

## Foreword

*Cirus Rinaldi, Marco A. Pirrone*

We are very pleased we had the chance to publish a book which includes some of the articles selected from the first issue of *Socioscapes. International Journal of Societies, Politics and Cultures* (2019).

*Socioscapes* is an international, open access, peer-reviewed scientific journal which aims to focus on original articles on issues arising at the intersection of society, politics and communication in an international perspective. We have particularly welcomed interdisciplinary research on ongoing social transformations which involve states, civil societies, ethnic groups, social classes, cultures and their effects on private lives and identities and the main scientific topics have been discussed and analyzed among scholars and representatives of civil society within an interdisciplinary framework grounded in social sciences.

*Socioscapes* is published biannually online by the Department of Cultures and Societies, University of Palermo. Each issue of the journal opens with an Editorial, summarising the content of the “Topics” section. The latter collects the contributions of the main section, selected via periodical call for papers. The Editorial also introduced the themes dealt with in the articles of the different sections. The section on “Topics” consists of three sub-sections: epistemological issues concerning the different approaches employed to discuss the main theme of the issue; central topic; and keywords used to look at the central topic. There follows a section including *Research, interventions, and works in progress* welcoming contributions and reflections about the issues raised in the journal’s “Aims and scopes”. The contributions included in the section titled *Theory and critical research* all address possibilities for theory and research outside the mainstream, with particular emphasis on issues of social change. The section *Conflicts, resistances, and voices* focuses on personal accounts documenting the lived experience of subaltern subjects; while the subsequent sections feature *Reprints and represented*: old and new classics, a series of keywords where international invited scholars are asked to discuss a specific theme, and reviews and portraits.



# Editorial. Migration and migration studies in late neoliberal times

*Marco A. Pirrone*<sup>1</sup>

I feel honoured to write this editorial for the inaugural issues of the journal *Socioscapes. Mediterranean Journal of Society, Politics and Cultures*, for the trust my sociology colleagues<sup>2</sup> at the University of Palermo have placed in me and co-Director Cirus Rinaldi. I am also motivated by the scope of this journal, its aims, and objectives, as reflected in its contents.

## **Why Socioscapes?**

We started thinking about this new journal for three main reasons. First, we wanted to provide a channel where critical discussion of and research about current social changes move beyond sociographical and descriptive approaches, which occupy a privileged role in the social sciences. As argued by the exponents of *critical theory* of the Frankfurt School: «[...] only a critical spirit can make science more than a mere duplication of reality by means of thought, and to explain reality means, at all times, to break the spell of this duplication. Such a critique, however, does not imply subjectivism, but rather the confrontation of the object with one's own concept. The given will only offer itself up to the view which regards it from a perspective of true interest the perspective of a free society, a just state, and the full development of the human being. Whoever does not measure human things by what they themselves are supposed to signify will not merely see superficially but falsely» (The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, 1972, 11).

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2. I refer to Roberta Teresa Di Rosa, Giulio Gerbino, Gaetano Gucciardo, Michele Mannoia and Cirus Rinaldi, Department Cultures and Societies, University of Palermo.

We wanted to start this journal, in the second instance, since we felt the need to make space for discussion and research overcoming the boundaries of academic “enclosures” and the “fencing” between disciplines. It is our conviction that a common development of theory can only be achieved only through a plurality of scientific interpretations and diverse subjectivities, in order to be able to confront “the object with one’s own concept”. Such a theory would maintain object(s) and subject(s) together, unravelling in an increasingly complex, differentiated, and individualised society in spite of its embeddedness within the dominant economic and social model of a liberal and globalised version of capitalism. It would also aim at finding new possibilities for social action and transformation. As Bauman aptly puts it, sociology – and I would add, the social sciences in general – can only «overcom[e] resolutely and indefatigably the boundaries separating academic speculation *sine ira et studio* and the subjective experience of its ‘empirical objects’, which are also its own interlocutors – an experience that always requires one’s engagement and commitment. The contemplative life lived by the sociologist leads them necessarily towards living *a vita activa*; more precisely, both these ways of life are destined to coexist intimately» (Bauman 2003, 45).

Finally, we wanted to grasp and unveil current and future conflicts. Our starting point are the many Souths that globalisation promised to remove, but which today are re-emerging and increasing in number.

As shown in the “Aims and scopes” of the journal, the editors therefore attempt “to draw from the recent scholarship on a new epistemology of the South(s), no longer framed as object of enunciation but rather as subject reclaiming a voice in order to escape their stigmatised position as ‘subaltern’ [...]. They] particularly welcome interdisciplinary research on ongoing social transformations which involve states, civil societies, ethnic groups, social classes, cultures and their effects on private lives and identities”.

From this perspective, *Socioscapes* aims not only to contribute to the analysis of cogent social changes and contradictions<sup>3</sup> of our time, but also to offer new discussions of concepts and ideas that mainstream sociology and social sciences by now overlook. The journal provides a platform for

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3. Contradiction is one of those terms that the “sociological vocabulary” would tend to neglect (Rositi, 2018, 38).

giving voice to subjects, social forces and/or potentials for liberation in our world, in keeping with the objectives of a critical sociology and social sciences.

### **The journal's structure**

We believed that these “multiple” considerations and interdisciplinary dialogues would benefit from a specific structure, explained in what follows.

Each issue of the journal opens with an Editorial, summarising the content of the “Topics” section. The latter collects the contributions of the main section, selected via periodical call for papers. The Editorial also introduced the themes dealt with in the articles of the different sections. The section on “Topics” consists of three sub-sections: *epistemological issues* concerning the different approaches employed to discuss the main theme of the issue; central *topic*; and *keywords* used to look at the central *topic*.

There follows a section including *research, interventions, and works in progress* welcoming contributions and reflections about the issues raised in the journal's “Aims and scopes”. The contributions included in the section titled *theory and critical research* all address possibilities for theory and research outside the *mainstream*, with particular emphasis on issues of social change. The section *conflicts, resistances, and voices* focuses on personal accounts documenting the lived experience of subaltern subjects. The subsequent sections feature *reprints and represented: old and new classics*, a series of *keywords* where international invited scholars are asked to discuss a specific theme, and *reviews and portraits*.

### **The present issue**

For this inaugural issue, the call for papers is dedicated to “Migrations and migration studies in late neoliberal times”. We are witnessing an “ostentatiously inhuman” (*ostentatamente disumana*) (Ferrajoli 2018) politics directed against migrant women and men in every part of the world, particularly in the more affluent countries. These countries were

formerly referred to as developed countries, thus using a term that failed to cover over the colonialist rhetoric used against less developed ones. The same rhetoric resurfaces today, as shown by those countries that have recently joined the network of global(ised) development. This politics makes no distinctions based on age, religious orientation, economic, social, and political motivations of migration. We are facing a “war against migrations” (Palidda 2018) in the name of “security”, which gives way to an extremely worrying condition.

As evidenced by Donald Trump in the US, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Paolo Gentiloni and, later on, Giuseppe Conte in Italy, through to Scott Morrison (and his predecessors, Malcolm Turnbull and Tony Abbott) in Australia, restrictive anti-immigration policies are reaching unprecedented levels of cruelty. Their agendas are increasingly built around metaphorical and material walls – the wall separating the US and Mexico, the use of barbed wire in Hungary – targeting migrant women and men who escape from different areas of the world.

Policies and practices of securitisation that strengthen borders, erect walls, and barbed wire are complemented by xenophobic and racist attitudes and rhetoric. This is set in stark contrast to the watchwords of the ideology of globalisation – which includes mobility, freedom, inclusion, integration, affluence, prosperity, and development. In fact, more than three decades past the advent of globalisation, the main contradiction implicit in the process of its liberal(ised) version(s) emerges with indisputable clarity. The free circulation of goods and capitals was initially celebrated by many for its potential to bring enhanced freedom, affluence, and development for all. In time, it was counteracted by the barriers restricting the free mobility of people. During the last thirty years of unbridled liberalism, capitalist economy has spread watchwords inspired by freedom and mobility (of goods, capitals, knowledges, people), which were necessary to achieve consensus over its expanding policies across the world. Conversely, the majority of states, and even supranational bodies and institutions, now deny freedom of movement for many people escaping inequalities, war, or political conflicts in their countries of origin. This follows a logic of marketisation, or profit that pervades all spheres of everyday life and is productive of new conditions of slavery awaiting migrants within both regular and irregular markets.

Is there an inverse relationship between these two contradicting vectors, namely, the watchwords of ideologies and the actual policies applied primarily by States? And, how can we probe at these questions? What role does the appeal to politics, economics, and culture(s) have? This first issue of *Socioscapes* invited Italian and international authors to discuss this contradiction from a variety of perspectives, from borders, walls, and racism to inclusion, integration, liberalism, and inequalities.

In the section on the *topic*, the first sub-section gathers together epistemological reflections and approaches to the “science of migration”. The second one focuses on the *topic* itself. Finally, in the third one, contributors discuss the *topic* through the lens of “sexualities”.

In the first sub-section, several contributors attempt to deconstruct the “science of migration” through reflecting on the power involved in building the object of study and its representations within the disciplines concerned with migration. They also seek to unveil the colonialist imaginary hidden behind this “discourse”, which has cemented over the centuries, supported by the logic that establishes the subaltern condition of the migrant(s).

### **This book**

In this volume we collect some of the essays published in the first issue of the magazine. They were selected based on the number of views received and also concern other topics present in the other sections of the journal, not only the main theme of the call related to migration.

In “Broken archives in a migrating modernity”, Iain Chambers queries the trend towards naturalisation that characterises the “contemporary organisation of awareness and knowledge” common to both the human and social sciences. In this way, both disciplines contravene their objective, namely, to show that what is considered “normal”, and for us, more natural and familiar, is merely “normative”. For Chambers, the contemporary articulations of “awareness and knowledge” show us that the human and social sciences are building two languages of conformity; they therefore fail to question their own language, which is (re)produced historically according to specific historical and social representations. As a result, every position that “disturbs” normality and normativity is seen

as ideological. The migrant, “invariably non-European, non-white, and non-Christian” is thus constructed as “the enemy”. This is not merely a question of contingency, or an effect of what in the old days we would have referred to as “moment”, but rather, it is the limit of “a precise history and its structures of power”, including ideological structures, that the “moment” allows to resurface. The colonial past and its ideological apparatus – racism – are the foundations of “the very mechanisms of knowledge and power that legitimate the present state of affairs”.

Arturo Escobar, in “De/coloniality and displacement: Ontological occupations and the historicity of migration”, deals with similar themes to his previous work, particularly with regards to the role played by what he calls the politico-colonial ontologies underlying the occupation of lands and the representation of the “Other” as subordinate. Escobar’s essay combines popular songs and music videos on migration and his theoretical-political reflections on global processes of occupation of lands carried out by modern/colonial capitalist ontologies and political economies. He then focuses on Africa, as both limit and future possibility, and on design as tool to reimagine a utopian pluriverse of would-be worlds without “migrants”.

Maribel Casas-Cortes e Sebastian Cobarrubias in “Genealogies of contention in concentric circles: Remote migration control and its Eurocentric geographical imaginaries” discuss the main concept of b/ordering analysing through archival research the genealogy of border externalization that uncovers a rather Eurocentric cartographic imaginary at work beneath expert-driven and neutral sounding policies.

Gaia Giuliani, Júlia Garraio, and Sofia José Santos address the role played by digital media in developing an ideological and identitarian discourse characterized by fear and moral panic about Others across Europe. In “Online social media and the construction of sexual moral panic around migrants in Europe”, they begin with analysing the securitization devices introduced in many countries of the EU and their work along specific gendered, sexual, and racialised lines. The article examines the role of digital media in amplifying the “sexual moral panic” about migration. Taking Italy and Germany as case studies-sites, Giuliani, Garraio, and José Santos argue that digital media have strongly contributed to the dissemination and escalation of fears of invasion and of dangerous sexualities framed by constructions of race and gender. Their contribution

unveils the ways in which colonialist and racist legacies that are historically sedimented in both Italy and Germany get reorganised “online” (i.e. through social media). These, in turn, produce a very specific post-colonial dimension reinforcing widespread hatred of the Other and new processes of racialisation, which include, among others, gender stereotyping.

Calogero Giametta and Joseph S. Akoro in “Queering social research on Sexuality, Migration and Asylum through co-authoring with participants”, reconstruct the dialogue between researcher(s) and participant(s). Giametta’s and Akoro’s article aims to demonstrate that the sharing of ethnographic accounts dialectic between researcher(s) and research (s)-objects may enrich the research process in general. A case in point are the conditions of asylum lived by sexual minorities. This kind of dialogic experience also sheds light on the power differentials at work in the relationship between the researcher(s) and research (s)-objects, ultimately leading towards critical self-reflection.

Fatima Khemilat in “Dissimulating & landscaping racism: sexuality, intersectionality, and neo-orientalism in French discourses” dealing with the connections of marginalized, or peripheral territories like the French “banlieues” and their negative representations, as shown by biased media coverage and other examples of structural discrimination against North African (alleged or real) immigrants and Muslims. For Khemilat, contemporary racism is reshaped through the idea of defending assumed republican values, such as women’s rights, freedom of speech, and the struggle against anti-Semitism. She therefore looks at urban spaces in order to trace both the symbolic and the material boundaries of gender, racial, and economic discrimination.

Martina Lo Cascio, in “La vita al ghetto di Campobello di Mazara nonostante l’invisibilizzazione. La r-esistenza dei lavoratori e un’autoanalisi militante collettiva”, focuses on researcher(s)’ reflexivity to explore the racialised, gendered, and classed power relationships in the field sites within the context of research on migrant workers in the agricultural sector.

Anthony Julian Tamburri’s article *Reflections on Italian Americans and “Otherness”* starts with the provocative claim that «race is an issue we still need to explore – interrogate, if you will – within the Italian/American communities». Tamburri takes two cartoons from the late XIX century and early XX century as case studies to discuss representations of immi-

grants from Italy as ‘dehumanized’ beings. His exploration of ‘affluence’ and ‘amor proprio’ within the contexts of studies on race is aimed to show the importance of a revised notion of history «to engage in an Italian/American state of mind». This is a productive strategy for coming to terms with historical stigma while tending towards new imaginary and material landscapes for Italo/American culture(s).

Giacomo Boncompagni in “Connectivity and Global Information. The digital side of immigration”, stresses that electronic-digital technologies are fundamental for immigrants and asylum seekers as they are useful tools to meet what have become “basic needs” for them: the need for connection and information. These tools facilitate and support the travel organisation and all the migratory experience of “new connected migrants”, but the issue of security should not be underestimated. The intensity of communication and information flows defines a media space that is now flanked by geographical space, but without replacing it; the digital has created a borderless social space that facilitates communication between immigrant communities geographically dispersed around the world. The comparison between the various authors and a detailed and up-to-date analysis of the scientific literature on the subject have made it possible to understand how the digital dimension has changed and influences communication between migrants, forms of exploitation and the management of migratory flows.

Francesca Martinez Tagliavia’s contribution focuses on postfeminist practices of resistance in the Italian visual field. The article combines approaches from many fields, from visual studies to cultural and feminist studies of images and the media. It focuses on the gender performances of the *velina* Giulia Calcaterra, an exponent of the Italian entertainment industry, and on her experiences of sexual and economic dominance in the workplace – the TV programme *Striscia la Notizia*. By following Calcaterra’s life at work, recorded in interview over the period from 2014 to 2015, the article exemplifies the practices of resistance she enacts with regard to the process of labelling involved in the use of the term “velina”, framing them within the context of postfeminism. Finally, Martinez Tagliavia theorises “*visual infrapolitics*” to hint at the open field of practices that materialize masked conflicts, invisible resistances, and spectacular forms of consent through which women workers in the entertainment industry react against gender violence in the workplace. This violence

is seen both in the type of work they do and in the related stigma (in this case, the use of the term “velina”). Her work aims to establish the relevance of these practices, which are inscribed in a post-feminist sensitivity, and to provide the conditions of possibility for collective acts of resistance.

In closing, I hope that this journal will provide an interdisciplinary venue for discussing and exchanging their individual research, open to all those who share its rationale. We aim to contribute to the shared project of building a critical and public dimension for the humanities and the social sciences through discussing cogent issues we are facing today. In light of this shared objective, we envisage that all those who are interested in critical dimensions of knowledge, and of their capacities to stimulate social change, may promote and contribute to the journal.

Lastly, I want to thank those who were involved in this project from the start, including honorary directors, members of the scientific, editorial, honorary, and editorial committees. My warmest gratitude goes to Miriam Belluzzo, who contributed to the editing of articles.

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# Broken archives in a migrating modernity

*Iain Chambers*

Returning recently to the beautifully woven text and images of John Berger and Jean Mohr's prescient work on migration, *A Seventh Man*, published some forty odd years ago, I came across this significant judgement:

«History, political theory, sociology can help one to understand that “the normal” is only normative. Unfortunately these disciplines are usually used to do the opposite: to serve tradition by asking questions in such a way that the answers sanctify the norms as absolutes» (Berger and Mohr 2010, 104)<sup>1</sup>.

I feel this is the case, and even more so today. The contemporary organisation of awareness and knowledge overwhelmingly serves to establish an uninterrupted language of conformity. It leads to structural change being obfuscated. Interrogation is silenced in a consensus that refuses to consider our language, position and the making of meaning. Disagreement and disturbance, and not the procedures that seek to crush them, are merely considered “ideological”. Whatever disturbs the status quo is rapidly labelled an anomaly or deviancy: transitory instances of local emergencies on the flat plateau of agreed procedures.

Opposed to this critical foreclosure, I would like to suggest that contemporary migration, or the racism that precedes and accompanies it, is precisely not, as we are taught to believe, about a set of exceptions or emergencies. Both are woven deeply into the web of Western democracy, into its historical and cultural life. With death spilling out of the headlines – from drownings in the Mediterranean to racial shootings in America's inner cities, the violent surveillance of territories and lives in Palestine, bomb attacks and mass shootings in European capitals – I would also argue that the limits and hypocrisies of the moral economy

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1. The book was originally published in 1975.

of the Occident are being continually exposed. The “enemy” – invariably non-European, non-white, and non-Christian, fundamentally “queer” with respect to the normative – is immediately identified and externalised. These are the limits of a precise history and its structures of power. They speak of the critical and political responsibilities for those processes that have brought us to where we are today. This pushes us to understand the present movement of migration from the multiple souths of the planet, the consistency of racism and the rendering of certain ethnic groups, minorities and associated cultures as second-class citizens or not yet modern, a historical condition. These are not temporary phenomena or accidental pathologies; they involve structured, historical processes and apparatuses of power. Insisting that such questions are central, and not peripheral, to modernity is not simply of economical, sociological or anthropological importance. What we touch here are the very mechanisms of knowledge and power that legitimate the present state of affairs.

### **Modernity as hegemony**

It is also here that we are forced increasingly to recognise that the democracy inherited from the liberal state – now fundamentally blocked in the abstract grammar of eighteenth-century constitutionalism and caricatured in the superficial sensationalisms of the mass media – is increasingly gutted and reduced to the state of oligarchy. An accentuated individualism, legally extended and secured in private property rights, cancels social space and public responsibilities. The accentuated utilitarianism of neoliberalism and the absolute valorisation of the individual produces an immanent order in which there are apparently no longer external relations and forces. As Margaret Thatcher succinctly summed it up in 1987: «There is no such thing as society.» Everything is now domesticated and individualised as the factor of life itself. Here the historical antagonism between the prospects of democracy and individual self-realisation have slipped far beyond their earlier and more restricted confines. Ideas connected to the just distribution of resources and opportunities have been crushed by the ideological triumph of responsibilities that serve only to confirm the individual. The autonomy of the self now reaches into the sinews of public government: policing and security, like health and edu-

cation, are not only atomised in response to restricted individual access and personal wealth, they also become autonomous agencies, increasingly only answerable to their budgets, agendas and language and not the causes they are supposed to serve. If the United States today is the most blatant example, it is not alone. As in so many areas of modern life, it sets the trend for a wave washing through the West and the world.

The presumptions that surround and sustain such concepts as the “individual”, “citizenship”, “democracy” and “freedom” are themselves the products of such mechanisms. While they continue to be presented as neutral and abstract ideals, their practices tell us a very different story. What has been repressed in the representation points us to other maps and temporalities in a planetary modernity that is not merely “ours” to define. If the politics of explaining and managing the modern world can only be sustained through the violent maintenance of unequal relations of power and the associated negation of other voices and histories, then perhaps we should ask ourselves what precisely does this universality, its democracy and modernity, consist of? This is to entertain seriously the idea that modernity itself is historically and culturally the precise mode of Occidental hegemony and that we need therefore to confront and unpack its premises and practices. At the same time, this modernity cannot simply be cast aside or cancelled. It is, after all, the matrix in which we all move, are positioned, and work to find ourselves and other promises and prospects.

### **The colonial fall-out**

This rough, undone and frayed web sustains arguments concerning transit, translation and transformation. There exists no pretence to explain or speak in the name of the non-Occidental world. Here, where my words deliberately fall short, the presumed distinctions between the West and the rest, centre and periphery, are rather problematised and exposed. Altogether more fluid geographies and transitory territories now encroach upon inherited understandings and views. Hierarchies of power and command are increasingly multiple and heterogeneous. This is to begin to register the limits of a knowledge formation that operates as though it were the unique global paradigm, whose history is Histo-

ry tout court. So, to insist on gaps in the account means to listen to other accents and rhythms, to register resonance and dissonance. This is deliberately to disband the particular form of historical reasoning that secures Occidental thought and practices in a theology of “progress” and its linear conquest of space and time. In a word, it is to slip away from the colonial imperatives that made the West the West. Here, in the break-up of European historicism – where only the West is warranted to tell the tale – the subterranean tempos of deeper times and longer rhythms are rendered proximate. The colonial past, conquests, racist slavery and the division of the world among imperial powers are never simply “back there”; they are constitutive of the present. They live on and continue to mould our comprehension of the existing world. This situation urgently implies changing the conditions of knowledge and posing the «problem of writing critical histories of the postcolonial present» (Scott 2004, 15).

Engaged with the mixing and mutation of time and space, other cultures and lives translate our coordinates from the presumed stability that reflects our passage into a heterogeneous scene seeding different histories and multiple trajectories. The world is crossed and cut-up. It is folded into diverse narratives that refuse to be blocked in a uniform accounting of time. It is precisely in this sense that contemporary migration and racism open an archive; an archive that is not so much an institution as a site of ongoing historical processes and the location of continuing social and political antagonisms. Here colonialism, migration and racism can no longer be contained in the categories of economical or sociological phenomena. Rather, they become instances of epistemological and ontological inquiry. As structures of historical violence they challenge the placid presumptions of both our knowledge and our everyday lives. They produce a modernity incorporated and imagined by other bodies and histories; in particular, by the so-called non-Western world which in being “worlded” by the Occident turns out to be both internal and central to the West that considers itself to be the unique measure of the planet.

«The Industrial Revolution, misleadingly figuring in popular consciousness as an autochthonous metropolitan phenomenon, required colonial land and labour to produce its raw materials just as centrally as it required metropolitan factories and an industrial proletariat to process them, whereupon the colonies were again required as a market. The ex-

propriated Aboriginal, enslaved African American, or indentured Asian is as thoroughly modern as the factory worker, bureaucrat, or flâneur of the metropolitan centre» (Wolfe 2006, 394).

Such intimacies are directly distilled in the intricate relationships of the formation of the modern European nation state, its cultures, cities, and its unilateral fashioning of the world where modernity, colonialism and capitalism became one. This is not about adding the equations of culture and power to the economic formula. It is about an altogether more complex coming together in a precise political economy. Here, to extend the map of the modern nation and include the colonial spaces over which it exercised its military, political and economic authority, is to change our very understanding of what constitutes the contemporary polity, its wealth, culture and population (Ascione 2016). This is to chart its making and practices on a very different map where the colonial periphery turns out to be integral to the making of metropolitan life and culture. Genocide, massacres and all the brutal violence of colonial appropriation and territorial aggression come now to be registered within the making of the modern European nation state. They are not unfortunate incidents, terrible tragedies, taking place far from home. They are constitutive of home itself.

### **Cruel combinations**

This leads to unwinding the claims of democracy and citizenship, of rights and the rule of law, in an altogether more extensive and unauthorised space. For if European states sought to establish their authority in the singularity of the nation, their rivalry remains persistently colonial in continuing to contest the spoils of the planet. Decolonialising this inheritance does not merely mean finally to pay attention to the so-called colonial periphery of yesterday, recovering its histories and registering injustice. Bomb attacks, mass shootings and civilian deaths in Madrid, London, Paris and Bruxelles, render dramatically proximate similar events in Tunis, Beirut, Baghdad, Kabul, Lahore and Peshawar. Here the colonial concoctions that configured modernity (the European carve-up of Africa and the invention of the “Middle East”) take their re-

venge on the present. In more immediate terms, raging continual warfare on Muslim countries for almost three decades, from Iraq to Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, leading to the death of more than 500,000 civilians, inevitably leads to what political commentators call blowback. As the writer Hanif Kureishi put it in the aftermath of the London bombings of 2005: «Modern Western politicians believe we can murder real others in faraway places without the same thing happening to us, and without any physical or moral suffering on our part» (Kureishi 2005, 92). This is to forcibly remind ourselves of the cruel combinations of colonial histories and postcolonial proximities that come to be stitched into the very fabric of the modern metropolis. Pulled through these examples into a deeper historical trough we confront the brutal evidence of Occidental colonialism being involved in a perpetual war on the rest of the planet for the last five centuries.

When Europeans arrived in what is now Latin America in 1492, the region may have been inhabited by between 50 million and 100 million indigenous people. By the mid 1600s, their population was slashed to about 3.5 million. The vast majority succumbed to foreign disease and many were slaughtered, died of slavery or starved to death after being kicked off their land. It was like the holocaust seven times over (Hickle 2015).

Tzvetan Todorov has referred to this history as humanity's greatest genocide (Todorov 1992).

It is in this precise sense that the urgency of a postcolonial perspective is not simply about rescuing forgotten histories and denied lives, and finally adding them to the previous account. The other voices and visions that arrive from the so-called margins of modernity, once directly colonised, today bracketed in the categories of the developing and underdeveloped world, promote a sharp epistemological challenge. The very premises of a modernity no longer guaranteed by a unique universalism is disrupted and dispersed. The exercise of scientific neutrality and critical distance fall apart in a worldly space in which power, no matter how complex, multifaceted and subtle its exercise, exposes a geopolitical provenance, a series of cultural agendas, a historical will; that is, a series of hegemonies at work. It is precisely through this heterogeneous complexity, even when exposed in scholarly subtleties and sensitive attention to detail, that hegemony, as opposed to mere instrumental domination, is reproduced. Its manner of narration, no matter how liberal or “multicultural” it may

seek to be, structurally excludes whatever seeks to challenge its manner of recognising itself and registering others. This, is what the Peruvian anthropologist Anibal Quijano calls the coloniality of power rendered as knowledge (Quijano 2000). The methodology legitimates the dominion of the discourse. What I am arguing here, against that dominion, is that the pieces of an increasingly fragmented tradition can no longer be put back together again. They now constitute a broken archive. Historically inherited elements can only be reassembled in an ongoing configuration where the old binaries of south and north fall away to be replaced by an altogether more heterogeneous and overlapping set of relations. When the once excluded and elsewhere is also in here, then the proximities of dissonance and resonance within an increasing conviviality of languages and localities touches the complexities of all the components.

So, the break-up of empire is not about its immediate cancellation; the colonial inheritance cannot simply be wiped off the slate. It is rather about the emerging assemblage of what has been subordinated or simply excluded from the existing framing and explanation of modernity. This implies engaging with spaces and practices that propose other rhythms and reasons. In the present circumstances these may well be negated, subordinated and reduced to marginal cultures and local histories, unable to claim the universal validity of the West. Nevertheless they exist, persist and resist within that very same modernity as a sore, a wound, a persistent interrogation; what the anthropologist Tarek Elhaik refers us to as an «incurable image» (Elhaik 2016). These are the other histories, and not exclusively human, that ghost our present. They hold Occidental modernity up to the light, exposing its shadows. They propose a re-membering of the world that evoke other manners of narrating, other shapes and figures that support understandings of the past-present-future. The archive slips beyond unique control. Modes of classification and meaning multiple. Worldly coordinates loom into view and another universalism begins to emerge: one not dictated and scripted solely by us.

### **Exceeding the frame**

Recognising the irreducibility of the world to a single frame or explanation clearly raises awkward questions that disturb the universal prem-