

Carta(s)

Exile/Refuge

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Manuel Borja-Villel

The Long Time of History

Nearly a century ago, the economist Nikolai Kondratieff completed an exhaustive study of historical cycles. He concluded that they had an approximate duration of fifty years and that they passed like waves through phases of growth followed by others of deflation. Kondratieff also considered that the crisis of capitalism did not mean its demise, since it lives in a permanent state of change, mutating and adapting unceasingly to new circumstances. The end of one cycle means the beginning of another, but it does not guarantee the end of the system. His research was repudiated by the Soviet *nomenklatura*. As Paul Mason reminds us, it constituted a threat to a state that imagined itself to have overcome the capitalist phase of history.¹ Kondratieff was imprisoned, and eight years later, on the day his sentence expired, he was tried and condemned once more. A firing squad executed him in his cell on September 17, 1938.

Kondratieff's tragic biography illustrates the extreme intolerance with which the Soviet state repressed any position that questioned its conceptual foundations. We know full well that political intransigence was a constant throughout the twentieth century. It occurs in régimes of varying ideological shades and is accentuated at moments of acute crisis—that is, in the closing stages of those long waves of which the Russian economist spoke.

Literal comparisons of the current context with the one experienced by Kondratieff may well denote a certain mental indolence. Time is evidently not reversible, but the parallels are significant. Both are periods traversing situations of extreme instability. *Crisis* was a recurrent term in the literature of the 1920s and 1930s, and Max Horkheimer, René Guénon, Léon Blum, Sigmund Freud, and many others wrote on the subject. In recent decades, a multitude of thinkers and activists, from Immanuel Wallerstein to Judith Butler, David Harvey, and Paul B. Preciado,

have reflected on its nature and causes. The concept of crisis is ubiquitous in the intellectual debate and artistic production of both periods. The tortuous and violent interwar figures of Picasso express a world whose transformations the Malaga-born painter could not quite fully comprehend. Allan Sekula's *Fish Story* and some of the installations of Hito Steyerl similarly reflect contemporary insecurity and uncertainty.

Now, as then, reality is complex. For example, new forms of business supported by the vertiginous development of technology have led to the repetition, like a mantra in the anarcho-liberal circles of Silicon Valley and in some sectors of the radical left, of arguments centered on cooperation and exchange. Financial globalization and international politics have effects on our world, but their dynamics and consequences are sometimes so remote and complicated that one has difficulty finding one's bearings in them, and the general impression is that nobody is in control. The risk that right-wing populisms might take advantage of this confusion was real in the 1930s, and its consequences are well known. The risk is equally real in a present that has mutated in many ways into what has already been termed "postfascism."²

Discussions of history were habitual during the first decades of the last century, giving rise to many theories of time across a variety of domains and disciplines. There was an awareness that a particular temporality could be effective on an existential and political level. The future resided simultaneously in a utopia to come and in the remote past of the first glaciations or in the more intimate space of children. The philosophy of history was a battleground where cultural hegemony was at stake. Archaeological studies of the remains of other epochs served to confirm a colonial structure and consolidate a particular power, but also helped to question it.

Kondratieff's work has been retrieved by prestigious economic and political analysts. Nevertheless, if the Russian researcher were to present his results today, he would probably be met with an incomprehension similar to that displayed by the authorities in his

day, since ours is a short-term society that moves from one survey or advertising campaign to the next. Governments and firms plan two or three years in advance, leaving the problems for those who come afterward. Nor is any complex negotiation being sought among sectors that start from antagonistic positions. A response is simply provided for what it is believed a population wants when it has turned into a consumer. As Adam Curtis demonstrated in his television series *The Century of the Self* (2002), majorities are constructed, ideologies cease to exist, and one day's "no is no" becomes the "perhaps" of the day after. Despite the rebirth of nationalisms, there has never been a less messianic epoch in history than our contemporary age.

A great deal of individualism and antisocial behavior underlies this lack of foresight. Ties are understood exclusively in terms of private interest. It is no coincidence that Ayn Rand, a writer for whom humanity progresses only on the basis of competitiveness and personal gain, and for whom any other type of collective measure is a hindrance, should have become a referent. We do not look to the future, nor do we look around us. The proof lies in Europe's inability to respond adequately to the refugee crisis and in the legal establishment of borders. The consequences of climate change are also evident to all but do not appear to concern the institutions. Floods in one part of the planet alternate with crippling droughts in others without any sign of an effective remedy. Those displaced by climate change have been superseded by the political refugee and the economic exile.

The time of politics and life is so short that it produces precariousness and insecurity. Young people have great difficulty imagining a future beyond the few months that their contract lasts. The ensuing fragility and deprivation of rights becomes a generalized form of subsistence. The state of emergency is no longer something separate from the community but aligned with its daily organization. From the terrible power of the absolute sovereign to make others die or allow them to live, as Judith Revel

observes, we have moved into a contemporary mode of allowing others to die while not making them live.³

Art is not unaffected by this situation. It is trapped inside the same economic mechanisms, laws, desires, and expectations. Given its connection with tourism and its ability to accumulate more market value than either gold or oil, it arguably plays a crucial role in the new forms of cognitive capitalism. Neoliberalism impels us to surpass ourselves at all costs and to educate ourselves continually in order to remain constantly available on the work market. It pushes us toward entrepreneurial conditions that result in self-exploitation, stress, and depression, as well as political passivity and even cynicism. Anything can be turned into merchandise, and the art system is no exception. Artists and museums now compete for a place in the top ten in terms of audiences and sales. It is not uncommon to find an artist or institution trying to win resources or fame with gloom-laden projects that exploit the pain of others. And large infrastructures and cultural events are important magnets for tourism, that predator on the life of our cities, which some have called “impoverishing wealth.”

Rather than sporadic self-reflection, museums must resolve to sustain a critical attitude toward their own discourses, apparatuses, and forms of organization and mediation. Marina Garcés reminds us in her latest book that the important thing is not only daring to say what one thinks but thinking beyond what one knows.⁴ That is the foundation of the notion of agency that museums have been insisting on for so long. It has to do with aesthetics and knowledge, but above all with ethics and politics. If decisions in the opinion poll society are taken in accordance with their social impact or economic return, agency activates an interlocution that is at the same time a learning process and a transformation allowing what escapes from the norm to be discovered and shown.

Due to the close correspondence between art and power, certain sectors have regarded modern and contemporary art and its structures as cultural expressions of capitalism. Modernity is

associated with a set of bureaucratized institutional practices, with a predetermined structure of disciplines and social functions, and with the colonization of the non-European world. From this it follows that the only thing that can bring about the end of capitalism is the cancellation of modernity.⁵ An antimodern tendency within numerous social movements from the 1970s onward is one result of this conclusion. However, the identification of modernity with the formations of capitalism is mistaken and ignores the alternative modalities that the modern can assume and that are founded on its ideals. Modernity, as Josep Renau made explicit in the 1930s, can simultaneously present a narrative of popular mobilization and a philosophical framework for observing the course of time. In this context, it becomes urgent to recover history, to reinscribe art inside it, and to draw up a new glossary that grants visibility to those whose voices have been denied or who have abandoned their artistic practices for the requirements of social intervention (one example is Gustave Courbet, who stopped painting to involve himself in the Paris Commune). In the same way, it is also crucial to question a certain modernist concept that thinks and describes historical events as though they obeyed a preestablished logic and moved in a linear fashion. According to this hypothesis, there is no room for a constituent process since everything has been instituted from the beginning and any kind of mutation will ultimately be merely aesthetic.

In the art world, as in the rest of society, a relatively small group of collectors, artists, galleries, and cultural operators accumulate an enormous amount of power and resources. Arguably, they have no need of museums and public organizations to carry out their work. Gagosian, Pace, and Hauser&Wirth can embark with ease on grand exhibition or research projects, including books and *catalogues raisonnés*, while many art centers are barely able to remain open, even though they are often forced to behave like private enterprises and prioritize economic interests over education and emancipation. In spite of it all, though, museums remain decisive for those same collectors, artists, and gallerists. The museum's actions occur in a long and complex time frame, which

neoliberalism lacks. This time frame should not be confused with memorialism, which is no more than the reverse of the presentism that has dominated our world since the fall of the Berlin Wall, demanding the exorcism of a past to which nobody wants to return. The history referred to in this text articulates past and future from the now; it reclaims and attaches value to submerged and defeated voices from the standpoint of their hopes and struggles; and it interpellates us and moves us. Today, more than ever, there is a need for museums to be aware that the contemporary art system, with its franchises, biennials, fairs, and congresses of all kinds, projects a fictional unity onto a world whose inequalities and conflicts are more and more entrenched, and it therefore falls to them to trace the genealogies of works, artists, and events, projecting them onto a future that is not founded on myth and thus separate from history.

1. Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 32.
2. See Enzo Traverso, *Las nuevas caras de la derecha* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2018), available in English as *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right* (London: Verso, forthcoming).
3. See Judith Revel's article elsewhere in this volume.
4. Marina Garcés, *Ciudad Princesa* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2018), 94.
5. Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (London: Verso, 2016).

Mari Paz Balibrea

The Republican Exile: Building from Absence

Shortly after the publication of my book *Tiempo de exilio* (A time for exile),¹ I was engaged in a debate with several historians, defending my book's argument that the Republican exile from Spain needs to be recuperated. My focus is on Republican culture as a critical margin from which to consider the development of Spanish modernity in the twentieth century. In the round of questions and in my exchanges with other members of the debate, there was repeated insistence, backed by erudite examples, of the innocuousness of the Spanish exile; its small or nonexistent impact on national affairs, on the dictatorship, and then on Spanish democracy; its voluntary surrender of prominence to "the insiders"; and even the exiles' satisfaction with Spain's evolution toward democracy. These affirmations, supported by verifiable facts and information, rendered my position an apparent exercise in wishful thinking. People might condescendingly agree on the desirability of incorporating the Spanish exile more widely and better, or even for the exile not to have taken place, but the reality was ironclad. Historical analysis must adhere to that reality, which could itself be critically addressed. But to pretend that the lives and ways of thinking of those about whom nothing or little was known as they unfolded (and which had little or no effect on the unfolding of Spanish contemporary cultural and political history) might not only be interesting but relevant to Spanish history is, to begin with, a false premise; it is to base research on a critical desire unsupported by historical facts. Spanish history renders this desire valueless, associating it with a nostalgia for what never was and with a lack of rigor fatally dependent on and biased by the moral commitment of those who choose to focus their studies on it.

Intellectual exchanges such as the one I describe can help us to understand the extent to which the discipline of National History might be hostile to a proposition like mine. The debate also illustrates the hidden political imbrications of the discipline, with

its dominant discourses on the development of Spain to the end of the Civil War. One of the main aims of my proposal in its open politicality is to unmask what is hegemonically presented as natural and obvious, as unweighted by any kind of bias. Thus, in naming it we must interrogate it, because to question it might undermine its supposed infallibility. What, and who, constituted Spain from the condition of forced political exile caused by the Civil War? What spaces and times are part of this and affect it? Questions such as these interrogate the content of the categories of subject, time, and space we associate with the nation, and in reflecting on and responding to them it can help to consider them as historical constructions; that is, as conceptual artifacts with a genealogy that can be recuperated and as ideological binds that can be brought to light and untangled, rather than as a priori categories that are unfitting to examine and must be filled out only with circumstance and historical development, with no consideration of how they were constituted or of the place they hold. What kind of responsibility do political discourses by specialists and nonspecialists, from the cultural to the political, have in forging ideas on the subject, time, and space of the nation, in the continual dissemination and reinforcement of these discourses in the national imaginary, in the time shared by those who consider themselves compatriots? The premise that Spanishness comprehends only what took place (and when) within our political and geographical borders, including people's lives, is a discourse that has been imposed by Francoism since 1939. The reasons for it, although many may find them abominable, are a clear, predictable example of the victor's actions in a war that exterminated, expelled, and silenced the vanquished. But when we see how the effects of this have extended not only into the long dictatorship but well into the democracy, then we realize that the reasons for it no longer have any value as explanations. To dismiss as a proponent of Francoism anyone who agrees and considers obvious the idea that leaving the country in exile makes it impossible to consider being outside its borders as something relevant and compatible with its inside is not plausible or fair. Yet this reasoning is perfectly recognizable and actively functions with

the fatal inertia of all ideas we accept as given, self-evident, and unquestionable. Catalanian and Galician history may show there was no need for, or metaphysical impediment to preventing, the Republican exiles from being incorporated into Spanish national history because of their forced absence from the nation. In Catalonia, for example, the border between inside and out did not represent any kind of insurmountable conceptual, political or aesthetic barrier to the articulating of *one* cultural and historical narrative that could be seen as national, as a part of that which has constructed the history of this culture in the twentieth century. Today, Mercè Rodorera, Carles Riba, Juan Sales, Pere Calders, and Agustí Bartra are just as much a part of the history of Catalan literature as Josep Pla, J. V. Foix, and Salvador Espriu. I find this comparison an enlightening exercise, and not only in the sense of the always desirable unification of diverse cultural practices under the single concept of the nation. What is enlightening is the historicity of these processes, which gives them the historical and political pertinence I claim in questioning received notions in order to free ourselves from the restraints of thought. To return to my original example: the facts obviously corroborate the negligible or nonexistent participation of the Spanish Republican exile in the development of the nation until democracy was significantly established, often with the blessing of the exiles themselves. But to see the Republican absence as the final, determining, irrevocable reason for sentencing the exiled to perpetual expulsion from our understanding of things in Spain is only one among the possible options, and it is an option loaded with political intent and consequences. If, instead of seeing this absence as fated, we think of it as an active factor in the articulation of national processes, then it immediately acquires a relational value to be weighed as part of our interpretations. Absence, exile, is not a faraway, indifferent outside; it is an outside that constitutes and makes possible the inside of dictatorial and then democratic Spain, without which our current existence would not be the same. For the purposes of maintaining its hegemony, the inside sought out and neutralized the critical, explanatory potential of the outside in 1939 and then in 1977. This positionality and the reasons behind it,

with the shame they carry for the inside, endow the Spanish Republican exile with the capacity to be a critical margin from which we might consider Spanish modernity and history in the twentieth century—a way to contemplate the nation through what it could or would not incorporate. This does not mean the life and work of every exile, whatever form they took, will corroborate the conscious effort to make the structural relationship between exile and the nation visible (although the philosophical thinking and art of exiled figures such as María Zambrano or Max Aub doubtlessly deserve deeper consideration). Instead, the Republican exile should be given visibility as an inside problem, one that defines and structures and therefore constitutes the twentieth-century Spanish nation-state: the problem of the massive expulsion of people who embodied the most important democratic and Republican heritage Spain had ever produced, a legacy that has never been returned or incorporated into what has been gradually constructed as the hegemonic vision of the country's modern tradition. Particularly in the years of the democracy, the prevalence of a parallel version of modernity—one having harmoniously emerged from the social and economic modernization promoted by Francoism in its rebirth during the Cold War era—has prevented us from recuperating the other modern heritage that clashes with this one.

The Franco regime in its later period reinvented itself with a modern discourse that until then had been vilified by reactionary forces: representatives of Spanish traditionalism and Catholicism. In reinventing itself, it managed to usurp the territory that had been reserved in Spanish modern history for the political spectrum from and toward the liberal left. Since the transition, democracy has been built by supporting rather than rejecting the achievements of late Francoism's version of modernity, from which democracy and freedom were absent. To invoke exile, and in general to invoke the victims of Francoism, disrupts this continuity in a move that might be labeled impertinent but never irrelevant and that can be disqualified only for political bias from the hypocrisy of hidden political interests.

To change roles and positions as I propose would be to try to comprehend the need for Spain to incorporate its relationship with the Republican exile in order to better understand itself. Spain needs its exile much more than the exile needs its nation, despite the stereotyped image of the exiled as vulnerable, nostalgic beings pathologically attached to their nation's past as it advances indifferent, even blind, to their pain. Those who left were scattered to all corners of the world and must have felt nostalgia and anger. But they also rebuilt their lives and made their mark on the realities of their new lands. Their experiences and work, having been thrown out into the world, often reveal a cosmopolitanism, a synchrony with the most important cultural, ideological, political, economic, and aesthetic developments of their half-century that were forbidden to those who remained within Spanish borders. No Spaniards, whether inside or outside Spain, were excluded from history, but in the diaspora the multiplying contacts and possibilities for intervention were much more equidistant than what was possible from inside Francoist Spain in the aforementioned developments in that period.² From this perspective, we find a new inversion of roles, where inner Spain is the margin and the Republican exile becomes the center. This can stimulate ways of productively relating the exile with the nation that are less subject to premises of residence within and more subject to vectors and trajectories that at some point might touch the nation but are not contained by it.

Finally, the exercise of recuperating the Republican exile is a praxis of memory, a practice that can be understood as a genealogy of the present, a retracing, a going back over the steps we have followed. We can use it to understand how we are constituted and to grasp tools that will help us to refute what we are given—or what is often surreptitiously imposed—and to think in new ways about the present and what has brought us to where we are. Exile then becomes a methodology, a critical perspective for looking from the outside in, toward the center; a pedagogy for understanding and looking at reality without accepting forms of naturalization. More specifically, to recuperate exile (and not just the Spanish Republican

exile) is to find a critical pathway into the nation, into the state coercion that maintains it, into the arbitrariness and excesses of its imaginaries that trap its subjects and open their desires and fears to greater manipulation by those who claim to defend their nations. The recuperation of exile also allows us a critical perspective on the emphasis on identity that repeats and contains the nation-exile structure: Identity needs to define an external other to exist, and this entails an act of separation (from what is considered to be different) as well as union (with what is perceived to be the same). To carefully examine its constitution and history will inevitably reveal the presence of the other in what we think of as our own. Can identity and its perverse, destructive politicization, ideologizing, and myths be renounced? This is something non-Zionist Judaism has been exploring for a long time, from the position of its thousand-year experience of expulsion and diaspora. How can this be done without losing the empowerment of defending what is ours? In identity and the collective manifestations of it organized around the nation we find one of the most unsolvable contradictions of modernity, noted by the entire philosophical tradition of thought on Nazism and the Holocaust, from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to Hannah Arendt, Zambrano, and Jean-Luc Nancy: the exaltation of myth in a culture that prides itself on having abolished it with reason and technology. Periods of crisis exacerbate the most negative, exclusive aspects of nationalism, not only by insisting on people's distance from others but by blaming outsiders for the evils of the nation. As the stigmatized are separated from the body of the nation by expulsion, or by being prevented from entering, the mass experience of exile takes place again and again. If we add to this the forced expulsion by extreme poverty from countries wrecked by the imbalances of capitalism, the numbers of the exiled multiply exponentially. In previous times, the rigors of exile were mitigated by geopolitical and global economic rebalances and by humanitarian efforts that found ways for drifting populations to be taken in. Such was the case with the Republican exiles who were received by most Latin American countries, particularly Mexico, which at the time was a far more advanced nation than Spain and in need of skilled workers. What is terrible

today is the absence of rich nations willing to take in displaced populations, whether out of self-interest or altruism. On the contrary, turning them away is justified by identifying them as aggressors and sources of poverty. This brings us back to the exiled (and their associates: the emigrant, the refugee, the displaced) who are used as carriers for suffering and stigmatization, as the inverse, the negative, of the nation and its citizens—as its unavoidable shadow. But this disadvantaged position is also strategically favorable in analyzing and taking apart the abject conditioning of the nation and the nationalism that rejected it. This understanding underlies the theoretical stance I propose here toward the Spanish nation, which is structurally unexceptional. Exile holds a space for resistance and opposition, and this space should be activated through intellectual and other means.

1. Mari Paz Balibrea, *Tiempo de exilio: Una mirada crítica a la modernidad española desde el pensamiento republicano en el exilio* (Barcelona: Montesinos, 2007).
2. This could have been an advantage for the exiled, but it was also a disadvantage (think, for example, of the French, German, and Russian concentration camps where Spanish Republicans were sent).

Judith Revel

Not to Make Live, and to Let Die

This text may have an unusual status. It is an attempt to think within the context of my profession (teaching and research in contemporary philosophy), but it is also born of a persistent outrage that has little to do with personal qualifications. For too long this outrage has accompanied the litany of horrors picked out by the televised media at dinner time when giving updates on the situation of refugees at the doors of Europe and sometimes within Europe: at the borders of Macedonia or Hungary; in the snows of the Serbian winter; in the mud and despair of the makeshift camps into which human beings are packed; in every landscape once familiar to us but now barred by walls, barbed wire, or fences; and, of course, along the terrible crossing of the Strait of Sicily toward the island of Lampedusa.

The question that arises is the following: Are the tools Michel Foucault provided for dealing with the rationalities and modes of governments—and used by him in particular in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, his lectures at the Collège de France from 1978 to 1979—still of use in accounting for the ways European countries, almost unanimously, administer, manage, and govern these men and women whom we call “migrants” out of fear of giving them that other status they demand—that of refugees? Or is there an emerging new paradigm of government that demands a return to some of Foucault’s earlier assertions? I am thinking in particular of the “Right of Death and Power over Life” section in the final pages of *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), or of the final lesson in *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault’s lecture in the Collège de France on March 17, 1976.

These analyses from 1976 indicate a transformation: the reversal of the phrase that might sum up, according to Foucault, the sovereign right to life and death, “make die and let live.” The inversion of this phrase around the end of the eighteenth century

and the beginning of the nineteenth century, to become “make live and let die,” is characteristic of political law reorganized at the same time by a disciplinary governmentality of individuals put to work; that is, by the anatomo-politics of bodies and by this new level of government, which in no way erases the first but actually joins with it, something Foucault referred to as a biopolitics of the human species or a government of populations.

The question I examine here is extremely simple: Is the idea of “making live and letting die” still the formula for government? And if we consider the extension of these analyses by Foucault regarding the contemporary period (i.e., the dual analysis he offered of German ordoliberalism and American neoliberalism from March 14 to April 4, 1979, in *The Birth of Biopolitics*); and if we linger in a specific way on the attempt at modeling the internal rationality in human behavior that is induced by certain theories of human capital; and if we consider very seriously what Foucault analyzed as the emerging figure of the *homo oeconomicus*, then do we obtain a reading grid that still accounts for the rationality of government when applied today to what we call “migrant flows” at the southern and eastern doors of Europe?

Several elements allow us to doubt this.

* * *

We will begin with a banality, one without which Foucault’s entire undertaking remains opaque: History never goes backward. And if it “moves forward,” it does so according to a system of historicity that excludes any linearity or teleological perspective; that, on the contrary, includes discontinuity and change, jumps and ruptures. Yet, these ruptures do not appear to be mere substitutions. Quite often they are simultaneously forms of permanence and transformation, which makes them difficult to grasp historically and complicated to analyze politically. Thus, toward the end of *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault writes, “the old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the

administration of bodies and the calculated management of life.”¹ Supplanted, yet not entirely replaced. There is a layering and a reinvestment, or reorganization, of the system of government from its last historical “stratum”; that is, from what emerged and what represents, in itself, a profound discontinuity. At the same time, this discontinuity is just a substitution: it opens onto a rearrangement, a redistribution of the general economy of government from the “new” elements that appear, and not only to erasure. Similarly, the simultaneity of the add-on and of the preexisting, of the already there, was in the background of the analyses undertaken in the seminar of March 17, 1976, at the Collège de France three years earlier: “And I think that one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was precisely that, I wouldn’t say exactly that sovereignty’s old right—to take life or let live—was replaced, but it came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. This is the right, or rather precisely the opposite right. It is the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die.”²

To return to our initial question: Can we understand what works and, on the contrary, what no longer works in the dual biopolitical management that is both individualized (disciplinary anatomo-politics of productive bodies) and given mass (biopolitical management of populations) when we attempt to analyze the way our governments today manage migratory movements? Furthermore, has something been added, like the tangible sign of a rationality that is redefined and profoundly transformed?

The question is rendered even more complex by the fact that, in the pages he devoted to American neoliberalism in his lectures of 1978 and 1979, Foucault offered elements of transformation of contemporary governmentality in relation to its initial liberal birth. At least two elements seem important. The first consists not only in confirming the centrality of work in determining the value of goods (something David Ricardo had already shown) but in reformulating both what we understand today by *work* and the

processes of economic valorization to which work gives rise. Starting from Gary Becker's analysis, which he cites, Foucault suggests we have gone from an *economy of commodity* (which was founded also on the commodification of the workforce itself) to an *economy of benefits*, in which man himself becomes his own capital. The second displacement, both simultaneous and linked to the first, consists in a recording of the latter by the government: it is no longer as much a matter of governing bodies as it is of governing behaviors. And here we find the passage from the extraction of "productive benefits" of bodies literally "attached to work" (which Foucault analyzed more conventionally in certain pages in *Discipline and Punish*) toward a new kind of extractivism founded on the management, the maximizing, and the sacking of the workers' (social) behaviors. The worker is no longer seen exclusively, therefore, as an object of extraction but as an active economic subject, which Foucault saw as the basis for what he called "homo oeconomicus"—a productive subject that is both producer and subject-capital.

The problem for Becker, and more generally for the Chicago School, is the formulation of possible models, or calculations by anticipation, of the rationality of behavior facing that subject—a subject that is not only a producer of capital but a producer *because he or she is capital*.

In a passage toward the end of the lesson of March 14, 1979, after enumerating the elements upon which the notion of "human capital" is founded, Foucault inserts a strange paragraph:

In the elements making up human capital we should also include mobility, that is to say, an individual's ability to move around, and migration in particular. Because migration obviously represents a material cost, since the individual will not be earning while he is moving, but there will also be a psychological cost for the individual establishing himself in his new milieu. There will also be at least a loss of earnings due to the fact that the period of adaptation will certainly prevent the

individual from receiving his previous remunerations, or those he will have when he is settled. All these negative elements show that migration has a cost. What is the function of this cost? It is to obtain an improvement of status, of remuneration, and so on, that is to say, it is an investment. Migration is an investment; the migrant is an investor. He is an entrepreneur of himself who incurs expenses by investing to obtain some kind of improvement. The mobility of a population and its ability to make choices of mobility as investment choices for improving income enable the phenomena of migration to be brought back into economic analysis, not as pure and simple effects of economic mechanisms which extend beyond individuals and which, as it were, bind them to an immense machine which they do not control, but as behavior in terms of individual enterprise, of enterprise of oneself with investments and incomes.³

At the end of this lecture he adds the idea that the question of innovation, as a possible solution to the problem of the tendential decrease in profit rates, is not—or not only—linked to the deployment of competition, because “if there is innovation, that is to say, if we find new things, discover new forms of productivity, and make technological innovations, this is nothing other than the income of a certain capital, of human capital, that is to say, of the set of investments we have made at the level of man himself.”⁴ Finally, he returns in an oblique way to the problem of migration (which he seemed at first to have decontextualized or made abstract, taking it out of any concrete determination): “In the same way, the problems of the economy of the Third World can also be rethought on the basis of human capital. And you know that currently an attempt is being made to rethink the problem of failure of Third World economies to get going, not in terms of the blockage of economic mechanisms, but in terms of insufficient investment in human capital.”⁵

With these three citations as a starting point, we must think about our own present, almost forty years later. We are no longer in 1979,

and our present is no longer that of Gary Becker or Foucault. So, in the gap between their world and ours we must begin our examination of a series of questions we cannot ignore. (I do not mean to equate Foucault and Becker but to say that they thought, undoubtedly in contrary political manners, from the same historical situation and that this situation is fundamentally different from the one we know today.) First, are we not, at the gates of Europe today, starting to leave the notion of “making live and letting die” and to adopt instead a formula that, while it may not return to the old formula of sovereign right (“make die and let live”), can be summarized by another formula that indicates a transformation of government rationality today: “not to make live, and to let die”?

Another element of novelty is the following: If this new rationality sometimes still maintains the validity of the notion of “making live” in the management of migrants (precisely because a transformation is a reinvestment and not a substitution or an erasure), then it implies a considerable displacement: the restriction of this notion of “making live” to a system of naturalization of life that is no longer the one Foucault described when he spoke of biopolitics, insofar as this naturalization seems to be empowered. Recall what Foucault said of this in 1976 in *The Will to Knowledge*:

This transformation had considerable consequences. It would serve no purpose here to dwell on the rupture that occurred then in the patterns of scientific discourse and on the manner in which the twofold problematic of life and man disrupted and redistributed the order of the classical episteme. If the question of man was raised—insofar as he was a specific living being, and specifically related to other living beings—the reason for this is to be sought in the new mode of relation between history and life: in this dual position of life that placed it at the same time outside history, in its biological environment, and inside human historicity, penetrated by the latter’s techniques of knowledge and power.⁶

This naturalization today literally “unsticks” or takes away the natural from politics. Natural autonomization is the result of this disarticulation.

Here is an example concerning migrants in particular: While investigating a few years ago what he had called, in a book of the same name, *Humanitarian Reason*, Didier Fassin concluded that a sick body had a greater chance of obtaining the (political) status of refugee than a healthy body. Humanitarian reason has become that of biological life, but a biological life understood not as an instrument of political management of populations, and at the same time as a condition of possibility of productivity of bodies put to work—which is what, for Foucault, biopolitics consisted of—but as an end in itself. The more a human being is reduced to the biological (by exclusively pathologizing his or her body, if it arises), the greater the humanitarian response; that is, the factoring of the human as a political and social subject. Fassin exposes the juridical architecture of this for France—beginning with the newsletter from June 24, 1997, regarding the reexamination of the situation of certain irregular foreigners when, as the newsletter says, “the foreigner normally residing in France is stricken by a serious pathological condition requiring medical treatment.” Which means founding regularization not on the length of irregular presence in France (“normally residing in France”) but on the presence of a serious illness affecting the body of the applicant. This measure was followed, one year later, by the law of May 11, 1998, which modified Article 12 bis 11 of the ordinance of 1945 “relating to the entry and the stay of foreigners and to the right of asylum.” In effect, the ill body amounts to a residence permit and work permit. We have gone from the right to asylum to a protocol of compassion on the basis of the biologizing of the political and social bodies of migrants—this is the price for the legitimacy of the application for asylum.

We may think also of Emmanuel Levinas’s phrase in *Totality and Infinity*, which Fassin quotes in the exergue of his book, “Everyone

will already agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality.” But perhaps we need to update it: “Everyone will already agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by rationality.”

* * *

All of this gives rise to certain questions with which I would like to end before briefly sketching a hypothesis.

The first question: How do we explain, even in neoliberal psychoanalysis, that “to make live” (i.e., the fact of assuming a qualitative and quantitative increase in human capital, not only of the possibility of putting bodies to work but of extracting life—social, relational, linguistic, affective, cognitive life—from economic value) is no longer recognized as the rule?

We cannot merely accept answers founded on a supposed rarefaction of work, since these answers consider only a specific kind of work (Fordism), effectively reduced by the growing automation of the processes of production. However, the growing socialization of a kind of work that is decidedly post-Fordist calls—on the contrary, and even from the viewpoint of capitalism itself—for the ever-greater integration of “atoms” of human capital, themselves investors, of these incarnations of *homo oeconomicus* that Foucault described and that he also saw in the figure of the migrant. Migrants are investors like anyone else—more than anyone else, even, if we consider the radical nature of the risk of their own self-investment.

We cannot accept the objections based on the supposed costs of the reception and management of migrant waves—if only because the costs of the demographic catastrophe facing a good many aging countries of the “first world,” or the price of this other catastrophe whose demographic base that combines with that of the work transfer, and which foretells the ineluctable crumbling of the pension system, are all well known by economists, demographers,

and sociologists. One dare not think of the real cost of security politics and of the “defense” of European borders—keeping in mind the billions paid to Turkey by Europe so it would act as a filter. Nor does one dare think of the exorbitant cost that might one day be involved in the literal implosion of Europe, around the question of migrants, if the water hammer of certain emerging nationalisms and neofascisms were to become more intense.

Why, then, is there this inverse logic, when it is in fact unbearable not only with regard to the indignation that some feel in the context of our shared humanity but in terms even of neoliberalism? And why, instead of managing migrant flows, as has always been the case, have we blocked them? Why do we see it as more rational to pick up dead bodies from the sea than to save living men and women? Does intervention apply only to the dead? Has biopolitics really become a thanatopolitics?

To this, there is no complete answer but only the fragment of a hypothesis.

The tipping point, which can explain at least partially the reversal of the notion of “making live and letting die” into “not making live and letting die,” is a profound inflection of the relation between politics and time. This transformation deserves to be thought about insofar as it rests upon three radical changes: the exit, for a large part of the world, from economic cycles—more still: the crisis as a new economic and political temporality; the imposition of an extremely short temporality, corresponding to an essentially short-term electoral governmentality; finally, and in a parallel manner, the installation of an “endless” governmentality in the uncertain space of juridical exceptionality expanded to the extreme—all the more “endless” in that we progressively build the conditions for its paradoxical constitutionalism. In short, economically, time is out of joint, and politically it is woven, in the form of a paradoxical injunction, between two opposite and contradictory sides: the terrible compression of political temporality, crushed on the one hand against that of elections and

just-in-time surveys, and the unlimited expansion of the state of emergency on the other. The notion of “not making live and letting die” is not only less onerous in the very short term (from the viewpoint of the real cost of foreseeable interventions) but absolutely profitable from an electoral viewpoint. In the medium or long term, the political, economic, and human costs quickly seem monstrous. Everyone knows this, but everyone tries to forget it. After all, it is a temporality other than the immediate present—that is, the next electoral season—and so, once we’re gone, who cares . . .

“Time is out of joint,” Hamlet says. Our humanity is not far from leaving us, but we are too blind to understand that the very name of *man* or *woman* is at stake. The reinvention of hospitality, the constitution of a common ground between men and women, goes, on the contrary, and urgently, through a reappropriation of the time of politics: a time for living, a time for making, a time for producing and for dreaming, a time for building and for inventing, a regained thickness—a breath of history in its entirety.

1. Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998), 139–40.
2. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. by David Macey (London: Penguin, 2003), 241.
3. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. by Graham Burchell (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 230.
4. *Ibid.*, 231.
5. *Ibid.*, 232.
6. Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998), 143.

À tous les clandestins
(To all the undocumented migrants)
Patricia Gómez y María Jesús González

À tous les clandestins tackles the issue of contemporary migrations, focusing on one of the most significant and intensely traveled routes in recent years: that which goes from the West African coast to the Canary Islands. Although the route has now been practically deactivated, it is possible to find traces on the walls of the places where many migrants were held prisoner. In homage to their memory, we have set out to retrieve the written traces that those men and women in transit left behind and to back them up with documentary evidence, through the use of wall prints, photography, and video.

The inspiration for this project was a set of journalistic articles and reports published by humanitarian organizations from 2004 to 2010 that alluded to the large number of messages and drawings left on the walls in some detention centers. Located at the main points of departure and arrival along the route, the centers in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands and Nouadhibou, Mauritania, were set up in 2006 during the “crisis of the overloaded canoes.” Both infrastructures are now closed, although they are guarded.

Please, Don't Paint the Wall (2016) offers a selection of the evidence left on the walls of various pavilions within the Detention Center for Migrants called *El Matorral* on Fuerteventura. The entire archive consists of 640 photographs taken of drawings, poems, and messages containing names and dates. Written in Arabic, Wolof, Spanish, English, and French, most of the material bears witness to the experiences, motivations, and hopes behind the trips the migrants had embarked on. The exhibit also includes the transcript of the writing on the walls, translated into Spanish by Mohssine Rezgaoui and Khalid Chaoui.

Please, Don't Paint the Wall, 2016
Photographic archive (selection)

الله أكبر
في د في النصارى
في د في حاسر الفقرة الحراك

الزحلة قربة الشمس
باني جاي فلوقة فاد

يونس 7 2018 3-3
N-T-079-59-25-68

أسفني
الأخيه مفقود

والخارج مولود E2FANE والأول الكومون عاء

أسفني

العيي محبت د الطل

معلقة

GUINEEN

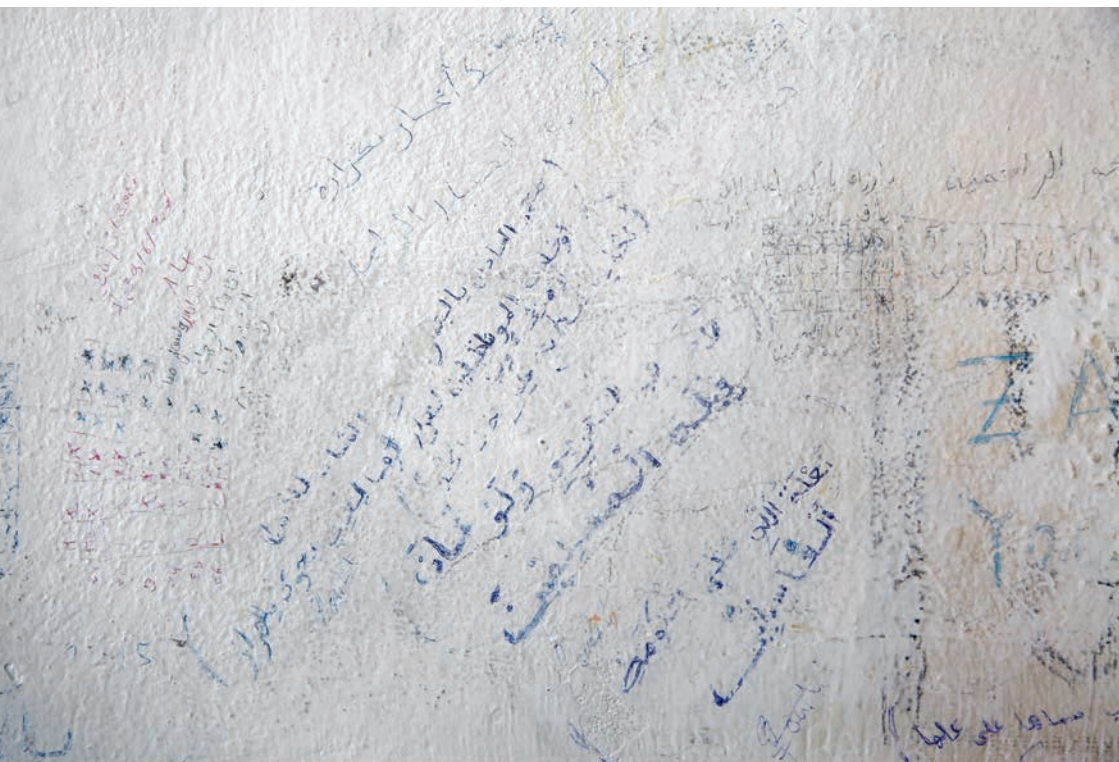
Aliou DIABY / 30/11/2007

je ne peut que Remercier le
le bon Dieu tout puissant, nous souhaitons aussi
que l'ESPAGNE soit parmi les trois grands
puissances économiques du monde in cha Allah

Guinean, Aliou Diaby, Nov. 30, 2007

I have nothing but gratitude for Almighty God, we also hope
that Spain will be among the three great world economic powers.
God willing.

C-8318

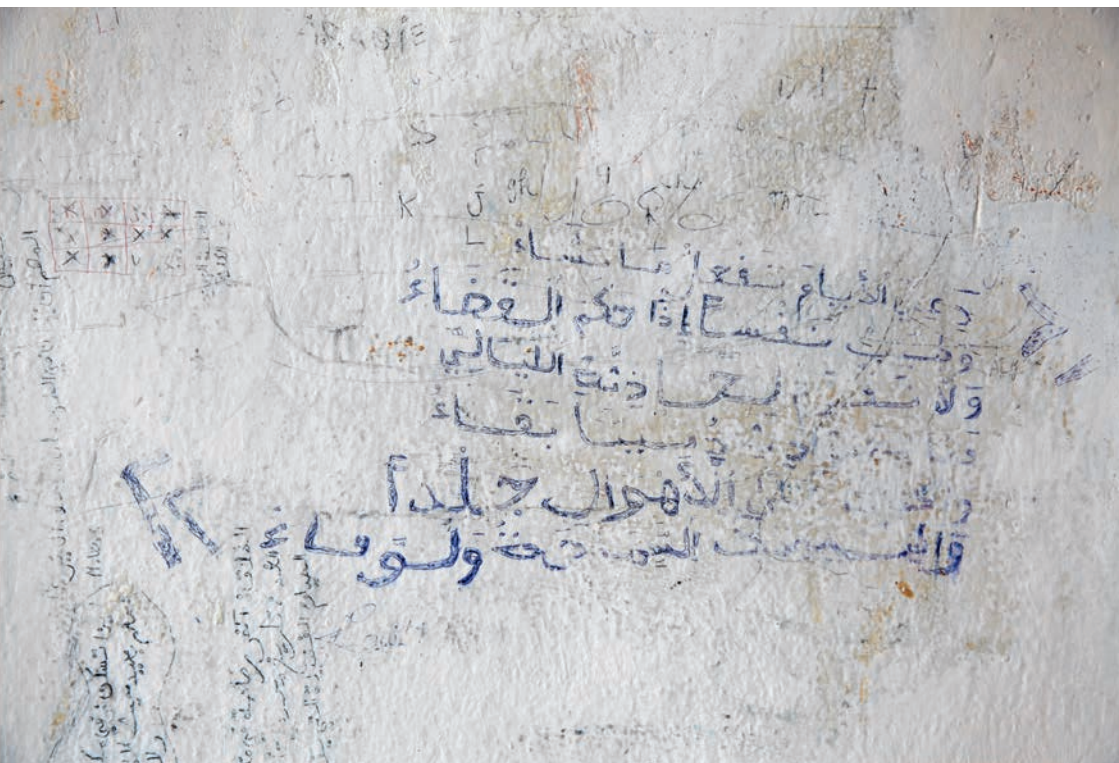


[King] Mohammed VI, you're an ass. You fired us, the honest civil servants and have left only the butchers in place.

One cannot trust Morocco, despite it being the Mecca for Muslims.

May God curse the Moroccan government of Fez.

CHA-D-1d-8470



"Let the days do what they will"

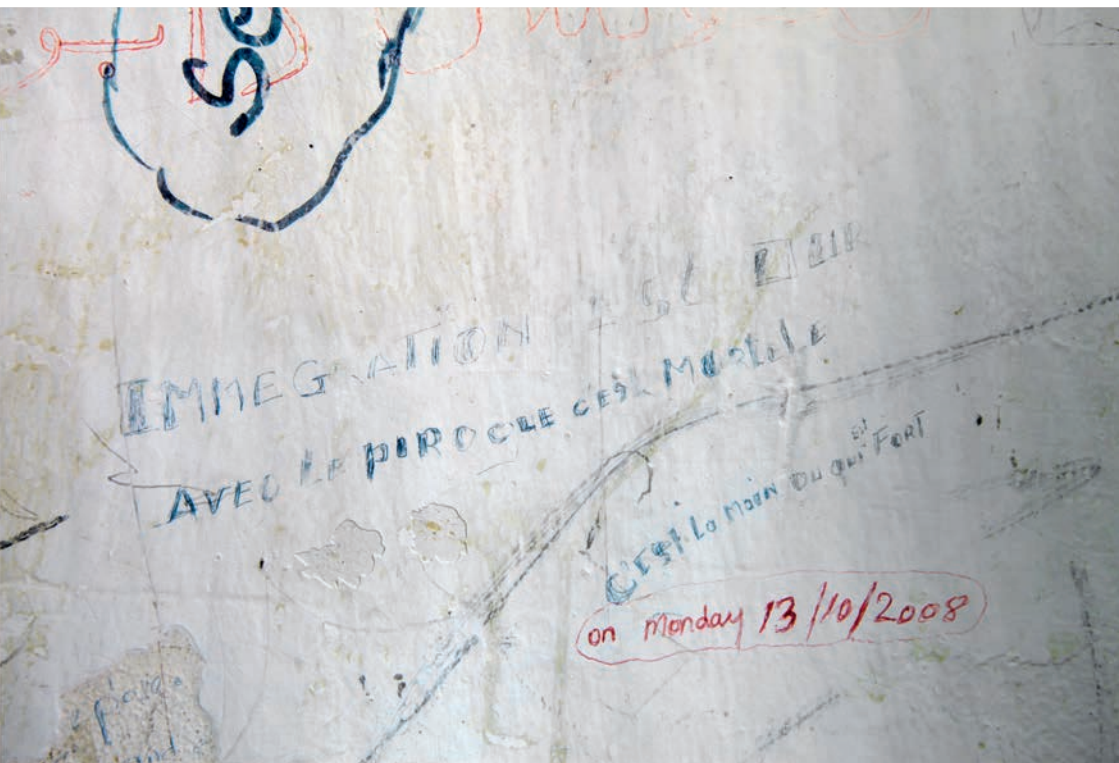
Let the days do what they will and enjoy the sentence destiny has bestowed upon you.

Don't let the fears that appear at night sadden you. All the incidents that happen in this life will come to an end.

Be a gentleman and show a lot of patience. Keep forgiveness, tolerance, and loyalty inside you.

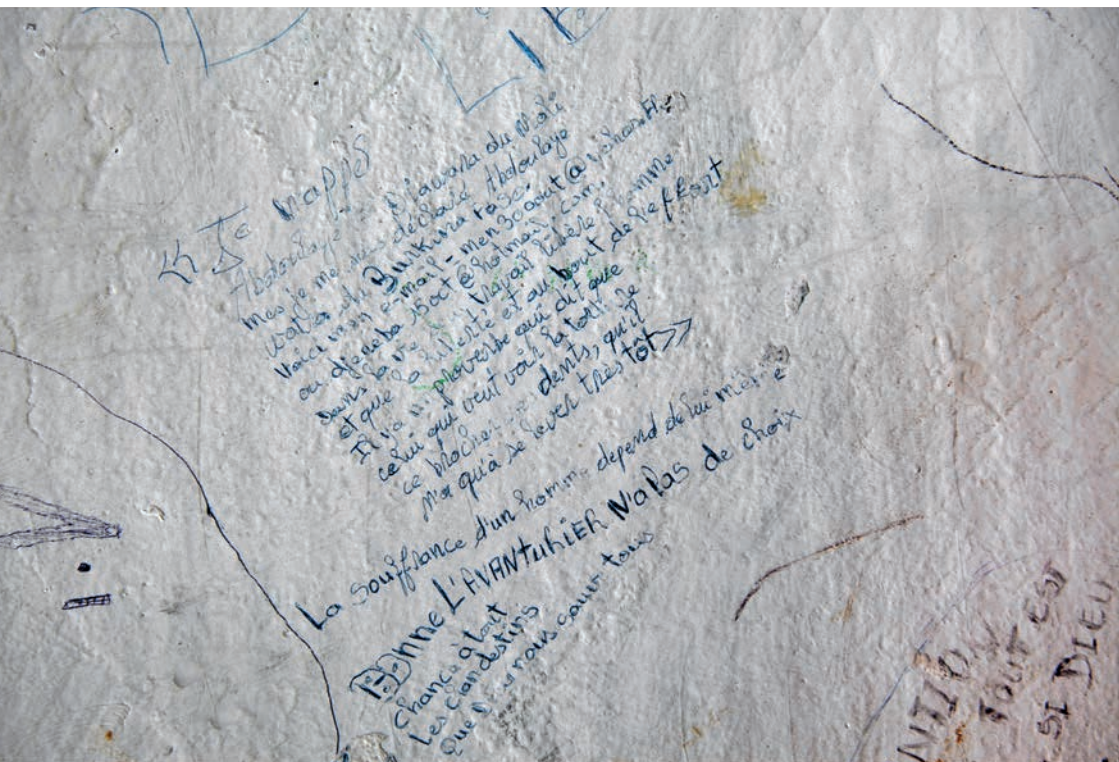
(Poem by Imam Chafii)





Immigrating is tough, in an overloaded canoe, it's fatal.
Monday, Oct. 13, 2008

CHA-D-4i-8996



My name is Abdoulaye Diawara from Mali, but I stated I'm Abdoulaye Watra from Burkina Faso.
Here is my e-mail = men30aout@yahoo.fr and djeneba15oct@hotmail.com.
The only thing in life that liberates men is work. Freedom is at the end of all the effort. Whether a man suffers or not depends only on him.
An adventurer has no choice.
Good luck to all undocumented migrants. May God save us all.

ن. أ. أ. أ.

المعتقل

الله العظيم

الاسم

مورال

May God save us from prisons in Spain.

CHA-D-5d-9271

Baye. NIASSE



Abou. Niouf
6-3-33

صورة حشر البلبل صبح قلب التعلل الماء
 والارض مع زمر لحنى العودلى واثنيت ياسيه عي
 وسوطني لحلم وكى تيهولي عزيبي عطفات من
 لم ورد القبل حول ارات ولبى ولبى ياروللى
 وكلمن عتق لولوب وشيبب اولا لوبى وكردا مسن
 م صفتت المثلثلى ان كى لمانه المصل تيب
 بسلك حلى رالعوى دندن لى والرقلى فغوا ليليا
 والوتراني راكبا على صالى اهل يمشى على ثلاثة
 كشيبة المرنجلى والشاربى ذالوقنا عصفيرى
 سلكى ومن سويلي، انا الاوئى الالبح جلت
 بلطج ارقفة يعقل عنما الادبيل راؤنا مملعا

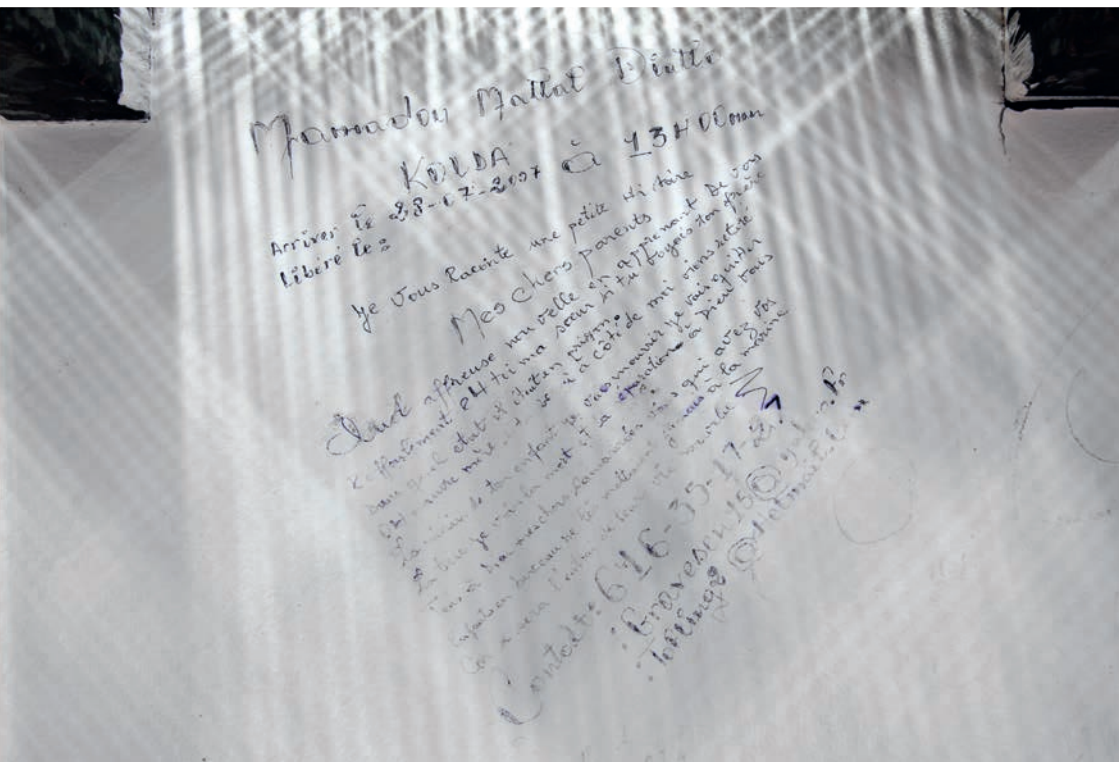
L.A.FIDA.ASS.KOM
 L.A.MARKIN.SABI
 NADAR.BASSA
 ALFONDO

The sound of the tiny bulbul's song
 Has unsettled my lover's heart
 Water mixed with orange blossoms
 Using orange blossoms as a wink of an eye
 And you my Lord, my Lord and master
 How deeply I have fallen in love, my affection for that beauty
 You took it from a chubby cheek, from the red Rose of embarrassment
 And she said no, no, and ran away
 Afraid of falling in love
 And she bowed musically
 For what the Lord had done
 and she bellowed, and bellowed, dear me, dear me.
 I told her "don't bellow and show me your white teeth"
 And she said "if that's the way it is, then get up and ask my family for my hand."
 Some young people served me coffee as sweet as honey,
 I smelled it with my own nose, it was better than cloves.
 Inside a garden of joy,
 Orange blossoms and joy for me
 A lute charmed me with its music
 The drum, tam-tam, plays for me
 And the tile roof, tiles, tiles, tiles for me

To dance, I am willing
 Chawa, chawa, the sound the quince leaf makes
 And the moon sang, calling
 Boredom in my boredom
 If you had only seen me riding atop a skinny donkey
 Who walks on three legs, like a cripple
 And people throw stones at my camel at the market
 And everyone laughs behind my back
 All around me
 But I ran away
 To meet an all-powerful king
 Who ordered me to be put away in a fort as red as blood
 He dragged me there while receiving criticism
 I'm the poet Al Asma'i, from the land of Mosul
 I concocted a poem written on a stone,
 impossible to recite for anyone who is clearheaded
 I say at the beginning
 The sound of the tiny bulbul's song

(Popular Arabic poem written by the expert Arab scholar and anthologist, Al-Asma'i [b. 740 - d. 828, Basra, Iraq])





Mamadou Mallal Diallo. Kolda [Senegal]

Arrival on July 28, 2007 at 1 PM

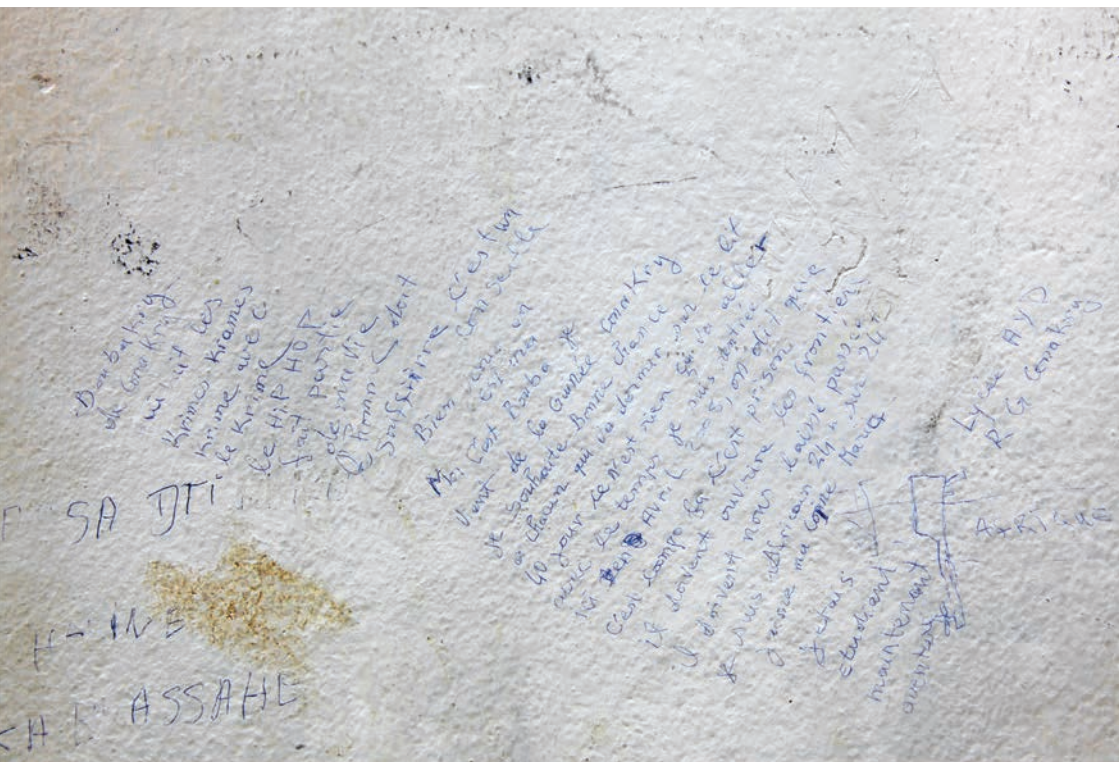
I'll tell you a short story

My dear parents

It was terrible when I heard the news about your deportation, and you my sister, if you had seen the state your brother was in when he was in prison. Oh my poor mother if only you had been at my side. Come and take your son's hand. I'm about to die; I'm leaving this earth, I can see death approaching, and our separation. Goodbye to all of you. So long my dear comrades. Those of you with babies still in their cradles don't let them venture off to sea since it will foretell the beginning of an ominous new life.

CHA-I-0094





Boubakry from Conakry
Who commits crimes krames, krime with a C
Hip hop is part of my life
People have to suffer, take my advice
Welcome to Spain

I'm Bouba from Conakry, Guinea
I wish everyone who is going to sleep in this bed good luck, 40 days
is not that long, it gets better the longer you're here, I came here
in April 2008, they say this camp is like a prison.

They should open up the borders, they should let us in.
I'm African 24 out of 24 hours.
I love my girlfriend Marie.
I used to be a student, now I'm an adventurer.
Liceo AYD RG Conakry

CHA-I-0182

dit Monsieur
J'ai été venu en France le 8 Novembre 02
J'ai quitté au Mali le 24 octobre 02 pour
l'arrivée au Sénégal le 25 octobre 02 parti
de Niamey à 11 heures pour aller à Gao
J'ai été arrivé à Gao le 28 le même jour
J'ai été à Gao pour passer des jours
on a été 12 jours sur l'océan Atlantique
J'ai été en Espagne 5 Novembre 2002 A partir
le 23 11 02 on a été à la police de Gao
Après 10 jours au Centre d'immigration
on a été 14 jours la base militaire
J'ai été 14 jours la base militaire
J'ai été 14 jours la base militaire
J'ai été 14 jours la base militaire

I reached Tenerife on November 8, 2007.
I left Mali on October 24th, a Wednesday.
I arrived in Senegal on Thursday, October 25, 2007, at 4 AM. I went to
Mbour, and took a taxi to get to Joal.
I arrived in Joal at 6:45 in the morning.

We travelled for 12 days on the Atlantic Ocean and arrived in Spain on November 5, 2007, at 10:30 PM. We spent 3 days with the police on Tenerife. We were supposed to be in the immigration detention center for 40 days, but on the 14th day, they transferred us to an immigration center in Las Palmas for the rest of our stay.

CHA-I-9850



The story of prisoner number 10 between the [Migrant Detention Center called] *El Matorral* and *Habsha* in *El Aaiun* [Western Sahara].

I pray to God that we are all freed. I'm tired of this loneliness. I'd rather die or go back to Morocco than stay here on my own.

The days go by and there is no news, or any response at all. The NGO, CEAR [Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (Spanish Committee to Aid Refugees)] still has not given us any news regarding whether our request for political asylum has been accepted or rejected.

I hope that everyone who is in this prison is freed.

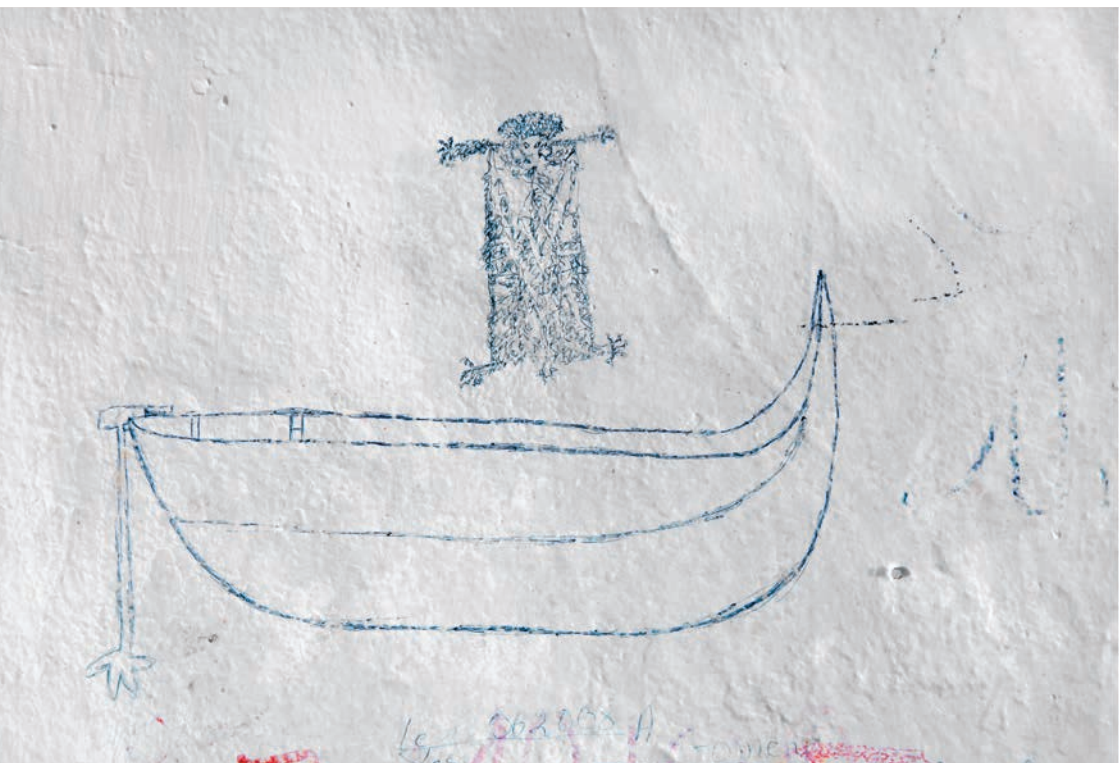
I'm the only woman among 20 people. There are two men I know among them: one is my neighbor and the other is the brother of my boyfriend, who is my life and soul.

I only have 2 more days left out of my 60-day term, and I'll be free, God willing. Today is the 58th day. Oh! Help me, God.

I can't sleep unless I take pills, I'm thinking too much.

All power and strength is held by God.

This solitude is killing me. There are 19 men and me, the only woman.



ملامحة : أتمتع كل المغاربة نساعداً ورجلاً بها يأتي :

إذا قبض عليك من طرف الشرطة الإسبانية ولو وحيداً ليس في حالة
زلبس مع مجموعة كثيرة من المغاربة ، وقائمة الشخصيات الصلي على
المخبرين إلى المغرب ولم يجدوا منك جواز سفر أو أي دليل على أنك من
مغربية ولم يكتف حال القضاء في إسبانيا ثم هو إن أعادك الشرطة إلى المغرب
فعليت أن تذكر أنك مغربي أن أنك مغربية وإليك القول أنك موريتانية الفرنسية
هذا إن لم تجد منك سابقا الشرطة إلى إسبانية جواز سفر أو أي دليل على أنك من
في تلك الشرطة المغربية التي ستستلمك في حدود بلجيكية بعد القبول والمصارعة
التي لا أنك من قبل عليك إلا كان رشوة أو ما تسمى تطلق الشرطة المغربية سراحك وتسلمك
من جديد الشرطة إلى إسبانية بصفك كنت مغرباً لموريتانيا فتعرفها الشرطة المغربية تقول
وفرتك إلى المغرب بعد ذلك تترك الشرطة المغربية من إسبانية من جديد إلى السجن الذي كنت
فيها سابقاً ولحق هذه المرة بصفة موريتانية وبعد 10 أيام يطلق سراحك وتضع في حرم
القسم في إسبانيا من المغربتين لا يبعدون عنك بلديهم ، فهذا ما فعلته أنا وقد أدلت به أحي
وسأخبر عند ما ألقاه الله تعالى وأنتهي حالي وسيداً لكم

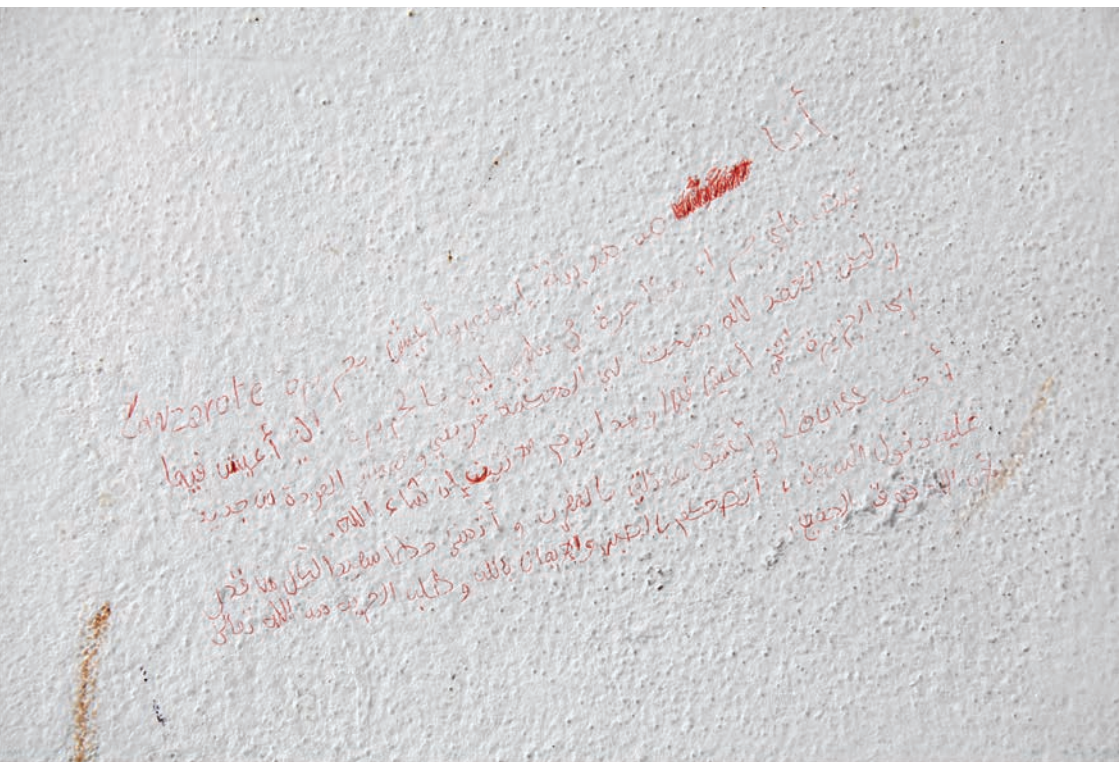
والسلام

Observation: I advise all Moroccans, women and men do the following:
If the Spanish police detains you alone, not together with a whole group of
Moroccans, and the court has sentenced your deportation, but hasn't found a
passport or other document on you that proves your Moroccan citizenship,
here is a solution: when the police sends you back to Morocco, you
absolutely deny that you are Moroccan; you have to say that you're
Mauritanian. Even if the Moroccan police at the border with Melilla beat
you, you have to flatly deny that you are Moroccan. That way, they will
return you to the Spanish police, who will release you, because Morocco
doesn't accept Mauritians. 10 days in jail and you're out.
That's what I did, and they released me. Tomorrow, I'm out of here, God
willing. I'll wait for you, good luck!
May peace be with you.



78969301





I'm from Sidi Ifni. I live on the island of Lanzarote [Canary Islands].
I was arrested because of a fight in a night club. But thank God, the court
decided to release me. I'll return to Lanzarote tomorrow, God willing.
I love Luis and adore my family in Morocco. I wish all of you prisoners here
the best of luck. I would advise you to have lots of patience and faith. And
pray to God for your freedom. God transcends everything.

T. J. Demos

Visualizing Climate Refugees

How are climate refugees visually produced? Whether forced, voluntary, or somewhere in between, migration responds to a network of forces. Economic conditions connect with social determinations, such as religious persecution or ethnic discrimination, and these join with biopolitical factors, including governmental legal frameworks and elaborate border control systems. Yet when migration responds to climate change, out of which emerges the recently proposed category of “climate refugees”—those forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of environmental transformation owing to climate change—we face a regime of visual representation that tends to erase relational and intersecting factors. The problem is that many anti-austerity activists rarely discuss climate change, and environmentalists seldom mention war or occupation, leading to a compartmentalization reinforced by the visibility of environmentally determined migration. And that visual compartmentalization carries political implications: Migrants are typically seen as disconnected from histories of entanglement that render many governments complicit in the very production of migration.

Consider three examples of climate refugee photography. First is that of the Argos Collective, a French group of photojournalists and humanitarians who dedicated one series from 2010 to climate refugees. Depicting the low-lying islands of the Maldives—presented both on the collective’s website and in their book *Climate Refugees*—their images show lands threatened by rising seas, coasts subjected to erosion, and buildings collapsing on shrinking shores. Islanders are portrayed in scenes of flooding, transforming the Maldives into the front lines of climate-change migration. Journalist and Argos member Guy-Pierre Chomette explains, “we wanted to emphasize the human dimension,

especially for those most vulnerable.”¹ The collective’s images portray these prospective refugees as victims, declining to represent aspects of the situation that would otherwise emphasize the Maldivians’ political agency in mobilizing against the petrocapitalist causes of environmental transformation. In relation to these subjects, the photographer-humanitarians model themselves as the heroic bearers of aid, culminating in a self-serving form of “wishful sinking” that correlates precisely to a photography of visual abstraction.²

Second, take the photography of John Stanmeyer, particularly his series published in *National Geographic* that captures Syrian refugees during Europe’s 2015 migration crisis. The images



Collectif Argos. *Maldives*, April 2007. Maldives has a chance to survive provided the global temperature increase does not exceed 2°C. According to the UN, the commitments made by the states just before the opening of COP21 in Paris would result in an increase in global temperature of 3 to 3.5 °C. Photo taken from the series *Réfugiés Climatiques* of the Argos collective (Editions Carré). Photography: Guillaume Collanges/Collectif Argos

accompany an essay by Paul Salopek that describes the conditions of some 100,000 Syrian refugees, including ethnic Kurds, who crossed into Turkey near the Mürşitpınar border, many occupying a refugee camp near Kilis on the Syrian border.³ The photographs show “a vast panorama of mass homelessness” and present a photography of faces—a system of representation that dramatizes the plight of figures largely detached from the structural conditions of social, political, and economic frameworks that enabled their homelessness.⁴ The images portray the immediacy of the refugees and their physical environments, including the austere camp conditions, with resignation and dread allegorized in

the dark, cloudy atmospheres, a prevailing negativity mitigated only by highlighting creative survival in difficult circumstances. It is as if we are looking through a telescope fitted with historical and political blinders—past Syrian geopolitics, decades of emergency rule, uneven economic liberalization and globalization, petrocapi-talism, uprisings of political Islam, wars with Israel, relations with Iran, interethnic and religious conflicts, all exacerbated by multiple years of environmental crisis, including a recent severe drought.

Third, consider the so-called first climate refugees of the United States, those located on the southern coast of Louisiana in Isle de Jean Charles, as captured in 2016 by photographer Josh Haner of the *New York Times*. His lavish color landscapes show a landmass at water's edge, where more than 90 percent of the island has washed away since 1955. (This watery territory was the inspiration for "the Bathtub," the setting for Benh Zeitlin's Oscar-nominated 2012 film, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.) We learn in the accompanying text by Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson that "human-caused climate change" has warmed the planet, bringing "rising sea levels, stronger storms, increased flooding, harsher droughts and dwindling freshwater supplies," in addition to more extreme and destructive hurricanes.⁵ Isle de Jean Charles has been further harmed by water channels cut by loggers and oil companies, though none of these are identified in the text or shown in Haner's photographs, which instead focus on local residents, "among the nation's most vulnerable," including Native Americans of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe and the United Houma Nation. The range of images are on the whole less victimizing than the Argos Collective's Maldives or Stanmeyer's Syria but still focus with tunnel-like vision on the effects of climate change on people. They do not mention the relation to earlier histories of colonial displacement and impoverishment of local peoples or comment on the fact that the very government that is funding the massive relocation effort of Isle de Jean Charles's population at a cost of \$48 million is the same one that subsidized

past fossil-fuel development and geoengineering projects that have rendered the coastline increasingly unlivable.

Images of climate refugees mirror the media's visualization of refugees in general. The media—and particularly the corporate media—commonly present a spectacle of victimhood seen through a voyeuristic lens that decontextualizes figures from the ground of historical and structural causes, focusing instead on personal traumas, vague background contexts, and present physical circumstances. The visual construction of such images tends to support views of migrants as threatening to European and North



Josh Haner
An Aerial View of Isle de Jean Charles, La., April 7, 2016. A \$48 million grant for Isle de Jean Charles is the first allocation of federal tax dollars to move an entire community struggling with the effects of climate change.

American cultures, fueling and perpetuating extremist political rhetoric and enabling viewers to detach migration from its complex determinants that, were they taken into consideration, would introduce very different solutions than the ones typically on offer.

During 2015, more than one million migrants reached Europe (mainly via Greece and Italy), as reports the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), charged with protecting the rights and well-being of refugees worldwide.⁶ Of these, 84 percent came from the world's recent top-ten refugee-producing countries—including Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq—informing UNHCR's conviction that most of those arriving in Europe were fleeing war and persecution.⁷ The massive displacement was said

to constitute “the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War.”⁸ Its magnitude has jeopardized the European Union’s commitment to open borders and borderless travel within its Schengen territory. The crisis has also threatened the EU’s welfare policies, its fundamental political cohesion and democratic principles and supported movements like Brexit in the United Kingdom. The crisis was narrated by a corporate media frenzy characterized by sensationalist reporting and imaging, bringing extreme rightwing politicians to greater visibility. These figures variously accused European countries like Germany of incentivizing migration by providing care, housing, and benefits to refugees and asylum-seekers and invariably letting in so-called terrorists and Islamic extremists.⁹

With this framing of migration—abetted by the media’s visual constructions of refugees—we purportedly face what Dutch rightwing politician Geert Wilders calls an “Islamic invasion,” a typical example of fear-mongering Islamophobia once thought beyond the pale. But now, propelled by horrific terror attacks in Europe and the United States, and couched in a reactionary media environment, reporters and politicians feel licensed to draw generalizing and stereotyping conclusions about all migrants. Their rhetoric is amplified and commercialized, particularly in the sensationalist press, and is frightening for its antidemocratic elements. A similar discourse has emerged across the Atlantic in Donald Trump’s presidential administration and its legitimization of the so-called alt-right, which some critics refer to as neofascist.¹⁰ It lends further support to building walls and militarizing border security—with full-spectrum dominance technology, including automated weaponry with right-to-kill algorithms and futuristic-sounding biotech applications that target genomic patterns keyed to ethnic traits—as the dominant framework with which to address migration. Accordingly, migration figures as a criminal menace attended to by a billion-dollar-a-year corporate-state-military industry, rather than as an involuntary mode of behavioral adaptation for human survival in complex and insufferable emergency conditions, or an

opportunity for cosmopolitan hospitality and humanitarian empathy for those in desperate need.¹¹ Instead of locating the causes of migration in Western policies of austerity, unfair trade agreements, neoliberal structural adjustments, military intervention, and resource wars, migrants, who are in part the effects of such complex systems, are blamed for being responsible for the “migration crisis.”¹²

By 2050, we will face an even more critical situation, with up to one billion people displaced globally owing to climate change—constituting 1,000 times the number of migrants who came to Europe in 2015.¹³ These future migrants include subsistence farmers, fishermen, and coastal dwellers, most located in the Global South, who will move northward in hope of better lives, economic opportunity, existential security, and survival. In this regard, environmental factors, as many analysts observe, compound economic, social, and political ones, leading to more violence and providing further motivating conditions for migration.¹⁴

Climate refugees are at the center of what Christian Parenti terms a “catastrophic convergence” of poverty, violence, and climate change, defining “the most colossal set of events in human history.”¹⁵ That these elements are difficult to distinguish is highlighted by author Rebecca Solnit, who argues that “climate change *is* violence,” in the sense that environmental transformation results from criminally negligent behaviors in industrial and corporate practice, whether that means polluting and logging tropical rain forests, failing to regulate healthy drinking water, or contributing to climate change through fossil-fuel extraction while funding climate denial.¹⁶ Making matters worse is recent economic history. After decades of Western-led neoliberal structural adjustments, promoted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Council, debtor states worldwide have been stripped of resources, their institutions of welfare, education, healthcare, housing, and infrastructure tragically defunded. They have thus been left with

few provisions to help establish safe, secure, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable homelands for multitudes, particularly in the Global South. According to Naomi Klein, the climate violence is worsened by the fact that it comes at a time of neoliberal ascendancy, which demands privatization, minimizes welfare, healthcare, and education funding, and maximizes free-trade principles. Neoliberal economics compromises the ability of states to adapt to environmental transformation, which then exacerbates poverty and further violence.¹⁷

Moreover, climate migration has no easy solution to be found in the framework of existing migration law, as there is no currently recognized category for the climate refugee (article 1A of the 1951 Geneva Convention grants refugee status only to those fleeing persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social association, or political opinion). Some legal theorists argue that recognizing environmental refugees under the Geneva Conventions will grant them internationally assured protection, independent of the laws of their own governments.¹⁸ The term *environmental refugee*, defined in a 1985 United Nations Environment Programme policy paper, designates “those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption,” which means “any physical, chemical, and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or resource base) that render it temporarily or permanently unsuitable to support human life.”¹⁹ That definition makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to separate the various factors that produce migration, which is exceedingly challenging to represent visually.

As we’ve seen, most photography of migrants focuses on simple, figurative depictions, without including the complexity of diverse environmental causes. Many artists also participate in this iconography or go further, producing representations of migrants that offer empathic gestures and guilt-relieving identifications, as when Chinese artist Ai Weiwei had himself photographed by Rohit Chawla posing on a beach as Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian

refugee who tragically drowned in 2016 while fleeing to a Greek island. The image of Kurdi's body washed up on shore was reproduced internationally, but such images—Ai Weiwei's included—tend to keep viewers entranced with eyes fixed upon a photography and discourse of *effects*, while the structural *causes* remain invisible.

Rather than endlessly fixating on the plight of the unfortunate—who nonetheless do deserve greater empathy, institutions of hospitality and transition, and legal protection and political integration within our environmentally shifting global society—we would do well to redirect our energies toward the causes of climate migration in the first instance. By transforming our approaches to migration from short-term crisis management to the long-term objectives of economic and political inclusion, greater equality, and ecological well-being, we can better advance the movement for an altogether different world, one of justice, equality, and sustainability. What would a visual culture of causes look like?

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Simon Sheikh

Visualizing Lack and Loss: Contemporary Art and the Representation of Capital and Its Failures

In the 1920s, Sergei Eisenstein attempted a filmic adaptation of Karl Marx's *Capital*, and in the early 2000s a group of artists in Berlin tried to make a film based on Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri's *Empire*, itself an attempt at updating and expanding Marx's notion of capital. For a variety of reasons, neither film was realized. But what both abandoned projects grappled with were issues of visualizing complexity and imaging the intangible: the world economy as a *political* economy. The problem is twofold: how to show "economics" and how to show the "economic" as political—that is, making visual both that which is naturalized and that which is invisible or hidden. Moreover, if such representations of the political economy are to be truly Marxist, they cannot be purely descriptive but must also be transformative. Finally, capital itself has undergone historical shifts (as the linguistic expansion from *capital* to *empire* hints at) from the historical form of industrialism and colonialism to the current forms of financialization and globalization. As Fredric Jameson remarks,

Any creative reading of Capital today is a translation process, whereby a language and a conceptuality invented for the first industrial age of Victorian society is transcoded by remaining faithful to its "original" construction, and secures its contemporary representationality by virtue of a grasp of the ambitious dimensions and the structural intricacy of its initial representation.¹

The (In)completeness of Maps

In Marx's own work we find a particular *representation* of capital, to use Jameson's term, running not only to several volumes but using a variety of examples, from the analytical and

theoretical to the political, and making extensive use of calculations and statistics, as well as heavy use of imagery and moral outrage when describing the conditions of the working class—not just to define capitalism but to overthrow it through the analysis itself. This task is certainly no less difficult today, not least in the form of image production, as no single image or set of images can, presumably, visualize the complexity of contemporary financial capital, which is, if not invisible, then at least virtual. In true Jamesonian fashion, Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle propose that this politicoaesthetic work become multiauthored and take the form of cartography: a cognitive mapping that is twofold, to visualize both the social totality and the lived experience that is contemporary capitalism: “What is at stake is the figurability or representation of our present and its shaping effect on political action. In a strong interpretation, the mapping of capitalism is a precondition for identifying any ‘levers,’ nerve-centres or weak links in the political anatomy of contemporary domination.”²

Mapping, then, is not merely descriptive but potentially transformative—a way of developing strategies and tactics for action and resistance to capitalization. This project can also be identified as positing a basic lack, a lack of overview of the world we are in, potentially leading to inaction rather than action, since which way to go with a map? And it can be a way of describing a lack in the form of gaps and openings, identifying places where the totalization of capital is lacking or weakening, and thus places for political action, where spaces of capital can become spaces of hope, as described by David Harvey.³

Moreover, Toscano and Kinkle’s *Cartographies of the Absolute* is itself a mapping of artistic practices and cultural production visualizing aspects of the workings of capital. They list artworks and films that deal in cartography that, when brought together as a sort of curatorial constellation, create a more total representation of contemporary capital, where cultural production does the work of illustration that Marx attempted with his use of statistics and projections, *as well as* the rallying

work Marx attempted with his use of moral language and inflammatory rhetoric in the *Communist Manifesto*. Toscano and Kinkle thus provide a list of specific practitioners and works, as well as a description of certain methods of creating totalizing views in film and photography. As can be gauged from their book's title, they privilege forms of mapping, thus including such artists as the late Mark Lombardi and Allan Sekula, who are emblematic of the potential and problems of mapmaking. In writing about Lombardi's complex, meticulous diagrams of the connections among various corporations, states, and individuals, they suggest that the high attention to detail makes the maps virtually impossible to use for any meaningful orientation, which may be the whole point. A similar feeling of being caught in a web of meaning encapsulates any viewer who has experienced the work of Lombardi's European counterpart, the Bureau d'études, whose immersive installations map current political, social, and economic systems of interrelations. Sekula, on the other hand, made maps using a single commodity that he then traced, as in his magisterial *Fish Story* project (1989–1995), which creates a fairly rounded portrait of how capitalism works by “simply” following and photographing the fishing industry from raw material, refinement, secondary production, through to retail, consumption, and waste.

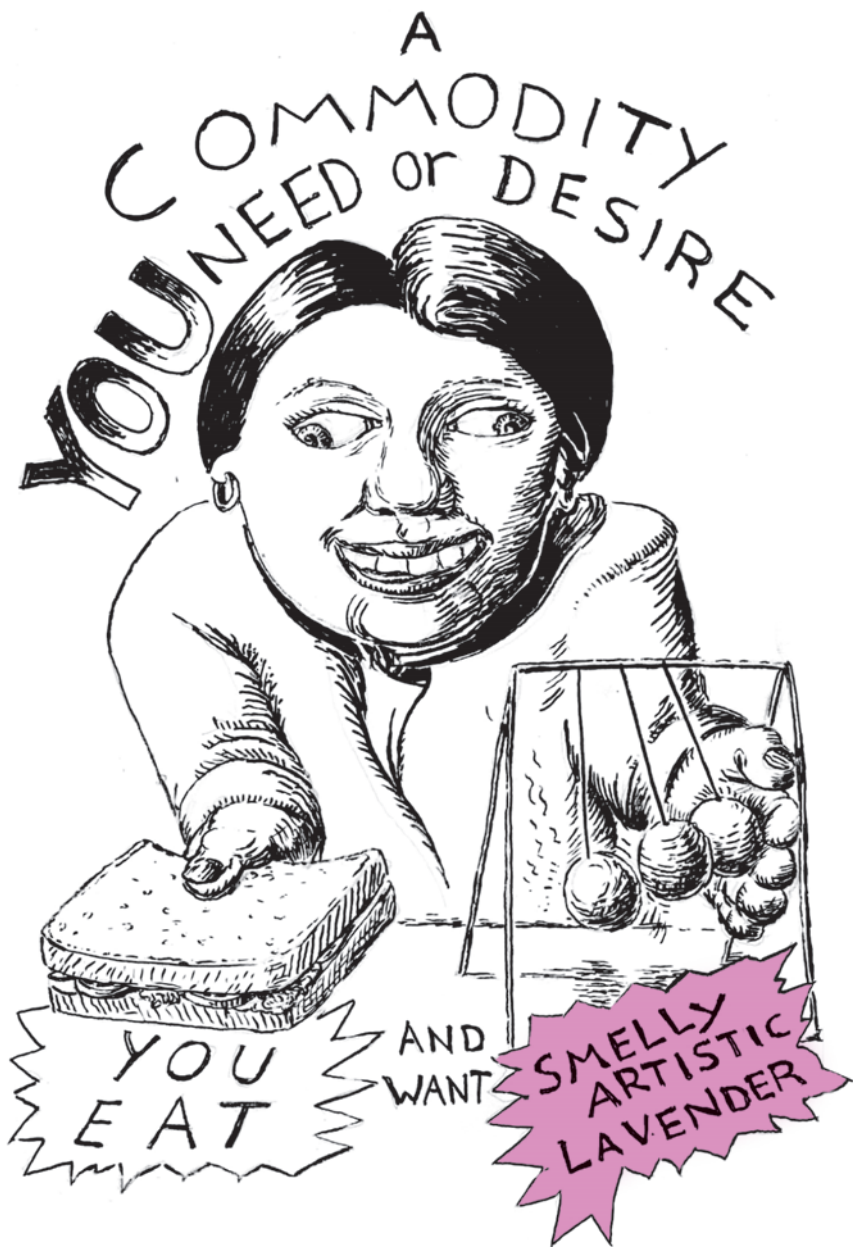
Capital as Toolbox

Sekula's usage of photography and text has often led to his practice being grouped under the heading of conceptual art, as a continuation of the type of cartography instigated by Hans Haacke and his (in)famous linkage of the Guggenheim's patrons to real estate speculation as a real live social system (a sort of partial totality), where the aesthetics of administration is paired with the critique of institutions. A conceptual approach to the depiction of capital need not take only the form of cartography, however. Intervention, idea, and gesture are encountered particularly in contemporary conceptual

approaches inspired by feminist thought. Examples include Maria Eichhorn's so-called financial pieces, such as her freezing of a set amount of capital for documenta11 in 2002 or her suspension of work for the duration of an exhibition period and the shutting down of the Chisenhale Gallery in London in 2016; or Katya Sander's works on financialization itself, exploring derivatives and algorithms in the video installations *Estimations* and *Production of Futures*, both from 2009. In these works, the mechanisms of contemporary capital are not so much mapped as demonstrated, with the notion of the gesture supplanting that of the figure, a route not taken in *Cartographies of the Absolute*. Finally, the collective Capital Drawing Group, consisting of the artists Andy Cooper, Enda Deburka, Dean Kenning, and John Russell, is working on a complete cartography of the concepts from Marx's *Capital*, twenty-eight chapters and running, through drawings, diagrams, and collages that can be extracted from the book itself, like tools from a toolbox, and used for political thought both within and without the art context. Rephrasing the title of Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar's *Reading Capital*, the Capital Drawing Group asks what it could mean to read *Capital* today? How does one situate this historic text within contemporary conditions of capital through reading? Is it possible to shift reading from contemplation toward actualization? Does this require special forms of reading and discussion, such as sharing and comparing interpretations and translations? Moreover, how should this collective process involve acts of visualization and presentation?

Toward the end of their episodic but never less than fascinating book, Toscano and Kinkle return to the birthplace of capital, England, and the depiction of industrial wastelands and dead labor to be found there. These landscapes differ from the expressions of power in classical landscape painting and are rather about powerlessness, concerning themselves with decay rather than grandeur, paying testimony to urbanization as a form of alienation of the subject. Throughout the last half of the





twentieth century, the theory of alienation was one of the main focuses of the “artistic critique” of capital (to borrow Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s term), whether directly, as in the use of Brechtian aesthetics in cultural production at large, from situationism to Godardian cinema to punk rock and beyond. Alienation, once frowned upon by communists, became the main focus of the philosophical and political coinage of the term *immaterial labor*, with its focus on subjectivity and productivity, and its conjoining of post-Fordist capitalism with the political regime of neoliberalism (and its twin, globalization). Perhaps not surprisingly then, many artistic projects have concerned themselves with showing the effects of capitalism rather than the workings of it, focusing on subjectivity and suffering, affect and alienation—the failures of capital and its colonization of our minds. Indeed, this was the focus of my own modest attempt at transforming capital into an exhibition.⁴

Art and Alienation

The alienating effects of capital on subjectivity have had their own filmic adaptation not just in the examples mentioned above but in the final work of director Robert Bresson, *L’argent* (Money), from 1983. While Bresson is most often referred to as a spiritual, even Catholic filmmaker, we can now view *L’argent* as an exegesis of alienation, of the devastating effects capital can have in its monetary form, where what eats out the soul is not fear but money itself. Bresson’s use of nonactors removes any trace of Hollywood identification with the characters, so we watch with almost clinical detachment, of a piece with their apparent detachment and alienation within the story. The film follows a fake 500 franc note as it passes from one subject to the next, devoid of use value, with only an exchange value of poverty, finally leaving the main protagonist not only debased and inhuman but a cold-blooded murderer. But the real cruelty in the film lies in how the effects of money, the counterfeit bank note, increase as the note exchanges hands from one person to the next, trickling down through the class system, from the

young bourgeois man to the middle-class shopkeeper and finally to the proletarian deliveryman who is falsely accused of circulating the bill, setting off a chain of loss, anger, and crime.

Alienation is not only the cornerstone of situationist art practices and their critique of the image and the spectacular; it runs through much of contemporary art, as periodized from the 1960s to today, where it has sometimes been criticized and other times celebrated, although most often both take place at the same time, as in the much imitated but never bettered practice of Andy Warhol and his Factory. In contemporary art, then, strategies of pop art, appropriation, and current uses of commodity fetishism in the digital realm can be fully subsumed under the heading of “alienation”—in the alienated labor of industrial production as opposed to artisanship present in the production of these art works, and in the empty wish fulfillment of the commodities themselves, whether presented as art works or circulated as luxury consumer goods. No irony was intended, then, when West German pop artists labeled their style “capitalist realism,” a phrase Mark Fisher chose for the title of his book about alienation and depression brought on by neoliberal hegemony and its insistence that there are no possible alternative ways of organizing contemporary societies, particularly after the fall of real existing communism in 1989/1990. Here, capitalism not only ferociously consumes all resources, natural as well as human, but also something we realistically have to accept as an endgame, or even as a condition of former-ness and loss, a sort of post-utopia that makes even commodity fetishism a primarily nostalgic drive, seeking a temporary fix to a time that is out of joint: “Capitalism is what is left when beliefs have collapsed at the level of ritual or symbolic elaboration, and all that is left is the consumer-spectator, trudging through the ruins and the relics.”⁵





Is There No Alternative?

In this sense, capitalist realism is a form of resignation, an acceptance of capitalism as the only game in town, no matter how untenable, and a sense of nostalgia for defunct utopias of social justice and equality. It is also, however, a state of depression, with no escape possible from capitalism and its destruction of the soul and the soil. In Fischer's analysis, this capitalist realism is now so deep-seated that it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, which certainly seems to be confirmed by the lack of a general political, critical-renaissance-of-the-left project in the wake of the credit crisis and the general "realist" response by all governments, whether leftist or rightist, of austerity measures for public programs and financial aid for the banks. It is as if no one dares to think of an end to capitalism, because this would also mean the end of the whole world. However, this "long, dark night of the end of history" also creates the very possibility of social change, since "from a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again."⁶ Hence the book's subtitle, skillfully turning Margaret Thatcher's TINA claim (there is no alternative) into a question: Is there no alternative? What the book makes possible is to think in terms of alternatives *in spite of* the malaise of our times and to do so by identifying not only a lack but a loss.

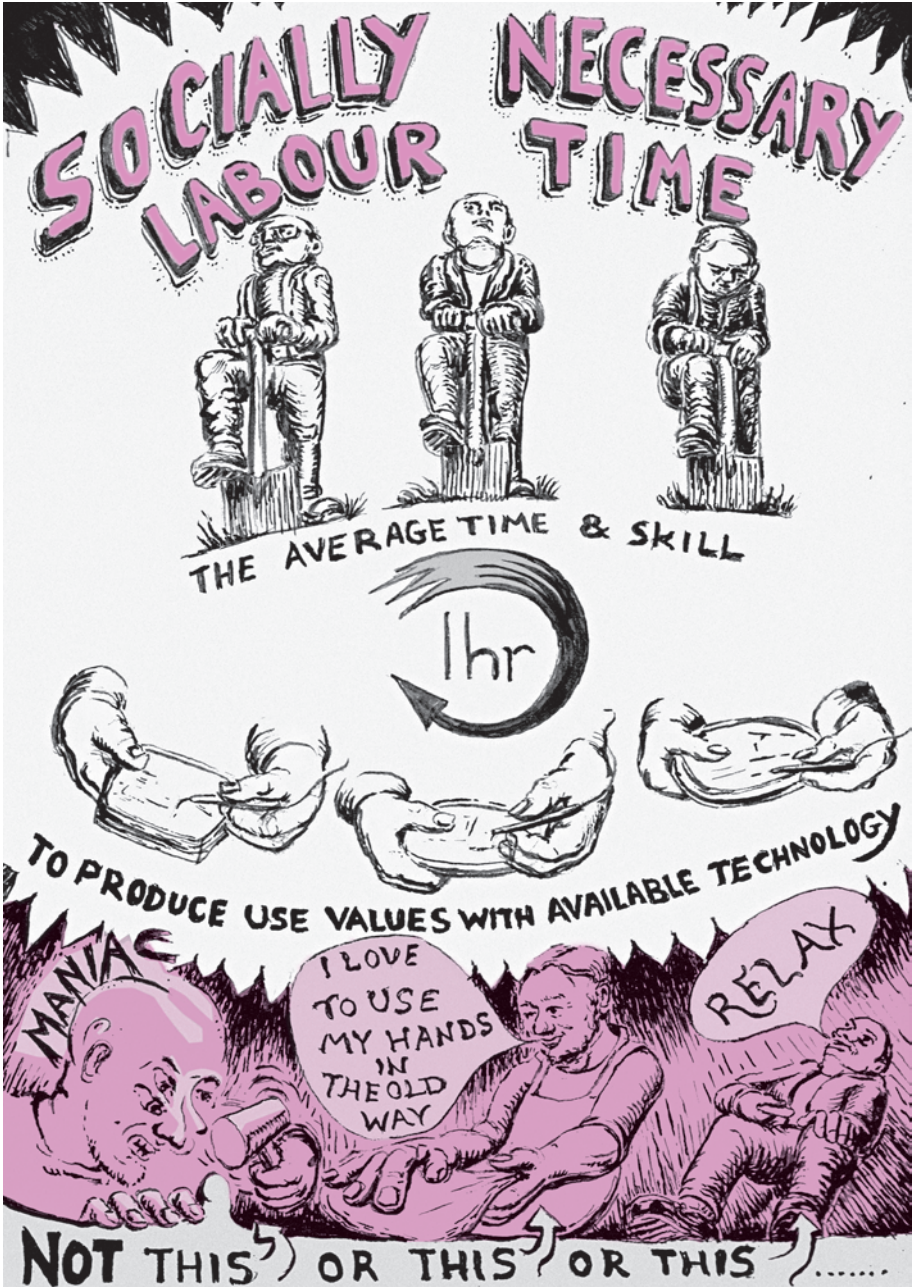
Today, almost a decade from the publication of *Capitalist Realism*, the articulation of loss as well as lack is more prescient than ever. The dominant global response to the loss of any political horizon of possibility and to the widespread sense of the lack of opportunities for change and alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and globalization has taken purely reactionary forms such as protectionism, nationalism, racism, and rightwing populism, from the Philippines to India to Hungary to the United States (to name but a few). As much as these new victorious political movements of the ultra-right are, in both senses of the word, offensive (militarily and morally),

they are nonetheless retrogressive: offering a return to an undefined (and wholly fictitious) period of ethnic cleanliness and monocultural sovereignty before capitalist globalization—a time to which some of us can somehow return and others, obviously, cannot. What is at stake here is not so much a sense of futurity but of direction: to the imagined past, a retro-utopia. To control the present, then, in a time of no imaginable future is to control the past. This is especially taxing on the art world and its institutions of circulation, such as museums, magazines, biennales, and art fairs, as these have, in many ways, expressed the cultural logic of globalist capital expansion, propagating multiculturalism even if within a recognizable international style of contemporary art itself. As such, one may predict that the very centers of the art system are crumbling. But if this is so, our task for the future is not to reclaim institutions but to institute differently, to perform the institution as recently suggested by Athena Athanasiou:

More than 25 years after the “end of history” and the demise of actually existing socialism, TINA (There Is No Alternative) aspires to become the new canon, affirming the axiomatic inevitability of global capitalism and precluding the possibility of alternative sociopolitical becomings. Therefore, I propose that instead of treating the interminable question of the capacity to act in terms of “possible versus impossible,” we examine what it might mean to institute “otherwise,” politically and performatively, “as if it were possible.”⁷

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7. Athena Athanasiou, “Performing the Institution,” in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 679.



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