Democracy De-realized

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> We are witnessing a globalisation of the economy? For certain. A globalisation of political calculations? Without doubt. But a universalisation of political consciousness — certainly not.
>
> Michel Foucault, "For an Ethic of Discomfort" (1979)

In these past, dark days it has been difficult to draw a line between the outrage and anxiety provoked by the attacks and the ensuing war, and the urgent need for some more humane and historical reflection on the tragedy itself. After such knowledge, what forgiveness? The appalling images of death, destruction, and daring that invaded our homes on September 11 left us with no doubt that these unimaginable scenes belonged to a moral universe alien to ours, acts perpetrated by people foreign to the very fiber of our being. But CNN had a sobering tale to tell. While the headline news staggered from one towering inferno to another, the ticker tape at the bottom of the screen interspersed its roll-call of the brave and the dead with lists of Hollywood movies — films that had told a similar story many times before, and new, unreleased movies that were about to tell it again. What was only an action movie for the longest time turned into acts of war. Same mise-en-scene, different movie.

I do not want to blast Hollywood, nor to rail against the violence of the mass media. And I am certainly not suggesting, wistfully, that life follows art because that only rarely happens. I have chosen to start with the global genre of the terrorist action film in order to question the widely canvassed cultural assumptions that have come to frame the deadly events. The attacks on New York were a manifestation of a much deeper "clash of civilizations," we were frequently told. One night during September, Benjamin Netanyahu developed this thesis to its logical conclusion and ended up by placing Israel just off the East Coast of America. The next morning, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz affirmed wide international support for the US from nations that he described as belonging to the "civilized world" and the "uncivilized world."

Returning to CNN's ticker tape of terrorist movies and special effects, which demonstrates the futility of framing the event in such a divided and polarized civilizational narrative. Each of the unimaginable actions we were subjected to on our TV screens have been repeatedly imagined and applauded in movie houses across the country by law-abiding Americans, and successfully exported to other ordinary film-loving folks across the world. However, the decision to *implement* and administer a politics of terror, whether it is done in the name of god or the State, is a *political decision* taken by a specific hierarchy of power — even if it is a hierarchy of those who consider themselves powerless. There is no confusing a political act, devoid of legality and humanity, with a civilizational or cultural practice. Ironically, the "clash of civilizations" is an aggressive discourse often used by totalitarians to justify their worst deeds, to induce terror and create debilitating psychoses of persecution amongst oppressed, powerless peoples. When *we* — whoever we may be — use the civilizational argument against *them* — whoever they may be — we are, unwittingly perhaps, speaking in the divisive tongue of tyrants. When the foreign and economic policies of powerful nations are conducted in terms of the civilizational divisions of "them" and "us," nations assume that hawkish, imperialist aspect that provokes a widespread sense of injustice, indignation, and fear. Self-interest and short-term gain are, regrettably, the lingua franca of international politics; diplomacy is part of the ritual of "seduce

— and abandon." But we must always remember the decisive effect of the "economies of scale" in these matters. When rich and powerful countries, or less wealthy countries that have acquired regional power and arsenals, play these reckless political games, the lives of ordinary peoples, civilians and soldiers alike, are treated with contempt.

The embattled and embalmed narrative of civilizational clash is often deployed to justify the reckless destruction of civilians who are suspected, by virtue of their culture (considered to be their "second nature"), as being tainted with the "guilt" of their traditions and temperament. Only those societies of the North and the South, the East and West, that ensure the widest democratic participation and protection for their citizens — their majorities and minorities — are in a position to make the deadly difficult decisions that "just" wars demand. To confront terror, out of a sense of democratic solidarity rather than retaliation, gives us some faint hope for the future. Hope, that we might be able to establish a vision of a global society, informed by civil liberties and human rights, that carries with it the shared obligations and responsibilities of common, collaborative citizenship.

What democratic narratives should we turn to in our hour of need, to get beyond the civilizational clash? I have long argued that when faced with the perils and trials of democracy, our lessons of equality and justice are best learned from the peoples of the colonized or enslaved worlds who have harvested the bitter fruits of liberal democracy, rather than from the Western imperial nations and sovereign states that claim to be the seed-beds of democratic thinking. *Democracy Unrealized*, the Berlin platform of Documenta11, invites us to review the challenges of the new Global Order in the *wake* of the Cold War — a wake that hangs like a pallor over many nations devastated by decades of Cold War rivalry; or failing states that find no comfort in the hollow promises of the multilateral free-market "miracle." Documenta asks us "to question whether the notion of democracy can still be sustained within the philosophical grounds of Western epistemology" and to explore "the potential for revision [and] revaluation" in keeping with the transformations of globalization, so that we may investigate the idea and ideals of democracy as "an ever-open, essentially unfinishable project that in principle has fallen short of its ideals." To pose the crisis of democracy in terms of its unrealized *Ideals* does not adequately challenge the failures of its promise. "Falling short" is often a strategic "necessity" for democratic discourse, which acknowledges failure as part of its evolutionary, utopian narrative. The argument goes something like the following: We fail because we are mortal and bound to history, the faith of democracy lies not in perfectibility but in our perseverance and progress, our commitment to set the highest ideals before ourselves and struggle toward them to revise and reshape our "best selves." Such an internal dialectic of the "unrealized"and the "utopian" encounters the negative instance of "failure" only in order to provide a strange *moral* consolation for itself.

Let me propose, in an affiliative spirit analogous to the platform of Documenta11, an alternate title: *Democracy De-realized*. I use "de-realization" in the sense of Bertolt Brecht's concept of "distantiation" — a critical "distance" or alienation disclosed in the very formation of the democratic experience and its expressions of Equality. I also use *déréalisation* in the surrealist sense of placing an object, idea, or image in a context *not of its making*, in order to defamiliarize it, to frustrate its naturalistic and normative "reference" and see what potential for *translation* that idea or insight has — a translation across genre and geopolitics, territory and temporality. The power of democracy, at its best, lies in its capacity for self-interrogation, and its translatability across traditions in the modern age. If we attempt to De-realize Democracy, by defamiliarizing its historical context and its political project, we recognize not its failure, but its *frailty*, its *fraying edges or limits* that impose their will of inclusion and exclusion on those who are considered — on the grounds of their race, culture, gender, or class — unworthy of the democratic process. In these dire times of global intransigence and war, we recognize what a fragile thing democracy is, how fraught with limitations and contradictions; and yet

it is that *fragility, rather than failure or success*, I believe, that fulfills the agenda of the Documenta11 manifesto — the potential for revision, revaluation of values, extension, and creative transformation to keep in step with 21st-century globalizing processes."

The transformations of our own global century are part of a longer lineage of fraying and fragility that takes us back to an earlier phase of global governance — the colonial empires. With the resurgence of neoliberalism after the Cold War, it becomes especially important to grasp the internal de-realizations of that global ideology, and to delineate its colonial genealogies. For instance, the great British liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill realized that one of the major conundrums of his celebrated theory of democracy consisted in the fact *that he was a democrat in his country and a despot in another country — in colonial India*. What needed to be acknowledged — as Mill *was not able to do* in that great document of modern democracy, On Liberty — was the self-contradictoriness of liberal democracy which raged like a war of values in its very soul. Internal to democracy is a struggle between a sincerely held "universalism" as a principle of cultural comparison and scholarly study; and ethnocentrism, even racism, as a condition of ethical practice and political prescription. At the heart of democracy, we witness this de-realizing dialectic between the epistemological and the ethical, between cultural description and political judgment, between principle and power.

Those in the North and the South, in metropoles and peripheries, who have been the victims of Democracy De-realized have their own lessons to teach. For they experience not only the injustice of colonization and slavery, but *know* in some profound way the *ethical impossibility* of perpetuating discrimination, segregation, or global injustice in the modern world. "It is not possible in a modern world to separate people by vertical partitions," WE.B. Du Bois, the great African-American poet-politician, wrote in 1929. "Who was it that made such group and racial separation *impossible* under modern methods? Who brought fifteen million black folk overseas? ... The world has come together in an organization which you can no more unscramble than you can unscramble eggs."[1] The spatial connectivities and contradictions of the late modern world-picture — reflected in the gargantuan discourses of the "global" — must be placed in a relationship of *ethical contiguity* with the scrambled sites and subjects of racial separation and cultural discrimination. Unless we recognize what is old and weary about the world — those "long histories" of slavery, colonization, diaspora, asylum — we are in no position to represent what is emergent or "new" within our contemporary global moment. What analytic and cultural measures help us to grasp the transformations of global change?

The "new" is only a historic destiny that lives amongst us like the ghost of the future; slender as a leaf of time turning, a sheet of space folding, inscribed on one side by the past, and the other by the present. The announcement of the "new" — as in the New World order, or the new global economy — is almost always the recognition of a turning point in history, the experience of a moment in transition, or in "incubation" as Antonio Gramsci described it.[2] What exists at any given time [in the name of the new] is a variable combination of old and new," "a *momentary* equilibrium of cultural relations ..."[3] Discourses of "incubation" drive us definitionally to-and-fro as we try to derive a critical and epistemological vocabulary from within the global discourse itself. "[The] becoming worldwide [or *mondialisation*] of the world is not the unfolding of a normal, normative or normed process," Jacques Derrida warns us.[4] The contingencies and contiguities of the new cartography of globalism mutate and vacillate, mediate and morph: the North-South axis of the globe shifts to the Global and the Local, and thence to the preferred "southern," postcolonial designation, the Local-Global. For some, globalism is the advent of "disorganized capital" playing to the risk society; for others it is "a fluctuating web of connections between metropolitan regions and exploitable peripheries."[5] Yielding national "sovereignty" to the international regime leaves the compromised nation-state suffering from "social schizophrenia,"[6] its affiliative authority is now metonymically displaced onto the "global city" that reveals the "unbalanced playing field" of the growth of global capital and the claims of

marginalized peoples.[7] The territoriality of the global "citizen" is, concurrently, postnational, denational, or transnational. Legal activists and scholars argue productively for what they call "effective nationality," which contests statist discourses of citizenship by emphasizing those articulations of civic/civil life that lie adjacent to the considerations of "formal nationality" and statute law. Indeed, the arguments for a change in the definition of citizenship are based on areas of everyday experience and are better articulated in case law "concerned with a person's connections in fact — their social, political and psychological connections."[8] And finally, according to the legal scholar Larry Lessig, the cyberspace actor is "actually living in two places at once, with no principle of supremacy between ... multiple non-coordinating jurisdictions."[9]

These "non-coordinating jurisdictions," which embody *forms* of global knowledge and practice, are not adequately represented in the scalar measures of the gigantic or the increasingly small. The propinquity of jarring jurisdictions — conflictual yet communicative — emerge from the *structure of the global political economy* itself. The economic historian Saskia Sassen describes the process as the "insertions of the global into the fabric of the national ... a partial and incipient denationalisation of that which historically has been constructed as the national, or, rather, certain properties of the national."[10] However, all these global discourses represent a double move: the discordant, disseminated sites of the global jurisdiction are, simultaneously, marked by an ethical and analytical desire for proximity. We have to learn to negotiate conflicting social and cultural differences while maintaining the "intimacy" of our intercultural existence, and transnational associations. The uneven and unequal playing field of the global terrain — "partial" and "incipient," neither past nor present but "incubational" — is nonetheless encountered and experienced as living in, and through, a shared historical time of "transition." Where do we turn, as the global world circles around us, to find a critical tradition for our times?

To labor for freedom from an oblique or extra-territorial position contiguous with the State — but discontinuous with many of its aims and institutions — informs the spirit of *minoritarian* representation and humanitarian advocacy. With this in mind, I want to "return" to Gramsci's work on the creation of a *cultural front*, bearing in mind the *partial* "denationalization" of the global condition. A cultural front is not necessarily a political party; it is more a movement or alliance of groups whose struggle for fairness and justice emphasize the deep collaboration between aesthetics, ethics, and activism. A cultural front does not have a homogeneous and totalizing view of the world. It finds its orientation from what Gramsci describes as "*the philosophy of the part* [that] always precedes the philosophy of the whole, not only as its theoretical anticipation but *as a necessity of real life*."[11] Today, as we are offered the stark choices of civilizational clash — between Faith and Unfaith, or Terror and Democracy — it is illuminating to grasp something that demands an understanding that is less dogmatic and totalizing — a philosophy of the part, a perspective that acknowledges its own partiality "as *a necessity of life*." Gramsci's concept of the subaltern takes ethical survival" as seriously as the challenge to hegemony, which makes him sensitive to our trying times.

The subaltern group is "deprived of historical [dominance] and initiative; it is often in a state of continuous but disorganic expansion, without a necessary party affiliation; and [crucially for the issue of denationalization], its authority may not be able to go beyond a certain *qualitative level* which still remains below the level of the possession of the state."[12] *This would include those who are committed to cultural justice and the emancipatory work of the imagination*. The utopian dream of "total" transformation may not be available to the subaltern perspective, which is nonetheless engaged in both struggle as an active inventory of emancipation, and survival as a mode of forbearance that links the memory of history to the future of freedom. Discourses that champion social "contradiction," as the *a priori* motor of historical change, are propelled in a linear direction toward the terminus of the State. The subaltern imaginary, *deprived of political dominance, and yet seeking to turn that*

disadvantage into a new vantage point, has to proceed at an *oblique* or *adjacent* angle in its antagonistic relation to "the qualitative level of the State." Subalternity represents a form of contestation or challenge to the status quo that does not homogenize or demonize the State in formulating an opposition to it. The subaltern strategy intervenes in state practices from a position that is *contiguous* or *tangential* to the "authoritarian" institutions of the state — flying just below the level of the State.

It is in this sense that the subaltern group is not a "sub-ordinate" class. It propagates an ethico-political practice in the name of the "human," where "rights" are neither simply universalist nor individuated. The "human" signifies a strategic, translational sign that gives ground *to*, or gains ground *for*, emergent demands for representation, redistribution, and responsibility — claims of the excluded that come "from below the qualitative level of the State"; modes of community and solidarity that are not fully sanctioned by the sovereignty of the State; forms of freedom unprotected by it. Such an "opposition in terms of human rights," Claude Lefort argues, "takes form in centers that power cannot entirely master ... From the legal recognition of strikes or trade unions, to rights relative to work or to social security, there has developed on the basis of the rights of man a whole history that *transgressed the boundaries within which the state claimed to define itself a history that remains open*."[13]

For it is in such spaces of "historical openness" that transgress state boundaries that we encounter a form of ethical-political "willing" that confronts the New Global State of titanic economic and political influence with the imperatives of an intellectual-moral community of Rights. Gramsci's concept of subaltern survival and the "philosophy of the part," central to the necessities of everyday life, lead to a practice of inter-national or global history; a poesis of imagining the World as an ethical and political project:

> One should stress the importance and significance which, in the modern world, political parties have in the elaboration and the diffusion of the conceptions of the world, because essentially what they do is to work out the ethics and the politics corresponding to these conceptions and act as it were as their historical laboratory."[14]

What are the conceptions of the world that issue forth from the historical, discursive, and cultural laboratories of contemporary globalization?

"Becoming global" is, in many respects, an aleatory claim rather than an achieved historical condition. Most writings on the *expanse* of globalization emphasize its *excessive* temporality, its acceleration, its intensification, the speeds through which we live in the air, on screen, in the circuits of cyberspace. As the descriptives intensify, I am increasingly drawn to the photographer Allan Sekula's minimalist Zen-like *utterance* "A society of accelerated flows is also in certain key aspects a society of deliberately slow movement."[15] What does this mean for the world as we ought to know it? More than 80 percent of the world's cargo still travels by sea. Large containerized cargo-ships today travel no faster than in the first quarter of the 20th century. Immigrant and refugee smuggling transports take months to deliver their contraband cargo — which may include the 700,000 women and children that are trafficked each year according to the US Justice Department, or the 200 million human beings that are believed to be in the hands of smugglers seeking entry for reasons of economic or political hardship — into the global or transnational world. Immigration and asylum applications can take years to decide — in one recent case, a Sudanese asylum applicant was released after he had been in detention awaiting a decision on his case for six years. Separated or unaccompanied minors who seek asylum as refugees can be held in detention in the US and other parts of the world, without recourse to their families, for anything between six months to a year while their leave to stay is decided.

These "cultural relations" — unequal and uneven — require us to see the antagonisms of the global world in terms of conflictual *contiguities* — rather than social and political "contradictions." The language of contradiction is teleological, it takes a form that totalizes fragments into a holistic system. "Contiguity" as a way of dealing with the "partial or incubational combination of old and new" makes us attentive to the "jurisdictional unsettlement" that marks the lifeworld of our times. I am, of course, talking in conceptual or metaphorical terms about large patterns of conflict and juxtaposition. But think of the "jurisdictionally unsettled" nature of Truth Commissions, the International Criminal Court, or the debate on Reparations: each of these discussions is conducted on complex moral and political grounds that represent the "terrain" of nationhood as an incubatory moment, a transition between the old and the new regime. They are trials of the truth that synchronize the worst excesses of barbarism and the great restraints of civility; justice and injustice are terrifyingly juxtaposed, and, most terrifying of all, they share a contiguous, conflictual border. Their "truths" are neither neatly divisible in guilt or virtue nor are Absolutes available for deliberation. We live in a time of Gramsci's "philosophy of the part." Contiguity, as a critical measure, enables us to evaluate the movement that exists inbetween the borderline jurisdictions — national, denational, transnational, postnational — of the global regime.

My own speculations on the ethical and existential "location" of such culturesof "border" living owe something to the work of the psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott's meditations on the process of "contiguity" as a form of space and time within "the actual world in which the individual lives, which can be objectively perceived."[16] Contiguity, Winnicott suggests, explores a third area of life, in-between the individual and the environment. It is "an intermediate area," or potential space in-between subject and object in which *cultural experience* is located. An area of "intermediate living" is, in Winnicott's words, a *third space* of psychic and social "variability" whose agency and creativity lie in experiences that constellate or "link the past, present and the future." It is the contiguity of these space-and-time frames that constitute the "cultural" as a practice that can both signify and survive the turning points of history and its transitional subjects and objects.

It was through my interest in the "intermediate life" of the global experience — that "third" space somewhere between the old and the new — that I became aware of a kind of contiguous, double horizon that hovered over the global discourse. It was a shuttling back and forth between continuity and contiguity, the tension of the "New World order" surviving in a movement between the dogged persistence of the "national" and the fragile future of transnational/international civil society. Between them emerges "this third space," where the democratic right to have rights, to continually open the debate about the legitimate and the illegitimate, is in tension with the diktat of the Law.

One aspect of this "double-horizon" is created by the foundational narrative of constitutions, laws, policies, legal regulations, and reasoning. *Within that horizon, one takes the world as one finds it and actively sets out to adjudicate it*. This is the important realm of the letter of the Law that the poet W. H. Audenso judiciously caught in his famous verse, "Law is as I've told you before... / Law is, but let me explain it once more, / Law is The Law."[17] Such judicial consistency — the phrase comes from Edward Levi's classic *Introduction to Legal Reasoning* — requires that "legal reasoning does attempt to fix the meaning of the word ... [so that] subsequent cases must be decided upon the basis that the prior meaning remains. It must not be re-worked."[18] Beyond this legislative interpretation of Law and legality, norm and power — "where the reference [or referent] is fixed" — rises another, contiguous and conflictual horizon of ethical and textual interpretation. It *may not be readily achievable or visible, but it represents a profound commitment to fairness and justice* ... This "second aspect" does not signify the "global" as a descriptive condition of contemporary life, but as an ethical or political claim, a wager on the future. For when we use categories like world civilization or global culture, Lévi-Strauss once explained, "We are employing ... abstract conceptions to which we attach a moral

or logical significance; [as if] we are thinking of aim[s or claims] to be pursued by existing societies; ... we must not shut our eyes to the fact that the concept of [global or] world civilization is very sketchy and imperfect."[19]

Such a sketchy, imperfect double horizon sustains a fragile faith in the "making of a world" of fairness that is rendered all the more anxious by the practical impossibility of achieving global justice in any comprehensive sense. For today's world is marked by a denser sense of "jurisdictional uncertainty and unsettlement," of a kind that earlier forms of globalization — colonization or imperialism — had not quite encountered, because slaves and the colonized were not considered, in any full and fair sense, to be part of the civil society or the public world of "nations." Ironically, it is this "jurisdictional unsettlement" that requires that we go beyond the roundelay of "Law is The Law," and embrace a different kind of ethical and poetic justice, that, once again, Auden captures with great insight:

Unlike so many men
I cannot say Law is again,
Nor more than they can we suppress
The universal wish to guess
Or slip out of our own position
Into an unconcerned condition.

It is the first move of the ethical and aesthetic attitudes to "slip out of our own position" and identify with an-other's condition. Such a slipping out or displacement transforms — or shall I say translates — the very territoriality (and temporality) of our confident claim to being "at home" in our own universe of concern. To be ethically or aesthetically "concerned" requires us to identify with otherness" or alterity; to relate to what "un-concerns" us and uncannily splits our sense of social sovereignty and moral certainty. Such ethico-political claims to justice and fairness, Claude Lefort argues, are based upon a sense of "symbolic efficacy" and are central to the notion of rights. In an argument that, in some significant respects, follows my description of the *subaltern strategy of contiguity*, Lefort explains how the aspiration and agency of rights makes State power confront its authority and autonomy "according to the criteria of the just and the unjust and not only of the permitted and the forbidden ... Human rights do not attack state-power head on, but *obliquely ...circumventing* it, as it were, it touches the centre from which it draws the justification of its own right to demand the allegiance and obedience of all."[20] It is the oblique movement of the rights discourse, often aspirational and metaphorical in its symbolic efficacy, that drew me to the problem of the double horizon in the making of the world as an imperfect place, "a potential [third] space of intermediate living" — in Winnicott's words — *and none the worse for that*.

The visibility of my doubly horizoned global world picture — aspiration and advocacy, ethics and the law — is nowhere better brought to life than in an image from that fine dissenting work of the global era — Allan Sekula's *Fish Story*. Sekula's project occupies a significant place in my work on the formal invocations of global culture, but I only want to allude to a telling detail on this occasion. For there is a kind of "double horizon" in Sekula's photographic essay of the lifeworld of containerized vessels, which, in his words, "[juggle] a triple funeral: a memorial service for painting, socialism, and the sea."[21] In some of his photographs, you see the partial prow of the container vessel cutting obliquely into the frame of the photograph, almost slicing off a side of the frame, as the container ship with its global goods ploughs its way forward into a horizon, carrying the viewer's eye into the uninterrupted path of "the fluid transnational block of capitalist power ... London ... Hong Kong ... Shenzhen Taipei."[22] Sekula's work has been read as a harsh critique of global capitalism in the documentary tradition, the most direct and directive of committed art. What such readings end up commending, congruent with Sekula's critique, is his radical view of the contradictions of late capitalism.

Sekula, I believe, looks beyond that conventional dialectic precisely in the oblique cropping or cutting of the frame as the prow ploughs the global seas. At that oblique angle, *conflictually contiguous* with the ship's forward movement, almost at an anamorphic tilt, lies another kind of horizon that disturbs and diverts — in the political *making or poesis* of art — the deadly direction of the "global economy." At times it is the melancholic wake that rises miasma-like, a ghostly shadow hard by the vessel — a kind of memorial wailing or veiling that pulls the eye aside, disturbs the forward look of economic or technological progress. Here there is a kind of straying from the path of the global horizon; the opening up of another kind of reflection in a nonrealistic medium, a semblance of Turner, a stain of steam, and the trace of other ships and other seas. Beside the mourning of Painting, Socialism, and the Sea, there is a space for aspiration and advocacy of rights that de-realizes democracy, as I have described it earlier, a light that dimly seeps through the backlit tilted banked clouds, and breaks up the waves. This "nonrealist" Third Space discloses an oblique, indeterminate movement that is less focused on signifying the determinants of global capitalism and more open to the representation/enunciation of the "right to have rights" as an urgent and open legal and humanitarian question for those workers on these containerized vessels — often stateless economic and political refugees, a patchwork of minorities — who are the victims of the "jurisdictional unsettlement" of our times. Sekula's containerized vessel now becomes a narrative about the "survival and extension of public space as a political and cultural question ... in which it is possible to question [the politics of] Rights on an increasingly broad basis."[23]

Who gives voice to the silence or absence that marks the place where the horizons intersect and intermediate living begins? What material histories emerge from this third space that is neither the Global as the Gigantic nor the local as "smallness"?

Minoritization, now, is not simply that abject condition of being "half-stateless," as Hannah Arendt once described it.[24] Today the identification with minoritarian causes constitutes a form of aspirational activism, committed to an agenda of intercultural and transgroup emancipation. Minorities infrequently subscribe to the apparently utopian or universalist assumptions of democratic progress associated with the founding of the "state" on the culturally transcendent territoriality of the nation. The civic culture and consciousness of the minoritarian citizen, today, is focused, with good reason, on Democracy Derealized — on "a regime founded upon the legitimacy of a *debate* as to what is legitimate and what is illegitimate — a debate which is necessarily without any guarantor and without any end. The inspiration behind the rights of man and the spread of rights in our day bears witness to this debate."[25] It is too easy to see minorities as being either antinational or transnational, either domestic or diasporic. More than a mere "grouping" of peoples or a special statistical and legal category, minorities raise this unsettling debate, at the heart of the democratic process, which is not about the legitimacy or implementation of the law, but about what is just and unjust, beyond the letter of the law; and what constitute "rights" beyond the nation-state. The institutions that embody this minoritarian spirit of aspirational activism — NGOs, Truth Commissions, International Courts, New Social Movements, International Aid Agencies, the spirit of Documenta11 itself — live only uncertainly in the shadow of state sovereignty, in the interstices, the in-between spaces, of a new internationalism. The claim to "equality and fraternity" celebrated by national governments, as the basis on which they create their national polities and participate in a world community of free nations, was cynically betrayed in Durban, at the World Congress of Races, when many countries refused to take responsibility for their own discriminatory practices. The unseemly rush to flee from their own historical pasts, like Lady Macbeth fleeing the bedchamber, was only matched by those who stormed out of the Conference chamber as soon as they were confronted with the ongoing injustices of the present. As the *New York Times* reported it, "India successfully lobbied fellow nations to prevent

mention of caste and discrimination. Before walking out of the conference over criticism of Israel, the United States objected to any discussion of reparations for the descendants of African slaves. Others refused to consider gays as victims of discrimination."[26]

The making of the minority is central to "achieving a democratic nation" rather than fostering xenophobic and patriotic nationalist myths. The narrative spirit of minoritarian "right" that I am proposing is audible in the recent words of Alioune Tine, a human rights activist from Senegal at the Durban Conference who led a caucus of Africans and blacks in the Americas: "We have never had the opportunity to gather together from every country ... now there is enthusiasm and commitment to remind states to meet their international obligations. That is the next step."[27] In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen supports such an argument, I believe, that human rights and cultural rights must not only, or dogmatically, be seen "in postinstitutional terms as instruments; rather [they may be seen] as ... prior ethical entitlements." And he goes on to suggest that "in this sense, human rights may stand for claims, powers and immunities ... [and they may be] supported by ethical judgements, which attach intrinsic importance to these warranties. In fact, human rights may also [accede to] the domain of *potential*, as opposed to *actual*, legal rights. Indeed it is [necessary] to see human rights as a set of ethical claims."[28] For this double and discontinuous horizon of the "world" is part of a larger constitutional shift within nations and across the transnational space, both in aspiration and advocacy.

In the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, I have seen this minoritarian mode of "intermediate living" — an intercultural constitutionalism — turned into a vision of democratic socialism. It is the condition of the minority agent — individual or collective — to take on the challenge of the "contradiction of double aims," to use Du Bois's canonical phrase, and struggle to produce a world-open message. For Du Bois, minoritarian agency is envisaged as an act of enunciation — the slave or the colonized represent their community in the very act of poesis, in the making of a "world-opening" message, as Du Bois describes the "voicing" of the marginalized. The burden of the minoritarian "message" is not merely the demand for the respect and recognition of cultural or political differences. This very *aesthetic* act of communication or narration is also an ethical practice "that is complete not in opening to the spectacle of, or the recognition of, the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him."[29] The responsibility of the minoritarian agent lies in creating a world-open forum of communication in which "the crankiest, humblest and poorest ... people are the ... key to the consent of the governed."[30]

For Du Bois, the making of the minority is an affiliative and "translational category of identification"[31] — class, race, gender, national, and regional differences. The claim to political recognition does not require to be underwritten by the authenticity of "racial" groupings or the communal exclusivity or particular-- ism of ethnic experience. Du Bois's central insight lies in emphasizing the "contiguous" and contingent nature of the making of minorities, where solidarity depends on surpassing autonomy or sovereignty in favor of an intercultural articulation of differences. This is a dynamic and dialectical concept of the minority as a *process of affiliation*, an ongoing translation of aims and interests through which minorities emerge to communicate their messages *adjacently* across communities. This enunciative concept of minoritization is much in advance of the anthropological concept of the minority that is in place in Article 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. For Article 27, minorities, in the main, are groups that have existed in a state before becoming beneficiaries of protection. It is their "cohesion" as a minority that has to be protected, for "minorities are conceived [in the article] as social entities wholly sustainable in their separateness."[32] Immigrants and women, for example, have had problems in being recognized by Article 27 because, it is argued, they do not closely approximate to a "jural order with institutions shared by the whole category" and they do not demand the right to sustain their culture "as a fundamental group quality sought to be maintained as an end in itself."[33] Such a strong preference for cultural "holism" prevents the emergence of new, affiliative forms of minoritarian agency and its institutions.

The minoritarian presence is a sign of "intermediate living" within the history of the present, that is neither gigantic nor small, neither global nor local. This subaltern "third force" makes dramatically visible what is involved in regulating the ethical and political borderlands of the global world with its simultaneous, noncoordinating jurisdictions. For the Greeks, legislation and the execution of decisions "[were] political activities because in them [human beings] ‚act like craftsmen' and hence *poesis* belongs to the realm of "acting in terms of making, and of its result, the relationship between men, in terms of an accomplished work."[34] And this combination of praxis and p*oesis — of advocacy and aspiration* in contemporary invocations of the "global" minority and its translational existence, is what I have, so far, explored. But if such is the making — the *poesis* — of a New global World, can it issue forth into a form of poetry that invokes the memory of older, earlier globalizations — colonization and slavery — and introduces it into the crafting of our current predicament? The poet Derek Walcott works out the ethics and politics of the contemporary "world" as a terrifying translational tryst with the contiguous, discontinuous languages and cultures that cross and cut in the making of the modern globe. The poet speaks:

But we were orphans of the nineteenth century,
sedulous to the morals of a style, we lived by another light,
Victoria's orphans, bats in the banyan boughs.
Dragonfly, dragonfly
.....'
caught in the lamp of Giorgione,
dragonfly, in our ears
sang Baudelaire's exhortations to stay drunk,
sang Gauguin's style, awarded Vincent's ear.

I had entered the house of literature as a houseboy,
filched as the slum child stole,
as the young slave appropriated
those heirlooms temptingly left
with the Victorian homilies of Noli tangere
This is my body. Drink.
This is my wine In the beginning,
all Drunkenness is Dionysiac, divine.

And then one night, somewhere,
a single outcry rocketed in air,
the thick tongue of a fallen, drunken lamp
licked at its alcohol ringing the floor,
and with the fierce rush of a furnace door
suddenly opened, history was here.....

Gregorias, listen, lit,
we were the light of the world!
We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world
with Adam's task of giving things their names,
with the smooth white walls of clouds and villages
where you devised your inexhaustible,
impossible Renaissance,
brown cherubs of Giotto and Massacio,

> with the salt wind coming through the window,
> smelling of turpentine, with nothing so old
> that it could not be invented.[35]

The contiguities of our own "incubational" global moment, both old and new, return in those lines that have echoed throughout my talk: "*Nothing so old that it could not be invented*." This is Walcott's translational claim as he exerts his ethical and political "right to narrate," revising the great frescoes of the "Impossible" Renaissance — whose "originality" it is now impossible to assert *after* the belated task of the translator who inscribes across the "origins" of the Renaissance the history of the middle passage of intermediate living — the unsettled jurisdictions of our cultural and political lives echoed in the disruptions and displacements of Empire. I use the term "right to narrate" to signify an act of communication through which the recounting of themes, histories, and records is part of a process that reveals the transformation of human agency. Such a "right" is not merely a legal, procedural matter; it is also a matter of aesthetic and ethical *form*. Freedom of expression is an individual right; the right to narrate, if you will permit me poetic license, is an *enunciative* right rather than an *expressive right* — the *dialogic*, communal, or group right to address and be addressed, to signify and be interpreted, to speak and be heard, to make a sign and to know that it will receive respectful attention. And that social "relation" — to relate, to narrate, to connect — becomes our jurisdiction and our *juris-dictio*, quite literally, the place from where we speak, from where we engage in the *poesis*, the making, of art and politics.

As I end, let me circle back to the beginning: to the place from where I speak to you today. Fallen towers, falling idols: what has befallen the ideals and the Ideas of global Progress now that the New World is bereft of its towers, its towering ladder without rungs targeted as the symbol of our times? Such days that eerily hollow out the times and places in which we live confront our sense of Progress with the challenge of the Unbuilt. The *Unbuilt* is not a place that you can reach with a ladder, as Ludwig Wittgenstein would put it. What you need once your towers have fallen is a perspicuous vision that reveals a space, a way in the world, that is often obscured by the onward and upward thrust of Progress. Listen to Wittgenstein:

> Our civilisation is characterised by the word "progress." Progress is its form rather than making progress being one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure ... I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundation of possible buildings.[36]

Neither destruction nor deconstruction, the Unbuilt is the creation of a *form* whose virtual absence raises the question of what it would mean to start again, in the same place, as if it were elsewhere, adjacent to the site of a historic disaster or a personal trauma. The rubble and debris that survive carry the memories of other fallen towers, Babel for instance, and lessons of endless ladders that suddenly collapse beneath our feet. We have no option, *pace* Wittgenstein, but to be interested in constructing buildings; at the same time, we have no choice but to place, in full view of our buildings, the vision of the Unbuilt — "the foundation of *possible* buildings," other foundations, other alternative worlds. Perhaps, then, we will not forget to measure Progress, as it creeps along the ground, from other perspectives, other *possible* foundations, *conflicting and yet contiguous*, even when we believe, in vanity, that we are standing at the top of the tower.

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