003: 2). Contrary to poststructuralist claims, globalization does not entail cultural or intellectual hegemony and spatiality remains a domain of theoretically significant cultural and discursive differences. While we inhabit an increasingly globalized world, we must take into serious consideration the significant issues of locality and difference that exist in more or less bounded spaces. Studies or approaches that neglect or deny “the theoretical significance of geographically delimited cultural and discursive difference” risk falling hostage to “hegemonic accounts of global convergence and totalizing cultural encompassment” (Jackson 2003: 2). “Notions of locality and local cultural-discursive difference remain important because the systematic inequalities reproduced by globalization continue to have an intensely spatial character” (Jackson 2003: 21). One may add to this thesis that every discourse is spatially and temporally located. Proponents of globalization and the erasure of difference speak from particular locations that stand to benefit in one way or another from such

approaches to knowledge production. Similarly, those who seek to “provincialize Europe” and “areanize” globalization speak from locations that they wish were granted equal centrality within the knowledge production enterprise.

In their contributions to Neil Waters’ *Beyond the Area Studies Wars*, John Agnew, Ravi Palat and Ian Barrow argue for a multilayered, multidisciplinary approach to area and international studies that would “establish a balance between the particular and the generalizable, the local and the global, empirical evidence and theory” (Palat 2000: 70). The contributors to this volume argue that a focus on globalization tends to obscure or erase real differences between cultures, languages, peoples, places and identities that nevertheless continue to vigorously assert themselves against homogenizing tendencies. In “Fragmented Visions”, Palat links the origin of area studies to the rise of American market hegemony and ideological warfare in the post-World War Two era. He shows how the dwindling of U.S. strategic interests in many parts of the post-Cold War world threatens to erase differences between the specific and the general, the local and the global. At the same time, Palat argues, the “divisioning” or regional segmentation of the world into areas of study after 1945 was neither obvious nor natural because “it is not the inert physical features of cartography but the activities of human beings that structure regions as coherent units of analysis” (2000: 70). While too narrow a focus on differences and specificities might lead to intellectual parochialism, a blind generalization and “exoticization of non-western cultures inhibits a study of these experiences as essentially contested, historically contingent processes” (Palat 2000: 86-87). Palat suggests that the limitations and contradictions of and between area and international studies may be overcome “only if we can transcend the nineteenth-century fragmentation of knowledge into discreet disciplinary tributaries and reconceptualize our analytical categories in world-relational terms” (Palat 2000: 70).

Like Palat, Agnew warns against the dangers of obscuring cultural and political difference in favor of a predictable sameness posed by globalization and the new international studies as well as the Manichean view of constructionism versus realism which often breaks down in actual research and teaching. The importance of the global or international is “neither the dominant scale of world politics” as assumed by realist accounts, nor “purely an invention of textual authority” as assumed by constructionists (2000: 152). “The very intellectual basis to international studies itself,” he suggests, “requires attention to the historical-geographical conditions and understandings that make it possible and perhaps, as under current conditions of globalization, call its sufficiency into question altogether” (2000: 152).

Interrogating the question of agency in the New World History, Barrow argues that the discipline of history itself is grounded in area studies. However, in the post-Cold War world, there is a noticeable effort on the part of world history to swallow area-specific histories, a trend that threatens to obliterate distinctions and cultural differences. The mistrust and hostility between world history and area specific histories are needless because both approaches share a belief in the human and institutional capacity for change and adaptation (Agnew 2000: 191-192). At the same time, world historians' and area studies scholars' tendency "to measure the significance of change in terms of the alteration of the constituent elements" rather than "in terms of how people themselves manipulate economic, political, or social conditions" lead to their creation of disembodied agents rather than coherent historical knowledge and or theory (Agnew 2000: 208). Barrow suggests that an alternative way forward is the construction of "a complex agency located in people and recognized as being amenable to reification" that might "enable world and area studies historians to speak a more common language" and allow them "to work beyond categorical boundaries and to create new histories of the world and its areas" (Agnew 2000: 208-209).

But asserting the relevance of the local and the specific in the face of the threatening monster of global discourse is probably only the beginning of the end of the area studies wars. Sharing beliefs in human and institutional capacities for change and adaptation is one thing; being actually willing and able to bring about change and adaptation in the way we carry out the production and dissemination of knowledge is quite another. It is well and good to cite the need to work beyond categorical imperatives and create new people-based histories of the world and its peoples. But at the risk of sounding needlessly pessimistic, there is always the question of interest and relevance to those who hold the purse strings to research funding. The problem of the ubiquitous institutional framework within which scholars must maneuver need to be practically addressed. How this can be done is anybody's and nobody's guess.

It is my contention that as a description of the movement of ideas and artifacts in the world, globalization should be pluralized. We should be talking of globalizations, rather than globalization because ideas and artifacts from all parts of the world move into and reside in all other parts of the world. Africanist scholars should revisit the world historical record and identify the many ways in which things African have been globalized over the centuries.

There was the globalization of African labor during the slave trades which led to the growth of many African Diasporas in all parts of the world.²

There was the globalization of African raw materials during the so-called legitimate trade and during the era of formal colonialism. There was the globalization of African military capital during the first and second world wars. And there was the globalization of African cultural artifacts – wood carvings, bronze and golden statues, etc. - that today represent some of the most priced displays in western museums. With romantic fervor, Edward Scobie reports that Artemis, the Greek goddess of chastity was black and that the Roman Catholic Church has had three black Popes (Scobie 1994). Today, there is the globalization of African intellectual capital in the form of books written by African scholars that are widely used in the western academy. The works of African writers and scholars such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Mariama Ba, Wole Soyinka, Alex La Guma among many others are priced items on African studies syllabi around the world. Hundreds of African professors teach and conduct research in the greatest western universities and research centers. Former Senegalese president Leopold Senghor sat on the French Academy. Today, a man partly of African descent is president of the United States. In any country in the western world, shops and boutiques selling African products and services such as hair braiding could be found. The same processes of dispersal can be discerned regarding all non-western parts of the world. Most tellingly, key western domestic and foreign policy decisions are today determined by perceived terrorist threats and oil supplies from the Middle East and Africa. A disruption in oil production in Saudi Arabia or Nigeria might raise the price of oil in Omaha, Nebraska. As far as globalization in African studies is concerned then, there is much to commend a pluralizing approach: the dispersal of socio-economic and cultural artifacts represented by globalization flows to and from all parts of the world.

Conclusion

Three main approaches seem to exist for the study of globalization in Africanist scholarship. One view holds that globalization needs to be Africanized. Another view contends that the perceived dichotomy between global and area studies are an illusion and that an approach that privileges synergy should be adopted. These approaches, however, tend to commit the same crime of essentialization for which they criticize much globalization discourse. Any discourse

² It is tempting to talk merely of the Atlantic Slave Trade. There were also the Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean slave trades that planted African Diasporas in Asia, the Middle East and parts of Europe.

on globalization that does not critically examine the basic assumptions of the term as an analytical category runs the risk of circularity. It takes globalization as a generally acceptable given that might be dressed in different garbs under different conditions, but that nevertheless points unfailingly to a unidirectional movement of ideas and artifacts from North to South. Critically examined however, it could be hardly doubted that ideas and artifacts move from all parts of the world to all other parts of the world. Just as “foreign” ideas and artifacts are found in the South, so are “foreign” ideas and artifacts found in the North. This is true of both intra-south and intra-north spatialities. Thus, globalization might more usefully be studied as a diverse mass of constant multi-directional mobility of ideas and artifacts than the unidirectional movement of things from North to South generally associated with the term.

References

- Agnew, John. "Disputing the Nature of the International" in Neil Waters ed., *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000.
- Amselle, Jean-Loup. "Africa a Theme(s) Park", *Anthropoetics* 9, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003).
- Jackson, Peter A. "Space, theory and hegemony: the dual crisis of Asian area studies and cultural studies." *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 18.1 (April 2003).
- Kassimir, Ron. "The internalization of African studies: a view from the SSRC." *Africa Today* 44. n2 (April-June 1997).
- Lowe, Christopher. "Unexamined Consequences of academic globalism in African Studies." *Africa Today* 44, n3 (July-Sept 1997).
- Palat, Ravi. "Fragmented Visions" in Neil Waters ed., *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000.
- Robinson, Pearl. "Local/global linkages and the future of African studies." *Africa Today*, 44.n2 (April-June 1997).
- Scobie, Edward. *Global Afrikan Presence*. Brooklyn, NY: A&B Books Publishers, 1994.
- Waters, Neil. ed., *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000.
- Zeleza, Paul. *Rethinking Africa's Globalization: The Intellectual Challenges*, Volume One. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003.



Journal of Critical Southern Studies

Published by Global Hands in Leicester, UK

Global Hands Publishing

Innovation Centre

49 Oxford Street

Leicester

LE1 5XY

United Kingdom

E: jcss@global-hands.co.uk

T: +44 (0)116 257 7952

W: www.global-hands.co.uk

Volume 1. Summer 2013

ISSN 0796-1901