

Fifty Years On

Oscar Guardiola-Rivera

Birkbeck College, University of London

Back in 2013 I wrote a book titled *Story of a Death Foretold. The Coup Against Salvador Allende, 11 September, 1973*. The book was published on the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the violent coup d'état that interrupted the democratic process of the Chilean Revolution, bringing that phase of the history of revolt in the Americas to an end. It hit the best-seller list of *The Guardian*, was shortlisted for the prestigious 2014 Bread & Roses Award and was selected as one of the best non-fiction publications of the year. It was republished in 2014 after which it was translated to other languages.¹

For a critical book of this kind to enter a best-seller list may be at least a little surprising. Mixing political philosophy with a painstakingly documented and materialist approach to history, besides the title's nod to reconfigurations of Modernist literature in the Americas, is not your literary agent's first idea of how to create a marketable success. More surprising was the answer she got when inquiring about the fact that, despite its apparent market appeal and translatability, the book would not be published in a Spanish version aimed at its most obvious audience: Latin America. "My contacts in the Spanish publishing industry"—which now monopolize the bulk of what is translated, published, and made available for Spanish-speaking audiences, including the Americas—"tell me there's no interest in revisiting

¹ Guardiola-Rivera 2013.

that period. They say enough has been written, so there can be nothing new about it. The page has turned, and if anybody is interested, they could read it in English. End of the story.”

Nothing new. The end. Fifty years on, those words resonate strongly with the very objectives and expectations that explain, or at least contributed to, the coup that not only brought General Augusto Pinochet to power but also, in violently “cleansing” Chile and thereafter the rest of the Americas (the lands of our childhood dreams and imagination), paved the way for it to become ground-zero for the experiment now known as “neoliberalism” and the foreclosure of the future. “An action prepared down to the last detail and brilliantly executed,” read a telegram sent by the Chilean office of multinational pharma-corporation Hoechst Chemical to its company headquarters in Frankfurt on September 18, a mere seven days after the violent coup against Chilean democracy. “[T]he Allende government has met the end it deserved... In the future Chile will be an ever more attractive market for our products.”² Indeed, beyond the coup against Allende, the period that begun between 1973 and 1974 also brought about two other developments: the destruction of the now-legendary computer and communications network called Project Cybersyn, which to some heralded the possibility of a very different future for cybernetics and social networks than the one we now live with; and the invention of the famed Black-Scholes equation that opened the gates for the pricing of derivatives and the financialization of every aspect of social life.

Arguably, the coming together of Chilean-style “law-making” violence allowing for neoliberal “primitive” accumulation, plus computer-driven derivative markets and sped-up infotainment, inaugurated the world we live in: the world of mass human rights violations and truth commissions or peace tribunals (itself a notion that, according to some historians, came about in the 1970s, not the 1940s); networked society; and global derivative markets bringing an end to capitalism as we’ve known it. The world of precarious classes, movements, and risk classifications, as well as derivative socialities that through deferral of destructive environmental costs to future generations, might yet spell the end—not the end of the story, but the

² Originally published in Bonn’s by *Vorwärts* and cited in Cortázar [1974] 2014, 52, the cable was presented as evidence during the proceedings of the II Russell Tribunal, a citizen’s peace tribunal focused on the relationship between the interests of global investors and covert or overt violent interventions in the global south.

end of history. The world of capital and resentment. The world we're in. The world in which we are never not falling.

How to approach such a momentous threshold fifty years onwards? In the 2013 book *Story of a Death Foretold*, my editor, Bill Swainson, and I decided to tell a linear story. To narrate the facts as they could be reconstructed based on painstakingly analyzed archival documentation and successive periodization—the way mainstream history and documentaries are composed, going from Allende's humble origins in republican politics all the way to his death and passing into legend. The title was a nod to those who contributed the most to the passing of Allende's history into memorial and monumental legend, in the Greek style of tragedy and *aletheia*. Chief among them being Gabriel García Márquez, the Colombian novelist and brand name of so-called Magical Realism.

Now, though, I would like us to move in the opposite direction. That is, to begin with the fact that the story of Allende and the Chilean Revolution is now part and parcel of what may be called a “social myth” and then ask: if so, how do you deal with mythic matter? Students of rhetoric and anthropologists may be right in pointing out that you cannot deal with mythic matter the same way you do with the matter of “history” as displayed in the archives of the world's metropolises or posited in the linear periodization and narratives characteristic of the mainstream historians of the Global North.

There are at least two reasons for this: first, those of us who come from the Global South were introduced into history, or rather conscripted into modernity, by negation, backwards, sideways, and from below. This means that we must move between, across, and perhaps beyond and work with materials on display (or hidden) according to the conventions of publicity, linear perspective, and secrecy in metropolitan archives as well as “low resolution” materials in the so-called peripheries. That requires other ways of seeing, storytelling, and approaching materials.

Second, our matter is neither history nor pre-history but, to be precise, “bad history.” This is to recall that we were damned (as Fanonian writers would put it) to be out of place or displaced, transported to phantasmatic zones of the globe where history is presumed to never have happened as it should, and conscripted into modernity as wayward foot-soldiers so that a peculiar waywardness has organized our inner lives. Such a mode of being—or rather, a mode of appearing—entails the need to figure, reconfigure, or articulate the fragments of our inner lives in a way that

emphasizes the displacements, disappearances, silence, and disavowals which have worked to deny the colonized—which possess a history—any hold on history. That history cannot be told by simply exposing such silences and secrets to the light. On the one hand, such forensic or inquisitorial procedures threaten to destroy the secret in the very act of exposing it. On the other hand, focusing solely on the afflictions, suffering, and blind spots that were lodged in our inner lives might obliterate or obscure the fact that there are also virtues in our capacity to see the work askew, moving from below and backwards—to “dissolving” problems by immersing them in the medium of the ongoing poetics of resistant yet changing signs, and the specific chemistry (mimetic sublimity?) and gravitational force of materials often dismissed as “relics” of a long-lost past.

No turning the page, then. Instead, deal with it: with the poetics; with the changing sign- and image-systems; with the dark surrealism of a colonial endowment of mimetic excess; and with the gravitational field forces of seemingly invisible and/or disavowed bodies, moving from the personal to the cosmic. Multiple dimensions that refuse to be reduced to zero, or flattened, require other logics—different ways of seeing, counting, and recounting. Other collections and constellations which, on account of the gravitational forces that bring them about and which they exert, may be characterized as fantastic critical objects or a magic encyclopedia with divinatory, epic, or derivative propensities dealing with chance as the flip side of fate. The stories of which resist being told in the fatalistic mode of ancient tragedy (i.e. Greek tragedy as read by moderns), or, worse, postmodern “realist” melodrama and infotainment.

Which brings us back to the question: how to deal with such mythic matter? To insist, we may do well to learn from gravitational thinkers, archaeologists, rhetoricians, and anthropologists, as well as from the latter’s interlocutors who persist, change, and exchange in active presence here and now. They observe that, often, the best way to read a myth is via other myths—in the modes of figuration and derivation. This may also be a better fit for the reality of our precarious movements and derivative societies in the age of financial, political, and environmental meltdown. Again, with an emphasis on (objective) contingency or chance, and crucial, capital encounters (both in the sense of crossroads or transpositions as well as in the financial sense).

That is why, in what follows I will proceed in the opposite direction to that of *Story of a Death Foretold*. I shall read the ongoing-ness of the story of the Chilean Revolution and Salvador Allende as a myth indirectly, deriving from another story and other myths. With them moving backwards while looking forwards, I shall derive

some implications of that exploratory reading for political philosophy and for approaching objects, stories, and the forces they exert today, fifty years on. I do not claim this approach to be historical or to operate with the forensic procedure characteristic of historians and lawyers. I am no historian, after all. I might be able to make a loose claim to be a political philosopher, but one whose philosophy has been greatly impacted by the gravitational thinking of poetics and the work of anthropologists as well as their interlocutors.

These interlocutors happen to be the people most affected and impacted by the brute force of events such as those of September 11, 1973, Operation Condor, and the counter-insurgency wars (wars that, in the Americas as a whole, have persisted as wars on nouns, such as the War on Drugs or Wars on Terror, as well as a protracted war on nature). Which means that the poetics we'll deal with here also happens to be ethical and political. That's fitting, because I am a lawyer, and as such I have been accompanying (politically and as a rights activist) a community of native peasants in Latin America for over twenty years. The story I'm about to tell you—through which we shall re-read Allende's story indirectly and from which we shall derive a set of implications without set conclusions—was told to me and others by these interlocutors. It's an instance of mythic matter.

Mythic Matter: The Story of Cachama

How to deal with mythic matter? Let's first expose ourselves, our wayward inner lives, to the waywardness of one instance of such matter. This one comes not from Chile but the coasts of Colombia—specifically, from the Afro and native peasant communities who dwell there. They tell the tale of a character named Cachama. A criminal to some. A legendary bandit or anti-hero to others. A man alone in combat against entire armies for other others. You begin to see the resonance with the mythic matter of Allende's story. According to the tale, during the years of the apotheosis of war in the lands of our childhood, this solitary combatant fell into some kind of black hole or opening in the ground or a whirlpool vortex. He lost his ground in time and space. As if his house or palace had fallen upon itself after a great deluge or a fire.

Because of that he came to be in a sort of permanent or intermittent state of fall.

In such a state, it felt as if Cachama had changed. He became less vulnerable, impervious to the forces acting on him, or not at all falling.

In fact, he became stronger and the force he projected on those around him—subjects and objects alike—also became stronger, fascinating (a fascination of abomination?), attractive, and compelling. No longer having anything to fall to, for there was no ground, gravity became lower for him than it may be for others. Thus, in accordance with some versions of the story Cachama the bandit or anti-hero could leap great distances in space and time. Because of that ability, the forces of order, progress, and the state could never really catch up with him. In other versions of the story, he became impervious to bullets, as if a force field around him protected Cachama from the other forces trying to contain or destroy him. In yet other versions, Cachama comes out guns blazing, like in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Harder They Fall*, or he directs the bullets against himself but despite all appearances that he has fallen, he, or his spirit, comes back to take revenge.

In these stories, as it happens with falling, which is relational, the horizon seems to quiver or is blown away by an earthquake or a hurricane, and characters like Cachama lose any fixed sense of above and below, ground and figure, light and shadow. Hence, as per most versions of the story, Cachama loses his shadow and that is why he becomes impervious to the soldiers' or his enemy's bullets and cannot be killed or imprisoned. He is "cleansed" and, therefore, becomes impervious to spiritual attack—a bit like Peter Pan. According to the story, Cachama reports that he senses confusion, or can no longer feel a boundary, between himself and the village, the buildings, the rivers, forests, and environs that would otherwise confine him or bring him to stay still and in final rest.

This uncanny state is precisely what would help Cachama take revenge on his enemies, take action, and change his position entirely. Or make justice.

Whether or not revenge is the same as justice, what matters here is that nothing remains the same. Cachama changes and becomes or behaves like other things. The villages, the buildings, the rivers, the forests, and environs change. Time changes. Even change changes. People like Cachama might feel themselves as objects or events (which is why the name Cachama is sometimes used also for a fish or a place in a village, the mangrove, or the forest) and objects may sense that they are people.

Ditto, even change changes itself. But no observer could measure the precise instant or duration in the object, as it is within itself. That leads to a whole new set of questions. And while we may derive some insights or implications from them, even we remain impervious, to or cannot arrive at, pre-set destinations or formulating set conclusions. Like Cachama. Or, dare I say, as it happens in the story of Allende.

Some Implications for Approaching Stories, Things, and Forces Like These

Like Cachama, it seems that the animals in the mangrove or the forest, the landscape (rural or urban), and the earth itself, may confuse or blur the fine line separating light and shadow, above and below, human and nonhuman, surface and ground. They seem mistaken about the forces acting on them and we may also be mistaken when approaching them from only this or that side, applying to them this or that set of given rules—like some lawyers and pedantic philosophers do, with this or that code or language. Small wonder then that tales such as this are often told in the creolized language and thought to be characteristic of native, peasant, and Afro-Colombian villagers in the Pacific and Caribbean coast of places like Colombia, Brazil, or Chile and elsewhere.

Which means that when confronted with such tales and thought, we must develop approaches that can be a better fit for the kinds of constellations, forces, and counterforces brought together in the chance encounters and capital encounters or reconfigurations that happen within such tales and thinking collections. We also must consider changing our own thinking approaches and collections. Perhaps, also, our very selves.

These diverse approaches and their different ideas about collecting and thinking (or exploring) what is collected are especially pertinent to the composition of fieldwork notebooks and story journals, memoirs, and stories for memorial issues such as this. They may also be pertinent to the work of approaching history itself as it happens (or doesn't) in places like these. Which is, as poets say, a labor of love.

This is so because histories, notebooks, journal pieces, and journal issues are precisely that—collections. And “because the items in a collection gravitate into one’s hands by chance, a collection can be used as an instrument” of explorations, negotiations, and interpretations, if not divination, as Michael Taussig says, “seeing that chance is the flip side of fate. For sure this is a wild idea.”³

Indeed, a savage idea, as Taussig points out. That is, the idea that chance determines what goes into the collection, how it is used, and that the notebook, journal or other such object may become “more self than oneself, like an entirely new organ alongside one’s heart and brain,” eyes or ears. An object that Taussig associates

³ Taussig 2012, 5. He calls for a social science “that not only accepts this principle but runs with it!” A call we extend to law, politics, and philosophy.

with the fetish: “an object so dear as to seem possessed” by a power of its own—spiritual power.

How could we not to agree with a fantastic anthropologist and writer like Michael Taussig? There’s so much we’ve learned from him, working with him and reading him for over twenty or thirty years as we followed him into a native community of displaced peasants in northwest Colombia. However, let’s add to Taussig’s fetish-inflected, savage idea of political spirituality an emphasis of our own. An emphasis on what it means to speak of objects able to exert intense gravitational or other such forces, capable of effervescent and explosive fluidity or change (changing subjects, liquid capital, plasticity of memory and mind, networked organizations, changing change, etc.). All this in the context of different explorations of objects, of societies transitioning from war to peace, and changing critical thinking. Also, in relation to the thought of objects in time and of changing times. Simply put, for us, allusions to gravitation and liquidity assume not only Newtonian or linear perspective conventions and normative standards, but also, or rather, historical, public, ecological, topological, and even cosmic proportions.

Recall that in the story of Cachama the bandit and anti-hero, it is said that when someone or something loses his or its shadow, they become hidden, occult, and unkillable, and possessed by an evil demon, furious spirits, or forces from below. Thus, when the shadowless return, it is to take revenge. To exert powerful judgment, but also to seek ways out.

In other words, to carry out justice or balance the weight and weightlessness of the cosmos, it isn’t enough to obliterate your enemies. In fact, you might need to see yourselves through the eyes of the enemy. In that case, it makes sense to say that the enemy is yourself and/or say that the enemy is always a potential ally. So, as in another story, that of Quetzalcoatl and the smoking mirror, you might see yourself and nothing else when you try to conquer or possess others.

Which means that the point of these precarious moves (it isn’t a method) is to include everything that has been excluded or discriminated against by a schematization of knowledge which has led to the confinement of real change in time (and of the times) and to the instrumentalization of reason. This is endemic not only to authoritarian tendencies in different societies but also to the interplay of the displayed and the hidden that bends imaging capacities and sensing towards resentment, the overwhelming of sense, and the masking or displacement of tensions.

Which raises a crucial question, as Taussig says: Are vengeance and justice the same? Can they really be differentiated? Or does the blurring of boundaries oblige us to rethink the very notions of boundaries, limits, judgment, and social and natural laws in time? Perhaps, the criminal avenger and the *justiciero* are not so easily distinguishable. Perhaps that is why in so many tales and histories, old and new, injustice is spoken of as a moment of confusion and indistinction.

Critical Criminal: Justiciero Stories, Fetishes, and Political Economy

The bandit or the criminal is a critical character. Also, in the sense that understanding hesitates and words (including legal discourse) stammer when confronted by crime. We should not forget that the bandit or the criminal are indexes of differentiation, pointing towards indistinction or disorientation and, thus, to a *discrimen*. The criminal is someone or something who differentiates himself or itself through their actions because these actions bring about a field, domain, or scene, and bring onto such a scene discrimination—a disqualifying distinction or decision. In this respect, the criminal is a sort of critical object which effects a critical capacity with its energetic, forceful efforts, or provokes turbulent tensions.

Writers—from the black surrealists of the Caribbean to Kafka’s storytelling, the Situationists, or Gabriel García Márquez and his Boom *compadres*—reckon that explosive or bizarre actions, non-contact correspondences or effects (such as when a force and a new organ, transmission vehicle, or fetish intersect) might provoke the art of distinctions. But what would it mean for that art or force not to force discrimination or damnation and, instead, bring something else or something other into being? Not only a time for change, but to change time and change itself.

Hamlet is often the example used to illustrate hesitation and cessation, but we prefer Cachama (or Allende) because the Prince of Denmark is not so succinct an example to describe thorough change. Ultimately, he does nothing, or nothing good, and this form of inaction is actually presented as a permanent crisis.

In contrast, bandits like Cachama and other characters in mythic matter or history strike at themselves—destroying themselves, moving onto shadows, falling downwards, or going into caves, like Antigone. Such acts of self-negation or defacement provoke a surplus of negative energy to emerge from within the defaced body or thing itself. This becoming means the body or thing is now in a state of desecration. But this negative state can come across as more sacred than “the sacred,” as per Nietzsche’s madman’s question after announcing that most spectacular

defacement: the death of God: “Do you feel the breath of empty space?”⁴ Let us take this space, an abarian point between field forces or a body-space, to be where the defacing is. The (negated) body—Cachama’s or Allende’s in the crucial end-moment of his life—indicate where and when the firm interruption of the inertial chain of acts or judgment and commands (for example, the military’s command to kill), can help other timespaces, alternating voices, and global situations to appear (in public). To become visible and present, to emerge from within states of exception. This is perhaps what G. W. F. Hegel termed “the labor of the negative.”⁵

Or, rather, to present the state of things as if in a chemical bath, such as those used by scientists and criminal investigators in charge of finding new truths about mass human rights violations, but also like poets and photographers. The latter may use a montage technique, for example, or the kind of determinant chance-connections that Taussig refers to when redefining the fetish. This matters because it tells us that in all the deader-than-dead sense we may attach to such a thing—the fetish—it reacts, returning as a shock. A *choc en retour*, a great camouflage or boomerang effect, as the surrealist poets of the Caribbean used to say.

This was of course the gist of what Marx ironically, humorously, and sardonically suggested in *Das Kapital* when he proposed the notion of commodity fetishism. Meaning that today we live in a world spectacularly bombarded by unlikely images and phantoms that we take for reality. Meaning that, by a twist of fate, the product (of our work and the exercise of our forces) comes back to dominate us. So it had been with God, for example, who turned the tables and told man that only God had created man. And so it is with the world of faster and higher flying technologies of data-collection, trade and imaging, of man-made climate change and computers, as well as AI (which we fear, reasonably it seems, might take over). They too seem to have turned the tables.

It seems likely to us that Marx would have had less of a problem with our contemporary world of make-believe, in which images and far-fetched stories like Cachama’s—or the bizarre, far-fetched idea that the real world was really made up—have become real. At least, he would have less of a problem than we seem to have. Why? On the one hand, because to him the fusion between the force of finance capital and new technologies monstrously directing themselves to attack democracy would

⁴ Nietzsche 1974, 181 also cited by Taussig, 1999, 1.

⁵ Hegel 1972, 10.

not seem that new. Or he would at least have pointed out that, for such a new system to work, it would require the fuel and storm-like force of opinion markets and the mass press. In other words, it would require automatism (meaning also demonstrative logicity, automated tech haunting us, and consequence) as much as, if not more than, resentment.⁶

As in “we are the law, therefore, we neither want nor need law, ergo, we kill.” Or like the image or meme travelling and dispersed at lightning speed that supposedly demonstrates “we’re superior to them, culturally, morally, and, therefore, in this conflict we shall prevail,” which, when directed against some demonized “internal” enemy (blacks and Indians, migrants, women, youth, queers, dissenters, *zurdos* or communists) becomes part of a deductive chain that leaves no time to think and instead invites the audience to take the next step without hesitation: “kill.” Meanwhile, ratings go up, likes abound in social media, and out of these affects-turned-field forces that foreclose time and imagination, someone or something profits. Getting ever richer and richer. In the meantime, we and our environs all become pawns to Lord Death for the sake of immortality, as in the story of Quetzalcoatl and the Smoking Mirror.⁷

We need more Cachamas and Quetzalcoatl, different Hamlets. Figures of historical turbulence and/or underlying indexes of field forces like Salvador Allende of Chile. Of whom Nobel Prize-winner and Magical Realist *primus inter pares* Gabriel García Márquez said:

[Some] years ago, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, one of the outstanding poets of our time, enlightened this audience with his word. Since then, the Europeans of good will—and sometimes those of bad, as well—have been struck, *with ever greater force*, by the unearthly tidings of Latin America, that boundless realm of haunted men and historic women, whose unending obstinacy blurs into legend. We have not had a moment’s rest. A promethean president [Salvador Allende], entrenched in his burning palace, died fighting an entire army...⁸

A Point in Time

It seems to me García Márquez writes about Allende not in the grand style of tragedy, even though he contributed more than most to the passing of Allende from historical figure into legend. Rather, he speaks of something smaller. A small

⁶ Vogl 2021.

⁷ Harris [1999] 2005, 177-186.

⁸ García Márquez 1982.

and, some might say, inconsequential point in time. As inconsequential as his protest and participation in the II Russell Tribunal: a citizen's tribunal that—in the mold of the tribunal which adjudicated on the subject of the atrocities committed during the Vietnam War—looked at evidence and collected testimonies regarding the intervention of the United States and other Western powers in what is now known as the Global South, specifically, Latin America. More specifically, in the wake of the coup against Allende in Chile.

As a counterforce to García Márquez's fateful description of Salvador Allende and the events of September 11, 1973, let's begin by pointing out that the president of Chile was not fighting alone. Just as García Márquez was not the only fantastic writer taking up the job of reinventing the investment vehicles of politics and law after the failure of its promissory languages in the wake of the coup and the II Russell Tribunal.

In the solitude of his presidential palace in flames in the last hour of his life, Allende's figure and words needed to explode with a force bigger than that of the bombs falling on La Moneda in central Santiago, across connectivity and boundaries, to become a field force. Which is the effect of Allende having delivered his final speech through sound waves at the precise time when the command to destroy the movement of the Chilean people had been issued and started to be carried out. A transmission from the originating source (i.e., Allende) that would resonate in time, moving with rhythmic force across and beyond his own time, impacting upon ours and introducing a small but crucial moment for pause for us (which, according to the García Márquez, we had not had). A small blockade at the end of his life, intentional or not.

The logic which this curious object obeys—a speech moving air as sound and information as electricity waves time-travelling via connected networks—isn't extensional, but rather, derivative logic. Derivative logics are characterized by their ability to transmit some characteristic from an originating source to a consequent site, figuration, or expression, bringing together things that are different or far apart without needing to reduce them to sameness or some lower common denominator or standard. Related to this is their capacity to make past-future trajectories actionable here and now with no need for flattening or the trickery of perspectival representation. Technically speaking, they transpose and leverage small volatilities (of movement and spacetime) that can have a wider and stronger impact.

A small point of hesitation, cessation, or refusal; but one with a much wider impact. One that makes the future actionable in the present. Here, the variable attributes of some underlying index (his words, Allende himself, the falling bombs, legal and constitutional battles, the orders issued, etc.) can be bundled together with different expected outcomes, not all of them predictable. And the effects and affects, although local in their attachments, can move and resonate around the world and through time. When taken as a broader social logic, rather than merely an activity that takes place within one sector called the economy, the dynamics of the derivative can be seen across many sectors of social life and history generating mutual attractors of indebtedness whose social entailments (care, reciprocity, hospitality) are the fundamentals of political engagement. Hence our use of the term “gravitational” force to refer to such impact: “The derivative brings to notice the potential impact issued from seemingly minor variations.”⁹

Let’s now go back to our example of hesitation, refusal, dodging moves, and cessation in the case of the last minutes of Allende’s life: the moment of his exchanges with his daughter Beatriz (the most harrowing, it seems to me), his final speech, and perhaps also the end point of his life. At this point, the decision, the order issued (to “kill”) and the affect/effect (resentment, profit) encounter the reality of time. In other words, when the path towards the execution of a final command or solution, the decision, is furnished with an interruption or a pause, half-voluntary and half-involuntary (i.e., a point in time) fate is held in abeyance. And hope, a courageous one, takes hold in the audience. A gift has been created, given, and received.

The gift of time.

Against Decision: The Gift of Time

You may have guessed by now that my proposal for dealing with Allende’s gift of time, mythic matter with gravitational impact and derivative implications, differs completely from the logics of extension and decision that still predominate in mainstream political philosophy and legal education, as well as in the kinds of historical writing that, knowingly or not, is still heavily indebted to Thomas Carlyle’s idea of visibility. Or else, to the conventions of linear perspective, geometrical space quantification, and framework thinking left over by traditional thought after its demise as philosophy.

⁹ Martin 2012.

Advocates of that philosophy may not be aware of the historical compromises between such modes of spatial visualization, the Christianization of fatalism into theologies of reaction and teleologies of spacetime, and the expansionism of Christendom over the space of the globe that have driven older and new imperialisms (such as the one that Allende confronted in the guise of the Bretton Woods financial architecture imposed by the Western allies after World War II, and the context of its decolonial refusal by the Tricontinental alliance). This might not be a problem if not for the fact that, as suggested just now, it is not possible to understand Allende's key actions (the nationalization of copper; the formulation of the "excess profit" doctrine to affirm self-governance over so-called natural resources in the international arena; the call for a New International Economic Order; laying the foundations for cybernetics for the poor; and crucially, the decoupling of coercion—the use of force—from sovereignty and people's democratic self-government) in the absence of that context. These actions were taken during the break down of the Bretton Woods architecture, not by international communism, but by something very different: derivative finance plus new technologies creating a generalized condition of precarity that breeds *ressentiment*.

There are those who, fifty years on, continue to interpret the end of Allende's life as the moment of an ethical decision, in which the past finally catches up with the present and becomes manifest—as in the play of Oedipus Rex striking an old man in the desert. They seem to read history and mythic matter as if it followed timeless laws and do so through the prism of ancient (Greek) tragedy. Which is to say, fatalism.

I beg to differ. I do not believe, as they seem to, that such prismatic lenses are "classical" in the sense of being timeless, or applicable with forensic precision through all of space and time. On the one hand, the prismatics of tragedy and historical perspective from atop mountains of vision do have a history of their own, just as any other instruments for the visualization of history. On the other, I do not believe they can be applied to an individual case, as when judges or lawyers look at one case and its circumstances, seek out a relevant set precedent or rule, and then issue a verdict. For starters, history and matter, including mythic matter, are not law-like or tribunal-like in that sense of the term "decision." They cannot be brought before a court. And if they were, then we should interpret them according to a fuller understanding of the principle of precedence. You're advised to follow a rule or precedent if the facts of the current case are (metaphorically or metonymically) similar to previous ones; but if not—and this is the point where the principle of precedence

becomes really interesting—then there can be no prediction for how the case, problem, or system at issue will behave.

When confronted by a truly novel case or systemic event, its response to measurement, liminal prohibition, or decision will not be predictable from the (precedent) information we already have. If society is like this, then its movement and derivations cannot fit the tight confinements of a “final” decision. Moreover, if nature is like this, “then the future is genuinely open.”¹⁰

That is why the kind of judgment that results from logic of extension and decision seems to me pedantic. Not just that, it is pessimistic in its total outlook on history (an eternal gaze *ad pessimum*, said Ernst Bloch), and perhaps nihilistic. For it de-realizes time. We should let go of the kind of the judgment that the playwright Antonin Artaud aptly called “the judgment of God.”

Abarian Points

My approach to these matters and to mythic matter may be described as a point between, across, and beyond (Kantian) timeless validity, or the law-beyond-law of states of exception or final decision, and into (Marxian) historical emergence. This approach may be a-systemic, but it is one that drills: that twists and turns like a Moebius strip; that laps over boundaries through connectivity (as in Freudian outlines for the pleasure principle and contemporary readings of topology and time physics); that reckons with the moment of the constitution of community between, across, and beyond different sign systems and trajectories when one is led to no longer perceive another individual or group as fully other, despite the interests of oneself or any others.

As in the case of Allende’s act at the endpoint of his life, I believe it is at that small, humbler point in time—not a chunk of divisible time, but the intensity of the reality of time—that thinking becomes political and free. At least in the sense that matters to us: that point in spacetime governed by weightlessness; the moment in which the heavy load of the past and the fetish turn from fall into flight thanks to a critical activity; the point of cosmic-political freedom. Namely, the spacetime given by the capacity for differentiation and interruption that offers as a gift a shift of geography and perspective, or a “solution.” That is, a solution in the sense given to that term by chemists and photographers and also by mathematicians, for whom the

¹⁰ Smolin 2013, 146-147; Cornell 2017, 195-215.

“solution” is a means of absorbing the data about a problem and the ideas or propositions addressing aspects of it in a way or proposition that composes a wider field.¹¹

The very distinction between fields may present itself as a kind of problem, to which the genius response of contemporary mathematics and gravitational thinking has been to propose the possibility of translations and transpositions between fields to figure a new and different solution. Rather than wielding a hammer to get access or penetrate the nut to its interior at the risk of shattering and pulverizing its contents, a different aspect of our cognitive and differentiating abilities is emphasized here. One that is set in resonance with the reality of time. Ditto: it consists of “immersing” the problem in a more general (chemical, logical, perspectival) medium or field. Therein the shell softens, the skin of the nut loosens with care. Such a process implies no loss of precision or specificity, nor does it render the internal contradictions or local irregularities within meaningless; instead, these are “dissolved” in “a wider field or a more encompassing” configuration.¹²

This is no (Hegelian) subsumption, but rather, more like the experience of exile as an abarian “paradoxical point” and modality of political thinking. Or, like a stereo- or poly-phonic composition and movement, as exemplified in the kinds of fieldwork and socially impactful theories emerging in Latin America during Allende’s time that would be informed by, and in turn inform, the struggles that the Chilean Revolution dynamized.¹³

Hence, let’s speak of the dynamic point between gravitational fields known by astronomers and flight engineers as an “abarian point.” The emphasis we place on such dynamics takes stock of the reality of time in which the possibility of vast reversals out of relatively small disturbances and genuine novelty cannot be ruled out. For we need more time. The reality of time much more than “real time.”

Thus, neither presentism nor eternalism can inform our readings of historically resonant cases and derivative implications such as those present in

¹¹ See Kluge and Negt 2014, 377 on gravitation, abarian point, and freedom between the Earth and the Moon.

¹² Zalamea 2012, 149, also cited by Fuller and Weizman 2021, 161.

¹³ For example, Zavaleta Mercado’s 1979 *El poder dual*, written in exile after the author’s arrival in Mexico City in 1973; or the cycle of writings put together by Orlando Fals-Borda between 1962 and the early 1980s, collected under the title *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina* (2015), including the stereophonic *Historia doble de la costa*, which informed, among others, the path followed by liberation theology and the philosophy of liberation in the region and elsewhere. See also Gago 2012, 39.

Allende's story. The present moment is the now, limiting past and future, in the cosmos as well as in our experience; crucially:

this temporal character of nature would persist in our absence as it existed before our emergence. However, what is real does not fit within the confines of the present moment...Everything in the universe is always becoming, or ceasing to be, and changing into something else... Change itself is changing. Time is the differential susceptibility of everything, including change, to change.¹⁴

We need changing change, changing characters, objects, and forces able to give us time and enable change in times like these. Surely, in disoriented times such as ours, simple dualities break down or get multiplied. We may feel dizzy, as if we were falling but there is nothing to fall to. And surely, losing our ultimate ground may be a shattering experience. We may become anxious, eager to recover something to hold onto. Derivative fascisms and other monsters may arise in such an interregnum. But does that mean nothing will ever change? As my friend the philosopher Drucilla Cornell used to say, the implication of the reality of time for those of us interested in bringing nature back into political philosophy is that there can be no theory telling us that change is impossible, that history is set and law is fate, that catastrophe is inevitable and our actions only a drop of water in the ocean.

Ethical & Normative Implications Fifty Years On

Such an ethical, normative implication is of extreme importance in our age of climate meltdown. In the supposed democracy of laws in which the tale of Cachama emerges, for example, democracy itself is shattered (bombed or killed) and end-times images and discourses spectacularly displayed. But why? What for? Precisely, to hide inner dynamics and tensions that may lead to thorough transformations, a way out, or the end of this world in which we are never not falling down.

The End...

We do not know if or when the end will come. One thing we know: neoliberal capitalism ended already. Or, at least, the phase of so-called neoliberalism and possessive individualism has ended. And it wasn't killed by "communism." Instead, the culprit may be found among the ruinous processes of the financialization of

¹⁴ Mangabeira Unger and Smolin 2015, 161.

everyday life. Which means that it ended where it started: in the Americas, the site of original “primitive accumulation” and so-called tropical speculative ventures. Also, ground-zero for the “neoliberal” experiment that came in the wake of the violent crushing of the Chilean revolution.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to ask, for the sake of clarification, what do we mean by neoliberalism? To make a long story short, we understand by neoliberalism the last and most accomplished attempt at marrying religion and politics into a feigned unity—which legal and political theorists see at the heart of so-called Bonapartism. “Bonapartism is the theology of political reaction” that returns and repeats itself at the heart of, and therefore as the unresolved tension within, liberal society. It asks what is necessary to secure the interests of the bourgeois and rentist-financial class as the universal interests of society at a time of supposedly permanent political crisis.¹⁵

It comes (back) to the fore whenever “constitutional government must be temporarily altered to whatever degree is necessary to overcome the peril and restore normal conditions.”¹⁶ In other words, by recognizing and organizing its own powers as social powers, the democratization of society challenges the distinction between society and the state that follows from and builds upon a prior distinction between nature and society, by (re)politicizing all social relations (which would in theory include human/nonhuman relations as well). The anxious fear at this point is that democratization would lead to conditions of ungovernability if left unchecked. Then, it is argued that for the sake of liberty, the state needs to be rolled back from society, reinforcing the distinction between state and society and thus, securing the political state and the “natural” unity and homogeneity of society as the presupposition of a depoliticized society—one solely governed by the liberal rule of law and the moral naturalized sentiments of enterprise and competition. A unity of law and economics that, despite its claims to naturalism, is a political decision to reassert the distinction between state and society, with far-reaching consequences.

The unity of law and economics promises to disappear all heretics and heresy itself. The novelty of neoliberalism is its liturgical capacity to weld together all the private properties—both the subjective or particular wants, and the objective, public and institutionally objective attitudes, which are collapsed each into the other and projected, flattened, onto a plane of representation. Represented or projected onto

¹⁵ Bonefeld 2014, 179-180.

¹⁶ Rossiter 1948, 5.

the screen of natural bodies simulated within a frame of universal scarcity, the result is the horror show of unending war, fixed identities, and absolute competition. Even nature itself is saturated with something we can only term *satisfaction itself unsatisfactory*. A projected view of scarcity is thus elevated to the status of the principle of nature and the mind and introduced into the heart of timeless desire.

However, we know we can no longer speak of this thing—timeless desire and satisfaction itself unsatisfactory—using the old geometrical notions of flattening projection, scale, and proximity. Precisely because in the wake of its explosion, this thing, this desire has become entangled with our daily lives. The democratization of society and its spatial viewpoint appears at first to have a problem with verticality. By suggesting that anyone can have an opinion on the objects of desire, either the same opinion or that all opinions amount to the same, it assures that the same value is attached to all statements about society and nature. All qualities are thereby not only expressed in terms of quantity but also makes any quality interchangeable with, as well as comparable, to any other quality.

In such flattened world, the only verticality left after the fall of all verticalities is, precisely, the exceptional vertical viewpoint that allows for the constant transmutation of all qualities into quantities against a framework of universal scarcity. The exceptionality of that vertical viewpoint over the whole of space (supposedly scarcely populated and characterised by scarcity) is akin to the “states of emergency” that the democratization of society creates “which call for the establishment of constitutional dictatorship.”¹⁷

In such a flattened space, necessity—the result of the transmutation of all qualities into quantities that gives them the necessity of the timeless laws of the mathematical realm—knows no (changeable) law. It demands the use of force (law-making violence) to restore the (timeless) order of the commonwealth. For people like Carl Schmitt—inspired by the secularized theology of the Second Scholastics underpinning sixteenth and seventeenth century *ius publicum Europaeum*—an “effective democracy” would depend precisely on the purer unity and perfect homogeneity between rulers and ruled. Schmitt’s program of “sound economy and the strong state” is the demand of neoliberalism, incarnated in the dispensation that followed the coup d’état against Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973.

¹⁷ Friedrich, 1968, 580.

It is for the sake of an economy of free labor that liberalism has to put itself at “the forefront of the fight for the state,” because it is only the state that can guarantee the commonwealth as one that limits itself to the task of making the economy of free labor effective, the land empty and given to scarcity. In the face of disorder and politicized labor relations, the state has to act and do so under the *uber*-principle that “the most fundamental principles of a free society...may have to be temporarily sacrificed...[to preserve] liberty in the long run.”¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, someone like Hayek would accept Schmitt’s conception of sovereignty according to which “sovereign is the one who decides on the exception.” A dictatorship that imposes limits on itself and thereby governs for the sake of the free economy. No longer a contradiction in terms, but rather the litmus test of constitutionalism. In the face of permacrisis and intermittent emergency, it preserves the rule of law by means of the force of law. So that nothing really new emerges. It de-realizes time, connectivity, and changing boundaries.

...is the Beginning

Let the focus of our approach be, precisely, on issues of connectivity and boundary. Let’s speak in that respect of the inter-temporality of justice. Of doing justice to this thing, this hidden truth, this world opening from secrecy to wider imaginations of justice here and now rather than in the deferred future. And of threshold moments of boundaries or interzones. Like the ones William Burroughs encountered in the Putumayo forests of Colombia. Like the ones Salvador Allende envisioned in his final words, when he spoke of the time when men would walk again along “las grandes alamedas” (the great boulevards) together with our mothers, fathers, and mentors, the *palabrerros*, exiles, and wordsmiths who taught Allende and Burroughs how to munch on words as one munches on coca leaves and *ayahuasca* while walking in the forest.

¹⁸ Hayek, 2006, 217.

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