

# Politics of the Images, Fictions of the Common

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It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.

This is an extract from *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten. Marta Malo de Molina who translated two chapters of the text for *Las Lindes*(1), reflected on the term Subcomunes, because “they are precisely practices and territories of cooperation (organised by the principle of the common) that linger underground in multiple settings (institutional and otherwise)”. Despite the fact that *Re-visiones* is an academic journal, it has always aimed to corrupt itself with undisciplined knowledge, in the company of the museum and all those independents and autonomous spaces that, since issue 0, have contributed to rethink, not only in terms of the chance we have to rectify the writing of our own histories, but also to propose new cartographies for political subjectivation. Harney and Moten speak of being inside, but without forming part thereof. Their metaphors are beautiful, but the emotional context is not to be trusted, and we are now unsure whether, speaking from within the Spanish state-funded university, although it is indeed in southern Europe, we could claim to be a camp of refugees or gypsies. It might be worth contextualising these metaphors, or completely uprooting them (claiming to be termites, or moles).

In this map that we are plotting together, we propose from now on, starting with issue 6 of *Re-visiones*, how to see things using what we have in common, all woven upon our concerns within those environments that flit between the worlds of academia, exhibitional contexts, public programmes in museums, the activities in independent and autonomous spaces and social movements. This should form a fabric which, yet again, as in the revolutionary tradition, blurs the lines between artistic and emancipatory practices, in order to – again – try to “organise pessimism”(2).

Putting out an open call for papers is, in this sense, little more than outlining the possibility of sketching this map, using whatever means the participant may consider fundamental for making visible and justifiable.

To this end, we have understood the fictions of the common can be the great molecular factory for the tales we concoct

to try and improve our being together, to strike up stories or sketch out strategies to bring us together, all with the aim of slowing down the current state of things. They are also related to how we tell them, the formats we select (and the access to them!). In short, the breadth of perspectives we have, the insistence – and the urgency – to move away from cliché in order to open up discourses that are considered inherent to image politics, understood as links between what is seen, what is thought, what is felt and what is said, rather than the compact mechanisms that organise what those in power see, think and say. That is, the way the dominant narratives affect us when small and perverse common places begin to take root, those places where we all – especially women - feel hurt. In short: abandon common places and, paradoxically, create new commons.

The articles that answered our call have invariably traversed a flat, nomadic space, which they go over and over again. In *A few flashes of lightning*, the article by Cuauhtémoc Medina and Helena Chávez Mac Gregor, we have been able to keep some continuity with certain issues addressed in the previous edition, i.e. regarding the disappearances and murders of young teachers in Ayotzinapa, a topic we wanted not to forget. The article briefly describes the process which led them, along with the Teatro Ojo, Hector Bourges, Laura Furlan, Karla Rodriguez and Patricio Villarreal, to the project created for Draft, *At night, lightning*: “how to intervene within a public sphere swamped by images of violence that, instead of creating a space to produce collective thought, is in fact subordinated by the effects of its own violence”.

In “A common place is not my place: artistic relations between Mexico and the United States in a globalised world”, Daniel Montero Fayed describes the geopolitical condition of global delocalisation and resetting as undergone by Mexico. He reveals how cultural and social flow and porosity overlaps with the relations that make up the very heart of the global economic system.

Starting with Giorgio Agamben’s ideas on the Pauline epistles, Jaime Vindel digs deeper into the philosophic intimacy between the messianic and the common, and he highlights the way in which the historical oversight of this link can help to explain the discriminatory formation of the historical subject in modernity. He also looks into the echoes thereof in the western imaginary of the subalternity, by authors such as Pier Paolo Pasolini or Guy Debord.

Vindel’s “saintly” allusions inspired us to put some questions to Jacques Rancière, as we thought it would be interesting to interview him regarding the *Nuit debout* protests in Paris. In this interview we used the images that accompany the transcribed texts. We showed them to him as we asked the questions, fully aware that our dear philosopher friend is not exactly given to phenomenological “punctum”. The conversation focussed on these images.

Andrea de la Serna in fact re-reads Rancière, and she offers us a “common-to-come”, based on Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the “people to-come”, and on Peter Brook’s *Marat/Sade*. She tries to determine what fictionalising the common might mean, and with what ontological, political and aesthetic proposals it can be elaborated.

The remaining articles in the dossier respond to some of the other “tags” in our proposal, i.e. those related to Internet user-cultures:

In “New Media Egologies”, Juan Martín Prada puts forward a detailed essay, pausing at the most important moments in modernity and its overarching system (i.e. capitalism), where he suggests the Internet is a mirrored sphere in which the practices of self-representation and hyper-visibility are constructed. In this way, he does not only flag up the dangers of narcissism, as fed by the neoliberal system, but he also brings them together in a historical analysis based on a “hazy”

dialectic, blurring the “self” and the crowd.

Loreto Alonso surfs the environment memory, an update on the collective dream pronounced by Walter Benjamin, where she leads us on a critical tour of three fictional narratives: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the *Big Brother* television format, and the Ari Forman film *The Congress* (2014), as well as forms such as the “loop” and other media-based dynamics of interactive estrangement. Marian Garrido, in turn, with an emoticon-title (ಠ\_ಠ), warns us that there is ghost floating around the Internet, called nihilism. Thus, “from the corporations, trying to grab their slice of the users’ hideouts of resistance, to collaborative platforms for consulting information, we can find numerous examples which challenge control but also threaten to derail the logic system which rules over the tangible world”.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Image Symposium, at CA2M and directed by Leire Vergara, this year they discussed the power of seeing images together. To that end, the talks and presentations have provided a great wealth of content for this edition. Kodwo Eshun kindly accepted our request to transcribe his talk “The Final Scene of *Hyenas*: A Fable of Fatal Incorporation”, referring to the film directed by Djibril Diop Mambéty in 1992, considered a “biting satire of today’s Africa”. Eshun questions the effectiveness of “opacity” (concept used by Edouard Glissant), that is, if it actually works inasmuch as a counter-force, against the transparency of power. In this sense, he suggests that we understand the final scene of *Hyenas* “as a performance of the sacrificial logic of structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s”.

Silvia Maglioni and Graeme Thomson, who, as well as participating in the Sessions, took part in the Seminar organised by our research and development project “Critical Visualities: Re-Writing Narrative through Images” (<http://www.imaginarrar.net/seminario5.html>), in which they presented their *Dark Matter Cinema Tarot: from a State of Emergency*. This article recounts their experiences in the *common infra/ctions* residency, at Les Laboratoires d’Aubervilliers (Paris), and it alludes to an experience they had in the workshops of the aforementioned Symposium at the CA2M, a nomadic practice that assumes a different form each time a Nocturnal Committee takes place.

We thought it would be worthwhile to publish the conference-conversation that Leire Vergara gave alongside Isabel de Naverán. Another way of seeing images in common, but in a format that suggests crossing over the image to head towards a territory which is becoming of increasing interest to us, i.e. that of the experience with the body and the imperceptible times of the everyday space. *Re-visiones* presents a new version of the lecture, including the transcription and translation into English of the first two points proposed by each author, as well as a video recording of the event.

It has been a fundamental part of this edition to be able to include *Focus: Adelita Husni-Bey. White Book: On Land, Law, and the Imaginary*, a small book coming from the invited projects and which Pablo Martínez introduces as the curator of the exhibition of the same name, presented in the CA2M in December 2016. It has Adelita Husni-Bey’s text on *The Convention of the Use of Space*, and a conversation she held with Ana Méndez de Andes and Emilio Santiago Muíño. All of this highlights the important contribution of the CA2M in terms of the academic research of a journal like *Re-visiones*.

We are particularly grateful that the review section has also been forged from the theme of the common. Virginia Villaplana, whose book *Políticas visuales de la emocionalidad y el deseo. Un homenaje al cine de Chick Strand* (“Soft Fiction: Visual politics of emotionality and desire. A tribute to the cinema of Chick Strand”) is discussed by Ana Pol, in a review titled “because we lived together”. In turn, Virginia Villaplana discusses María Rosón’s book, *Crítica(s) de arte. Género, memoria y cultura visual en el primer franquismo (materiales cotidianos)* (“Art Critics: Gender, Memory and Visual Culture in early Francoist Spain (everyday materials)”).

To conclude, we continue the series of interviews, which began in Issue 4, talking to female researchers with whom our own work shares common ground. In this issue, Pablo Martínez interviews Marina Garcés, not only in her capacity as the author of the book *Un mundo común* (“A Common World”), and most recent *Filosofía inacabada y Fuera de clase. Textos de filosofía de guerrilla* but also as an active participant in Espai en blanc (<http://espaienblanc.net/>), and critical writing with images via the *Pressentiments*.

## Notes

1 Text can be downloaded in Las lindes, [www.ca2m.org](http://www.ca2m.org)

2 A phrase Walter Benjamin borrows from Pierre Naville. See “El surrealismo. La última instantánea de la inteligencia europea”, in *Iluminaciones I*, Madrid, Taurus, 1991, p.59.