

The Life Of Ghosts In The Periphery Of The World

Povzetek

Življenje duhov na periferiji sveta

V članku predlagam teoretično razlikovanje treh različnih oblik prikazni, ki prežijo na sodobno zgodovino, od katerih bolj znani dve zadevata časovne napetosti med preteklostjo, sedanjostjo in prihodnostjo, medtem ko tretja zadeva razmerje med centrom in periferijo svetovnih gospodarstev. Osredotočamo se na to tretjo vrsto fantazmagorične napetosti, da bi raziskali pogoje za nastanek modernega zgodovinskega časa in za njegovo sodobno izčrpavanje.

Ključne besede: Zgodovinski čas, Marx, Hegel, duhovi, periferija

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Abstract

In the article we propose the theoretical differentiation of three different spectral forms that haunt modern history, two of them – which are better known – concern the temporal tensions between past, present and future, while the third concerns the relation between center and periphery of world-economies. We focus on this third type of phantasmagorical tension in order to explore the conditions for the emergence of modern historical time and for its contemporary exhaustion.

Key words: Historical time, Marx, Hegel, Ghosts, Periphery

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Introduction

The substance of the phantasmagorical seems to arise from a short-circuit between being and non-being, something which-is-not appears from within what-is. This is how the permanence of the past, or the anticipation of the future in the present might acquire a *spectral form*: its content is always a lack in being that parasitizes being - something which is no-more or not-yet - while its form is defined by the way two incommensurable regions of reality suddenly collide, like fantasy and actuality (Fisher, 2014). What we will argue, however, is that this spectral form is not exclusively bound with temporal paradoxes and conflicts: it is also possible for ghosts to be shaped by the clash of incommensurate regions of *space* - conjured by »tectonic«-rifts between places that exist simultaneously, but within different worlds.

Temporalization Of History

We are interested here in modern ghosts, not the modern *Geist*. Unlike the Hegelian Spirit, a ghost is not infinite, it does not take the form of an age or a world, but something that moves *within* a world. Unlike Spirit, which would turn the "infinite loss" of any ahistorical roots into the "infinite gain" of historical transformation, ghosts are made of situated losses - of unpaid debts, forgotten scenes, lost loves, terrible injustices. At the same time, unlike deities, demons and angels, ghosts do not come from another world: they travel from a moment in time to another, from one place to another - their spectral form is dependent on the delimitation of different zones of the world, such as the qualitative difference between the components of time's arrow: past, present, future.

The establishment of this qualitative distinction between temporal components is what Reinhart Koselleck called the process of the *temporalization of history* (Koselleck 2004). Through it, the arrow of time comes to overdetermine the social and political body with its irreversibility, radically differentiating the vectors of history, to the point of accomplishing a paradoxical feat: on the one hand, it gives the Western world its singular idea of accumulative progress and increasing disenchantment, while, on the other, creating fertile grounds for new ghostly forms.

History out of time

When Friedrich Schlegel encountered *The battle of Alexander at Issus* in the Louvre, painted by Albert Altdorfer in 1529, he wondered to himself if that great panorama, picturing a crucial battle of Alexander the Great against the Persian Empire, in 333BC, truly was a landscape painting (Wood, 1993:25). For Schlegel, the greatest accomplishment of the painting was not its spectacular rendition of the incredible proportions of the battle, but rather to have captured, through an almost absolute use of anachronism, something of the very experience of history.

If, on the one hand, Altdorfer had used every available historical record to accurately represent the numbers and details of Alexander's battle - the number of soldiers on each side, the dead and the wounded, everything listed and accounted for in the framed description above the scene - on the other, he depicted events of the past as if they were contemporaneous to him. Alexander the Great is painted in the resemblance of the-then recently-deceased - roman Emperor Maximilian and the Persian army of Darius III clearly mirrors the Turks of the Ottoman Empire who, in that same year of 1529, had attempted an invasion of Vienna. The anachronism is crowned by the absence, in the midst of all the information about the battle listed on top of the painting, of that one number which would rarely escape any modern historian: the actual date of the battle - an omission which consolidates the superposition of two separate historical moments into one scene.

It is this double temporal inscription, this way of capturing a sort of transtemporal availability of events, which inclined the critic from the XIX century to submit the spatial and dramatic prowess of the painting to its depiction of history and time. If, spatially, the painting pictured hundreds of thousands of soldiers in battle, temporally, it depicted twice as many men, by making events separated by 1800 years superimpose on those hills.

However, what Schlegel called »anachronism« was not, by any means, an effect of singular style, as if the painter was ahead of the curve when forcing incompatible historical moments within one sole scene. What we find in Altdorfer's painting is rather the effect of inhabiting a certain common »semantics of history« (Koselleck 2004) in which the historical meaning of an event is determined by its capacity to transcend not a given age, but time as such. The battle of the Macedonians against the Persians and the battle of the Europeans against the Turks could be made equivalent only insofar as both of them pointed to an atemporal conflict, to a point where history touches on the eternity of the great deeds and the great personalities. Alexander the Great is not an »specter haunting Europe«: the re-

semblance between events rather points to the manifestation of one same atemporal spirit, given that both battles were struggles for the expansion of God's reign on Earth.

What we usually call »circular time« (Koselleck 2004, Gould 1988) is, in fact, the structure of an experience of history in which past and future organize our space of experience and our horizon of expectation in an essentially homogeneous way: all the future has in store for us is what has already happened - so that the destiny of all great battles of the future is stored in the battles of the past, which one should study just as all the great generals of the past have done. The strong, qualitative opposition here is not the one between past and future, but the one between the temporal and the atemporal - not the difference of the present and the future world, but between this world and the otherworldly.

Historical Progress

This, nonetheless, was not the way Schlegel himself inhabited history. After all, the German critic could only have taken the coincidence between past and present in Altdorfer's painting for an anachronism if he himself had been immersed in a way of experiencing historical time in which past and future are qualitatively and structurally distinct. It is from within an experience of history oriented by the expectation that the future is not a mere repetition of the past that repetitions can become legible as such and interpreted as effects of a localized action. This new experience of historical time - which takes hold of Europe sometime between the XVIth century, of Altdorfer, and the XIXth, of Schlegel - which we have called, following Koselleck, the "temporalization of history". That which could, until then, only wait for us in eternity - the existence of another world - suddenly gains a place within time and now awaits for us in the future.

Rather than the circular reinforcement between the *space of experience* - that is, between what the past teaches us to be possible - and the *horizon of expectations* - what we imagine the future holds for us - in a closed circuit which therefore identifies the radically new with the atemporal, the temporalization of history produces a disjunction between experience and expectations. The way the past informs the present becomes significant only in the measure that it allows us to tear ourselves away from it, towards a future that is still underdetermined. This is the experience of history encapsulated by Marx's famous statement that »men make their own history« - hence the horizon of expectation, which is open and in dispute - »but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected

circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past» (Marx, 2013) - hence the space of experience, the constraints of the past over us.

But why, from the breach between past and future, opened by the modern experience of history, would ghosts emerge?

This question is perhaps one of the founding questions of the philosophy of history. It is precisely the underlying impasse which might perplex us when encountering, in the works of the same philosopher, the claims that »history teaches us that we learn nothing from history« (Hegel, 1995: 59) and that »a revolution of the State is only accepted in the opinion of men when it repeats itself. Through repetition, what was only occasional and possible becomes reality and its effective« (Hegel, 2004: 231). The same thought which recognizes the impossibility of historical repetition, recognizes its inevitability. The same world which secularized historical time found itself obliged to constantly negotiate with the specters of the past.

The Utopian Curse

We could call this predicament, the impasse which overdetermines our capacity to act and to effect a rupture with the past, the *utopian curse*. »Utopian« because the ghosts of the past contaminate our space of experience, our capacity to project ourselves through our actions towards the future realization of what has not yet been experienced.

The plague cast upon us by these ghosts has a perfectly logical form. When we look at the past, we see several failed revolutions-like a revolution whose republican ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity were used, in a second moment, to justify and promote the colonial expansion of an Empire. The tragedy of this false start impresses upon us, therefore, the mission of starting again. Thus the utopic curse, which shapes the very idea of tradition in modernity, is put in place: the very transmission of a historical mission, the imperative to start again, blocks, in the same measure, its realization. The same movement which would distance us from the past - a revolutionary transformation-brings us closer to it- for it was the revolutions of the past which left us with this task. When we act towards the new it is impossible to repeat the past - for we are condemned to the construction of a new future - and it is, at the same time, impossible not to repeat it - for the construction of a new future was the tragic motto of the failures which preceded us.

To encounter this ghostly presence cursing the future we only need to continue following Marx: in the *18th of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* it is said that »men make their own history« but also that:

»just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language« (Marx, 2013: 2)

The Springtime of the Peoples conjured up the French Revolution-and led, next, to the election of Bonaparte's nephew, to the *coup* that would make him an Emperor, and to a new cycle of economic and colonial expansion.

The Dystopian Curse

This, however, is not the only ghost to extract its substance from the modern »dis-conjuncture«-there is also the specter which extracts its form from the future, which echoes in the present through our horizon of expectations and which, therefore, contaminates not so much our capacity to act as our powers of imagination. We could call its effect on us the *dystopian curse*-»dystopian« because it deviates the course of the imagination which seeks to advance towards a place outside our current space of experience: rather than arrive at a world that has not yet being experienced, our imagination runs around in circles, doing nothing more than expand the limits of the already-known (Fisher 2014; Berardi 2011).

This phantasmagorical prison takes, once more, the form of a logical impasse: to imagine the end of something which is nevertheless constitutive of who we are requires us to preserve some form of continuity between the present and this future state in the imagination and therefore to actually postpone this final moment (Arantes 2004). He who imagines his own funeral cannot but reconstruct his own gaze over the coffin. From the standpoint of this impasse, then, the only way to imagine the end of *our* world becomes to imagine the end of imagination, the end of *the* world as such - given that any content we might ascribe to our horizon of future expectations would contribute, at the same time, to its emptying out. Therefore, the only future which is not a mere extension of the present is the future without an idea, the future that is the end of the future.

But, in emptying out the imagination of the future, these specters transform, above all, the past. If the dystopian curse imprisons us between the imperative to imagine the end of capitalism - for we must strive towards the new - and the impossibility of doing so - for our imagination only

expands the present - then the only place left for us to deposit our expectations of novelty becomes the ruins of past experiences. And so it is that we are condemned to dig the ruins of culture in search for the "traditions of the oppressed" (Benjamin 2007) - though we remain incapable of distinguishing if this compulsive digging around helps us to recuperate aborted futures or further consolidates their final saturation, absorbing them into our stale imaginative powers. The infernal circuit binding tragedy to farce, condemning actions to repetition, is substituted here by another one, linking *nostalgia* and *nihilism* (Badiou, 1999, 2013).

The Continent Of History

We have tracked, thus far, the ghostly effects of the temporalization of history. On the one hand, the spectral form of impossible beginnings casting an utopian curse upon us, compelling and preventing us from acting, like Hamlet's father. On the other hand, the specter of impossible endings casting a dystopian curse on us, compelling and preventing us from imagining, like a Lovecraftian monster.

But how did this happen? What took place in the Western world in this short interval of no more than three hundred years between Altdorfer's painting and Schlegel's visit to the Louvre? It is not a matter of knowing how to create a new start beyond farcical repetitions, nor of knowing how to imagine the end of our predicament without nihilistically postponing it. It is rather a matter of understanding *how we kickstarted the historical machine of progress to begin with*. What feeds Mandelstam's beast of broken vertebrae?

Let us anticipate the hypothesis that will guide us from here on now: *modern historical time feeds on space*.

The discovery of the »New World« which takes place around the XVth and XVIth centuries, is certainly a key-element in the constitution of the *Neuzeit* of modernity. What should strike us, however, is that the arrival of Europeans in the new continent in no way led to an immediate rupture in the semantics of circular history, which Altdorfer exemplified for us. On the contrary: the emergence of this unknown territory indicated to its European contemporaries the unequivocal imminence of the end of the world. The very idea of »discovery«, in fact, is anachronistic, for Christopher Colombus himself treated this European event rather as a *restauration*: the consummation of the work of Christ through the reunification of the totality of the world. Once the divine work was accomplished we would finally enter the end times - a certainty explicitly noted, for example, in the book of prophecies compiled by Columbus himself in 1501, where we find his

calculation, based on holy scriptures, that, counting from 1492, we would be only a hundred and fifty years away from the end of the world. This could help us understand why the treatises and reports produced by the great explorers of the so-called New World are filled with monsters and grotesque creatures which did not really challenge the existing tropes of European imagination: the terrible figures glimpsed at in the seas and forests of the uncharted lands seemed to spring straight from the works of Grünenwald, Dürer or Cranach the Old, where they already incarnated the decrepitude of civilized morals (Lascault, 2004).

The feeling of the imminence of the end also inhabits, in fact, the *Battle of Alexander at Issus*. The reconciliation of Christianity with its rightful planetary domain implied, after all, that the time had come for Muslims, Jews and the faithless to recognize the consummation of the Christian faith, in a final battle of light against darkness. The expulsion of Jews from Vienna in 1517 - at a time when Altdorfer was in fact the local consul for foreign affairs! - and the siege of the city by the Ottoman Empire in 1529 were both taken as signs that confirmed the imminent arrival of the Judgement Day. It is no wonder, then, that our painter chose to superimpose the battle of Alexander against the Persians and the fight against the Turks: the expansion of the Macedonian Empire was largely recognized at the time as an event which kickstarted the Hellenistic age, a turning point - or even the beginning - of universal history. The battle of Vienna would thus signal the consummation of this same process, the moment where the two extreme points of history would come together.

Spatial expansion, therefore, is not enough to set in motion a new »world time« (Wallerstein 2004, Braudel, 1979). »Discovery« did not mean, at the time, an opening to the unknown - on the contrary, it perfectly retained its biblical meaning: both »revelation« and »end« - in other words, *apocalypse*.

If we cannot explain this transformation solely by considering maritime expansion, neither can we hold science responsible for the ignition of the modern historical machine (Chauí, 1998). It suffices here to recall that both Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton believed that the possibility of reading »the book of nature« through experimentation and mathematics only confirmed the truth of the prophecies of Daniel and John (Rossi 1968). Both maritime expansion and the expansion of knowledge were signs that the divine book of the World, reserved for the end times, had been finally opened. Both the discovery of the New World and the discovery of the scientific method were historical events because they proposed new and broader *unifications* of time and space. They *accelerated* the end times, bringing about its realization, within an already constituted historical experience.

The modern experience of history, however, is essentially *fractured* - and the spectral forms which parasitize it do not emerge from other worlds, but from its immanent and constitutive gap. It was inaugurated, at least emblematically, with the famous statement of one of our most notorious cursed heroes: »time is out of joint«.

It was therefore not enough to juxtapose the known world to an unknown one, in the promise that the second would eventually be integrated to the first, for the experience of history to transform itself. It was also needed that the colonial expansion and the development of science would collaborate in the creation of a *common dynamic* within which the incongruous regions of the "Old" and the "New" Worlds, of knowledge and ignorance, of culture and nature, could be *unified without ceasing to be unequal*, so that this tectonic clash between incommensurable spaces could effectively rupture the circuit of history. What was lacking, therefore, was the consolidation of a *world-economy* (Wallerstein, 2004; Karatani, 2014).

It is worth meditating, for a second, on this simultaneously static and dynamic origin of our historical time. Consider the juxtaposition of two spaces whose rules of constitution remain untranslatable between them. Their very incompatibility, the emergence of a »simultaneity of the non-simultaneous« (Arantes, 2012), would then produce a sort of optical illusion, the mirage of a progressive acceleration - even if, in fact, nothing is moving. This is how most optical illusions art pieces are in fact created. The modern idea of progress - which we owe more to the ideologues of the XVIIIth century than to the fathers of modern science - is one such illusion: a diachronic ordering of civilizations, in a movement that is rather a collateral effect of their synchronic comparison.

It is, therefore, the transformation of the colonies in a constitutive part of the world-economy - that is, the change in their statute from *margins* of European Empires to that of *peripheries* of an expanding capitalist economy (Karatani 2005) - which awoke in the economic center a new sense of experience and expectation. It was not only a matter of expecting that territorial expansion would force the encounter with something new, but rather the possibility of producing, out of the rift between these linked, but incommensurate spaces, an infinite source of energy and value.

The so called »antediluvian« forms of capital - merchant capital and usurer capital - dwelled very well within cyclical time: they extract their surplus from the strategic crossing of the difference between spatial and temporal regimes of value and they do not depend on the constitution of one same world-economy, quite on the contrary. It is industrial capital, the one which associates technology and productivity, on the one side, with

the consumption of human and natural resources, on the other, which relies on the *contiguous* difference between temporal and spatial regimes within one sole circuit: the time of the productive use of labor and the time of the labourer's reproduction, the competition between employed and unemployed time, the spaces of exchange and the spaces of consumption, the private and the public, and so on. And it is the expansion of this simultaneous rift - conditioned, but supervenient on territorial expansion - which transforms the clash between centers and peripheries into a historical movement which seems to move towards progress, in increasing velocity (Marx, 2010, Karatani, 2005, Virilio, 2006).

It should therefore be no surprise that the most polemic theses of modern philosophy of history, the ones which signal that it was an unborn project, were those which tried to delimit the beginning and end of the modern adventure. On the one hand, the idea that there are peoples outside of history (Hegel, 2004), on the other, statements declaring the end of art or the end of history as such (Hegel, 1998).

Filled with racism, misogyny and the recognizable brand of conservatism of the early XIXth century, both these ideas nonetheless anticipate the intuition that there are *prior conditions* to the experience of universal history or to the maintenance of its always-new horizon of expectations. Geography, climate, the material conditions of survival, the access to writing and specific forms of social organization - such as the existence of the State - would all be necessary conditions without which a society could not march towards the historical conquest of absolute freedom. On the other hand, the lack or saturation of the expressive resources of a society, the incapacity to create mediations which would conciliate or render commensurable large-scale social processes and individual experience - the universal and the particular - would also condition the possibility of renewal of artistic development, without which whole cultures could irreversibly stagnate into empty and repetitive exercises of style. Beyond the stupidity with which these two theses distil prejudices concerning what these specific conditions might be, they nevertheless make explicit the presupposition that *the semantics of historical time relies on a contingent material basis*, one which might be lacking in some regions and situations. The absence of this substrate, however, is not so much the effect of geographical contingencies, but rather the outcome of a truly monstrous process of dispossession - that is, it is a *peripheral* rather than *marginal* effect of the modern world (Arantes, 2000).

The Tropical Curse

And this is how our third spectral form comes to haunt modernity. Unlike the ghosts of past and future, the specter of the periphery arises out of a *spatial* fracture, out of a kind of inequality which cannot be mended by the promise of an egalitarian historical outcome, for the simple fact that *this is the fracture which divides the inside and the outside of history*. Unlike the spectral forms oriented by the internal struggles of historical time over the effectiveness of beginnings and ends, of ruptures and expectations, the ghost of the periphery is informed by the movements of expansion and contraction, uniformization and dispersion of spaces.

This leads us to a third type of plague, something which we could call the *tropical curse*: a plague which paralyzes our capacity to create worlds, imprisoning us in the double impossibility of overcoming social divisions as well as of treating them as separate spaces (Arantes 2004). And this is the deadlock that informs one of the main characteristics of this form of spectral presence. We mentioned, initially, that specters differ from spirits in that they are entities of *this* world, rather than manifestations of a transcending force. But what about the case of ghosts which attest to the *intra-worldly existence of other worlds*? This is why the specters of the periphery tend to transit in the form of the only »other world« which fits within our own: the world of *things*. This is not a matter of some leftover repression of animism, as Freud might have it, but rather an absolute modern invention, called *commodity fetishism* (Marx 2013) (Karatani 2005) – the local expression of our indebtedness to a global network of labour and exploitation that is so fractured only commodities get to navigate it.

The tropical curse, as the previous two, can also be expressed as a logical impasse—in this case, a topological one. The periphery is the deposit of the expectations of the future, given that, in accordance to the transcendental illusion which gives historical progress its movement, the periphery is lagging behind while the center advances. But the expectation of the center is to advance not only towards a more developed future, but also towards the periphery, which must be modernized, therefore reproducing the center's expectations. The impasse is thus set in place: if the periphery is modernized, the future of modernity loses its condition of possibility, and if the periphery is not modernized, the same predicament is met. The tropical curse is, therefore, the impossible coincidence between the vector of progress – which promised to bring modernity from the center towards the underdeveloped world – and the inverse vector, which points to a *peripherization of the world* (Arantes 2004) – the expansion of the conditions of the periphery

towards the center. Once more, the city of Vienna is surrounded by the Turks, but this time it's because they work there.

And this siege is truly starting to strangle the center: all those strategies which define life in underdeveloped countries - the simultaneously legal and illegal work contracts, both flexible and absolute, the fractured cities of rich and poor rabbles, the explicit interdependency between racism, patriarchy and free market, the violent enclosure of natural resources, overpopulation and exodus, the brutal face of financialization - now seep into the developed world. Migration crises, massive unemployment, the saturation of communitarian support networks, the crumbling of public and democratic institutions. A true »uneven and combined apocalypse« (Williams 2011).

What a morbid inversion of the famous definition of God proposed by the Cardinal Nicholas de Cusa: *capitalism reveals itself to be a system whose periphery is everywhere, and the center nowhere*. But what are the consequences of this inversion? After all, it is quite different to claim that anywhere can be considered the center of the world - that is, that we can adopt the perspective of the totality from any position - and to claim that every place is situated at the periphery of some central perspective we can no longer adopt.

A Peripheral Impasse

And, in fact, if one might say today, as in 1781, that »all the interest of my reason (both practical and speculative) is concentrated in the following three questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What can I expect?« (Kant, 1999), then we should also recognize that while the utopian curse interdicts what I can do and the dystopian curse interdicts what I can expect, it is the specter of the periphery which blocks, finally, the capacity of knowledge to make any claims to universality.

It is no secret that universalism was a rather marginal project (Karatani, 2014). In fact, not even capitalism was born at the center of the world (Amin 1974): England was pretty much forced to consolidate its internal market since it could not compete with the commercial hegemony of the Dutch, and the birth of bourgeois ideology greatly benefited from the marginal situation of Western Europe with regards to the Roman Empire. Modern universalism, which we usually associate with the thought of XVII and XVIII century European thinkers, is equally the product of an encounter between the center and the margin, of the challenge of conceiving what remains invariable when we operate a shift of perspective between radical-

ly distinct cultures and forms of life (Karatani, 2005). What awoke Europe from its metaphysical »dogmatic slumber« and obliged a dozen of provincial men to develop the impersonal and anti-predicative category of the »subject« was not the skeptic tradition, but rather the encounter - through travels, newspapers and books - with China, the Americas, India and Haiti (Buck-Morss, 2006). A situation not unlike the emergence of isonomy and democracy in Ancient Greece, when the commerce in the Mediterranean confronted the Greek polis - at the time a sub-margin of the Egyptian territory - with the question of the stranger. In short, the history of universalism has always related to the crossing of cultural borders and with the challenge of thinking through what of humanity survives the parallax of two incommensurate cultures.

This »parallax vision« - so dear to Kant - is, however, precisely what the tropical curse affects: if all social space becomes inherently dual, fractured between two incompatible normative regimes, without any one of them functioning as the foundation of the other, and without us being able to take advanced capitalist countries as a model of how to overcome this contradiction, then it becomes, at the same time, *impossible to cross borders* - given that only the periphery exists, while the center slowly dissolves - and *impossible not to cross them* - given that life in the periphery is nothing but the constant shifting between hybrid normative regimes. The peripherization of the world produces, thus, an emptying out of what Christian Dunker called "productive experiences of estrangement" (Dunker, 2015), the experience of crossing borders between worlds to better witness what survives them. It is notable, however, that one of the main defense strategies against the tropical malady that slowly colonizes the rich developed world is to establish a pact with other demons.

One of the most common ways to avoid its spell is to entertain oneself in an infinite dialogue with the impotence cast upon us by the temporal specters of past and future. When nothing distinguishes us anymore from those who were placed at the margins of universal history, from the lukewarm misery of the rabble, we are still left with the possibility of conjuring up other curses upon ourselves: liturgically, we re-enact the great revolutionary gestures, in hope that the ghosts of the past might recognize us as the heirs of their impossible mission, or we blindly struggle against the walls of neoliberal imagination, melancholically cursing our impotent fate, while inviting the company of the dystopian phantasm. It is not that we are truly imprisoned in the drama of farcical actions or of nostalgic imagination: it is rather that different forms of suffering can also function as social insignias which protect us from this new time of the world. But why is it so hard to

confront the specter of peripherization, to the point that we rather deal with these bitter remedies?

When the peripheral fracture emerges, the social homogeneity of the democratic public space is eroded. Ideas do not get »popularized« in the terrain haunted by the tropical ghost. The circulation of images and words does not sediment a public space, lessening private differences through a shared ideal or narrative - on the contrary: the more ideas circulate, the more everything gets *vulgarized*, the more noise corrupts every signal, and every statement becomes the opportunity for infinite refractions, since the economic unity of the space does not guarantee there any organizational unity of people, no homogeneous conditions for the social circulation of discourses. The vulgarization of space – the emergence of the spatial conditions of historical time within its own horizon – is therefore not a moral issue, or a malady that can be exorcised through promises of a *better future*: it is more akin to a geological effect, a consequence of the fracture that historical time has opened in the world, and which slowly becomes the terrain of politics as such. We must learn to inhabit it.

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