

GLOBAL CRISIS AND NEW CRITIQUE

1 This project of a new critique of contemporary crises has arisen from successive encounters of North American and Latin-American intellectuals in open protest against the conditions of academic misery and social disintegration in both geopolitical regions. It is also an attempt to put an end to the institutional and linguistic silencing of intellectuals who are faced with the enormous dilemmas of our time: the industrial destruction of ecological balance, the degradation of democracy as spectacle, an economic crisis that casts millions into the void, and the worldwide extension of racism, violence, and war.

Mexico bears the double destiny of, on the one hand, an Independence that has been decapitated by wars of territorial occupation and a socially irresponsible concept of modernization and, on the other hand, a Revolution that wound up instituting the same repressive model of modernity that it claimed to dethrone together with Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. Latin America is weighed down by the destiny of the terminal colonization of its indigenous peoples and cultures in situations of corporate totalitarianism, political corruption and violence. The United States continues to follow the imperial destiny first spelled out in the Monroe Doctrine and punctuated by the nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which elevated it to a global military power. The ethical void and human desperation that are volatilized in the democratic spectacle swell with propagandistic and military strategies against a terrorism that is generated by the global expansion of corporate and military powers.

North American intellectual consciousness has been paralyzed since the expressions and exploits of postmodernism in the 80s. US universities have become mega-machines that fragment and isolate human intelligence.

Technical specialization and linguistic control have eliminated any space for reflection at the present time. For their part, neither Mexico nor Latin America have been capable of critically reflecting on the open conflicts of their colonial past, the ambiguities of their independence, or on the future of their economic, media-bound, and academic dependence on North America.



Jorge Castillo, *En el olvido* (tinta china - 29X40 cm).

This situation of dependence and indebtedness has generated great movements of social resistance. The *Occupy* movement in the United States, the student movements in Latin America and, not least of all, the civil resistance of Arab countries against the military destruction of their cities, populations and economies are some models of this resistance. The protests by the indigenous peoples of Brazil, Mexico, Colombia or Peru against the corporate invasion of their lands represent reactions against one and the same global constellation. However, the absence of any political organization or well-defined theoretical project threatens the existence of these movements.

The ex-intellectual blindly and mutely contemplates this scenario.¹ The conservatism of structuralism has sequestered the words with which this ex-intellectual could establish links with social reality. Postmodernity has chained him to corporate power under the auspices of an avant-garde that

has become commercially degraded. The academic apparatus has cloistered him in webs of micro-politics and micro-discourses. The cultural industries have reduced literary and artistic creation to fiction and ornament.

2 The absence of alternative discourses is the alibi of an academic bureaucracy and an industrialized culture that maintain their hegemony by censoring those very same alternatives. In academic circles in the United States, for instance, one is not permitted to mention the reflexive tradition that ties the humanism of Emerson to the critique of social and political mega-machines proposed by Lewis Mumford. The European university has reduced the central category of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the transformation of the Enlightenment into a system of propaganda and a spectacle of techno-centric domination and its devolution into a genocidal mega-machine, into its opposite: the generalized fetishization of the culture of spectacle under the omni-modal power of cultural industries. The Lettered City of Latin America has displaced the project of social integration of the indigenous peoples and cultures of the continent in exchange for a civilizing project of terminal genocide.

A new critique is the necessary response to this expansion of corporate powers and the subsequent collapse of thinking. This critique is new insofar as it aims to reformulate the ideals of social justice and democracy, which were formulated by modern thinkers from Spinoza to Marx, and from Thoreau to Josué de Castro, in the face of continuously expanding institutional powers and the development of increasingly expedient means to degrade and control human beings. This new critique confronts an industry of spectacles whose proportions and powers are unlike anything ever seen before. This critique is new because it confronts the massive, destructive, and irreversible effects of industrial development on the biosphere and its socially genocidal consequences.

This new critique assumes a methodological process opposed to *cultural studies* – opposed to its anti-aesthetic dissolution of the autonomy of the work of art, its deconstruction of critical theory, and its devaluation of literary and artistic criticism to little more than a discourse. Its task consists of epistemologically founding a non-destructive concept of science, of redefining democracy on the basis of a productive human relationship to nature, and of restoring a spiritual order that is twice removed from the theologies and philosophies of colonization.

1 An ex-intellectual represents someone who has divorced him or herself from the intellectual life, or who was divorced from it unwillingly. He or she is the clay from which the "new" critical intellectual will be molded. An ex-intellectual is not to be confused with the post-intellectual, who is both linked to and responsible for postmodernism and its vacuity.