

Alternate globalities

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Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, center and periphery, negative image and positive image? Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter myth of radical purity?

(Homi Bhaba 1994: 19)

The freedom of knowledge has indeed been a quest that has sought to destabilize orders of hierarchy, regimes of domination and also Manichean dualisms of good and bad. In the discursive universe of knowledge production, the colonial encounter or the colonial paradigm has been the defining parameter of such inequities. In retaliation, the post – colonial enterprise has successfully traced out the hegemonic inscriptions on knowledge production, but, as Bhaba says, have these tracings done more than establish irreconcilable opposition? Have they left behind an unrealizable aspiration for an originary moment, an impossible starting over? These are lofty questions that cannot be given any short or quick answers – yet, in my presentation today, I will attempt to propose a way with which we can imagine some alternate ways of producing knowledge which step beyond 'implacable oppositionalities' or mythical 'inventions' of 'originary purity'. I draw my anchor from the social – anthropological frame, but I hope I speak to more than my base discipline.

First, a brief note on what led me to these questions – over the years 1997–98, I had spent an anthropologist's 'fieldwork' year in Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon. This was in relation to my doctoral research, which I was conducting as a student of social anthropology, from the University of Delhi, in India. My research questions were about

recovery and reconstruction, with reference to the Lebanese Civil Wars, as manifest in multiple urban settings in Beirut. This endeavor on my part – i.e. a researcher from one country in the global south encountering - in the anthropological fashion - another locale in the south was a transgression of sorts.

As is well known, social anthropology as a discipline has grown out of the colonial encounter. It grew out of a ‘western’ quest for knowledge about the ‘other’ – and anthropological knowledge grew from the west’s encounter with the rest. This self–other relationship between the west and the rest does not need explanation or endorsement with any audience. Its implications in disciplinary practice, especially in anthropology is equally established – fieldwork encounters were about the white man traveling out and away to distant lands – where distance was measured as much in real space as in civilizational remove. In this paradigm, my fieldwork encounter in Beirut was that of one ‘other’ studying another “other” – so to speak. For all practical purposes and disciplinary intent – this was a transgressive moment. On hindsight, my endeavor seems to resonate well with David Scott’s statement where he says,

European and American Anthropologists continue to go where they please, while the postcolonial stays home or goes West. One wonders whether there might not be a more engaging problematic to be encountered where the postcolonial intellectual from Papua New Guinea goes, not to Philadelphia but to Bombay or Kingston or Accra .¹

What then is the engaging problematic that could be surmised from this encounter between ‘post–colonials’ – between myself the Indian anthropologist and my Lebanese informant - as it were. My first answer to this is indeed my first question – what production of knowledge does this encounter bring about? When I set about answering this base question, I find myself on a terrain that implicates not just the anthropological endeavor but the political economy of knowledge production itself. But, before I can explain this, I will have to start with how within the anthropological genealogy itself, there has been a stock taking of what and how certain knowledges have indeed been hegemonic. This contemporary stock taking has been in the form of a reflexive critique about anthropological geo–politics, about disciplinary genealogies. It also articulates a powerful politics of location - who can make anthropological knowledge and from where? Should metropolitan centers be toppled from their

¹ David Scott, 1989. “Locating the Anthropological Subject: Postcolonial Anthropologists in Other Places”. *Inscriptions*: 5, p 80.

positions of legitimacy? What knowledges have disciplinary legitimacy against others? How can peripheral knowledges achieve parity? And so on. However, given the basic dualism of the originary relationship between the colonial self against the peripheral other - the parameters of this discourse, however critical, more often than not stays within the persistent center-periphery dyad - critiques are largely articulated as self-reflexive portrayals from either position, in relation to the other and often in opposition.

However, if I were to formulate this critique from my fieldwork experience – I have the opportunity of proposing another kind of critique – in the shape of other kinds of relationships that could lead to alternate cartographies of knowledge production. My core proposition today is the following - I propose a particular ‘tacking’ between and amongst locations in the ‘south’, so as to see what epistemological, empirical and theoretical implications lie buried in potential relationships that have hitherto remained unexplored. In another way, I am suggesting a connection of largely uncharted dialogic spaces, which can potentially move beyond the limits of the precolonial-colonial–postcolonial impasse and map new pathways and communications. These potential connections can be compelling in the framing of new assemblages that bring together unexpected sites into productive networks of dialogue and exchange.

The focus is shifted away from ‘older’ dualisms, for example – colonial vs. post colonial, center vs. periphery, north vs. south - relationships that indicate hierarchies not just in the anthropological imagination, but in the discursive universes of knowledge production. At the same time, I do not necessarily argue for models of pre or post colonial purity or heterogeneity – that would be a gross denial of planetary history. I am more concerned with building capacities that can deal with contemporary concerns. I suggest the exploration of new interfaces so that there can be a conscious formation of plural landscapes of multiple relationships. One point I would emphasize here is that this is not an exercise in comparison, where common criteria for evaluating separate contexts are framed (like developmental discourses of the evolutionary type). Rather I intend an initiation of encounters between analytical and empirical registers’ in any area of anthropological or other social research, which open channels of communication that respond to common legacies, epistemological and practical parities/alterities as well as ontological similarities. Such encounters may consolidate or even discover those gaps that the center –periphery relationships have left out from the classical intent of understanding human diversity.

New Cartographies

Self-evident as it may be, yet it is crucial to assert, right at the outset, that the interfacing in the south entails three fundamental features. First, this is not a homogenizing gesture that grounds itself on the notion that there is something inherently 'similar' about locations in the south. Second, its not necessarily about a geographic south – in effect, the connectivities are about links amongst those knowledges and situations that have remained peripheral, sometimes even within centers - thus a metaphorical south. Third, this is not a search for indigenous knowledges or native anthropologies that will remain locked in insular systems of meaning, but rather, it is an attempt to find common epistemologies. Three questions guide my following discussion,

What potential does this tacking amongst and between the 'south' have?

What kind of epistemological ground does it gain?

What kind of knowledge is getting constituted?

What potential does this tacking amongst and between the south have?

In asking for a south-south interfacing, I do not at any point, regard this gesture as an indirect reification of the North-South division, i.e. the global south banding together in some form of counter position against the north. There has been enough to assume that these strict binaries amount to very little indeed. This does not also mean that, on one hand, the baggage of Eurocentric excess can be dispensed with entirely and on the other, the potential for a new imaginative terrain of knowledge production can be denied because a certain dark underside has been acknowledged. I would much rather take a cue from Kewsi Kwaa Prah (a South African anthropologist), when he says the following of Archie Mafeje's dismal writing off of a future of anthropological knowledge, given its hegemonic underbelly. Prah says²,

This position appears to me philosophically adrift, and even more worrying is its implicit denial of the logic of the social sciences. Anthropology, as a science of culture, has, as has rightly been pointed out by a wide variety of minds, historical baggage which needs to be thoroughly scrutinized for both methodological flaws and

² Kwesi Kwaa Prah, 1997. "North-south Parallels and Intersections: Anthropological convergences and divergences in the study of Africa. *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol. 17 (4) 439 – 445.

thematic Eurocentric exotica which hinder its scientific march forward. (Once again, the word scientific needs the expected qualifications). Without doubt, and expectedly, many assumptions and conclusions of the present will be negated in the course of time. But the dialectic of this process is that of growth and not death, that of clarification and not the installation or advent of a new dark age, where only idiosyncratic approaches are celebrated at the expense of consensual or shared understandings. (Prah, 1997:442) (words in parenthesis are mine)

If we are to retain the thought that the apprehension and understanding of human diversity is indeed the core of social research, we cannot sustain the oppression of history as the only guiding force, much rather, we have to open up methodological and epistemological spaces - and this is where the south – south interface finds ground. What does this interface suggest?

The epistemological privilege that secures the alleged monolith of western reason (which, as we now know is a rather fragile claim) in the metropolitan centers is the terrain we interrogate through our critiques. We assign historical conditions for this privilege cohered around the idea of colonial hegemony (tenable or not) and have tried to reclaim a postcolonial epistemology by revealing the structures of domination, the practices of hegemony – all of which has suggested the singular relationship of oppression between the colonial north and the colonized south. In this context, the suggestion of an interface amongst and between the ‘souths’ is in effect an overturning and shattering of this unitary, limiting relationship into multiple relationships. As I will explain, this is not multiplicity for its own sake, but rather the possibility and potential of heterogenous epistemologies which apart from allowing a release from the colonial – postcolonial impasse, meets a basic challenge. For my argument here, I would underline the recognition of the challenge that in the world we live today, totalitarian experience is a reality that conventional wisdom, the older binaries, or existing critiques have not necessarily explained away. The war on terror, Civil Wars, fundamentalisms, religion, the project of democracy, gendered hostilities and the endless ramifications of globalization – good or bad are just a few of these experiences.

I am reasonably convinced to suggest that in contemporary experience - there is a peculiar interplay between universals and particulars. These are relationships, which in order to be understood best, will need to be trained away from the universals of the Anglo-American/Eurocentric ‘selves’ or even the conventional particulars of ‘others’ to newer formulations of either. The conceptual anchoring that this requires could come from what Marc Augé writes about in the introduction to his book titled “Anthropology

in Contemporaneous Worlds.”³ Referring to certain ‘global’ categories such as liberal capitalism, nationalism, fundamentalism and so on, he suggests,

The movement of planetarization and individualization is not making itself felt everywhere with equal force, but it is a general condition and it is creating singular particular resistances of various forms around the earth. Intuitively we feel that the development and expansion of liberal capitalism, nationalism, particularism, fundamentalism are contemporaneous in the full sense of the word: they belong to the same time and space and they are connected to one another – they hang together.

The title of this volume combines a singular noun – anthropology – with a plural one: contemporaneous worlds. It is meant to register the double movement of universalization and particularization that is simultaneously affecting the entire planet. Social Anthropology has always taken into account the context of the groups and phenomena it studied. Today, while multiplicity is being maintained, or more exactly, renewed, that context has become, for all cases, planetary.

Whatever forces make for a planetarization, there is very little doubt as to how contemporaneous experiences of various kinds do allow shared understanding. In the critique of knowledge production, where the primary aim is to de-center epistemic privileges, and also claim a position for alternate knowledges – one of the constructive possibilities would be to illustrate the potential of alternate universals, planetary consensual understandings that can substantiate a de-centered epistemology. If the alleged opposition and dialectic continues to be the west vs. the rest model – there will be very little that has not already been said or done. The shattering of that binary does not come from simple opposition, which in effect maintains the same categories – the west and the rest. The constructive way would be to allow for more coherent categories which do not operate in paradigmatic binaries but in realms of multiplicity. Almost by default, the south is the repository of many because the historical imagination, mythical or not has always cohered ‘a’ center against ‘many’ peripheries. While there were many others, the self remained unitary.

In effect then, the effort to establish a new planetary paradigm is to measure the movement from universals to multiversals – where multiversal does not disintegrate into a cacophony of idiosyncrasies, but rather coheres together with the resonance of similarity and the dialectic of difference. If indeed there is a possibility of this, I am persuaded that there will be more life to the project of formulating creative knowledges, more growth than what can be achieved with opposition alone.

Having said that, I return to my second guiding query :

³ Marc Auge, *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds*. (Tr. By Amy Jacobs. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994)

What kind of epistemological ground does the south-south connectivity gain?

Let me illustrate the potential that tacklings in the south could lead to with some of my own fieldwork experiences in Beirut and Delhi and through some issues that I am currently involved in.

I have been struck by the peculiar interplay between sectarian urban violence, strategies of rehabilitation and survival on one hand and religiosity and faith on the other. Three sketches in this context -

First, in Delhi, where I live, my explorations were about the afterlives of Sikh families who had survived one of independent India's worst events of ethnic violence – the massacre of Sikh men after the assassination of the then Prime Minister in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. The official estimate of the dead, over a period of 3-4 days was about 2733, however, the unofficial and more accurate figure would be around 4000. The singular profile of those killed in some of the most atrociously cruel acts of murder was that they were Sikh men of all ages - young boys to the elderly. Soon after, relief camps had been set up around the city by various organizations – citizen's groups, governmental as well as community associations to provide minimal shelter to the many women rendered homeless. A permanent rehabilitative effort that emerged out of that time was a state decreed 'Widows Relocation Colony' where a substantial number of survivor families, i.e. widows and their surviving relatives – children or elders were relocated. The singular sustained source of aid and support here, till date, is provided by a community organization called Nishkam – an organization that dispenses relief entirely under the banner of religious motivation.

Second, Lebanon : The July August War between Israel and Hezbollah (the Shi'ite militant political party and self styled resistance force in Lebanon) resulted not only in massive destruction on life and property but also to an uncertain ceasefire. Hezbollah established itself not just as a formidable Arab force that could stall an Israeli attack, but also as a stunningly efficient provider of immediate relief and rehabilitation. Hezbollah's rehabilitation efforts in this cycle of devastation across southern Lebanon has been widely reported - my focus has been on the devastation and relief measures in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Hezbollah's involvement in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts is not new – their reconstruction wing *Jihad-al-Binaa* (variously translated as "Reconstruction campaign", "Construction for the Sake of the Holy Struggle", Struggle

for Reconstruction, Holy Construction Foundation”) was established in 1988 in response to the devastation wrecked on the Shi’ia population of Lebanon during the 1975- 89 Civil Wars. It is currently constituted by about 1500 engineers, architects and other volunteers.⁴ During my first phase of fieldwork in Beirut in 1997-98, Hezbollah activity was evident in helping Shi’ia families relocate from the downtown area which at that time was being spectacularly reconstructed through a powerful public private coalition. Their eventual settling in the southern suburbs, recognized now as Hezbollah territory is an area made horrifically vivid by the recent Israeli attacks. Hezbollah’s incredible efficiency in providing support to the particularly vulnerable groups within their community is a commendable effort underlined and coded, once again, by religious motivation.

And lastly, the third context - the way in which relief and rehabilitative measures have shaped up in Gujarat since the Godhra 2002 events of state wide violence against Muslims suggest powerful resonances with Beirut and Delhi. To recapitulate, on the 27 February 2002, a train compartment filled largely with *kar sevaks*, members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was burnt killing fifty nine people trapped inside. All of them were returning from Ayodhya where they had been involved with the building of the Ram temple over the demolished Babri Masjid. Soon after the incident, Gujarati Muslims across the spectrum were subjected to concerted attacks all over the state. One reliable report holds that about 2000 people were killed, nearly 400 women raped, and a quarter of a million people displaced. About 5000 families were said to have entered several makeshift relief camps.

Relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat, since the events of Godhra, continue to be one of its most condemnable aspects.⁵ It has been reported recently that the government, even for a week after the massacres and killings spread across the state, did not have any relief or rehabilitation measures in place. The relief camps that did come up in this aftermath were set up mainly by Muslim organizations. Amongst the colonies that continue to exist, undertaken collaboratively by a set of non – governmental organizations, there are a total of 81, 58 of which were in urban areas and 23 in rural areas. A compelling feature of these colonies is that each one of them, without exception has been established and sustained by various Muslim organizations which has been

⁴ The official website, however does not mention the community by name.

⁵ Issues and facts relating to compensation packages have been controversial. A discussion of those falls outside the limits of this essay – I concentrate here on the relief camps alone.

described ‘ranging from conservative groups like the Jamiat Islami and the Gujarat Sarvajanik, and the more centrist religious organizations like Jamiat Ulema Hind, to a heterogeneous range of small and local Muslim organizations.

There are obvious resonances in the questions that can be asked in each location –even though they are not ‘comparable case studies’ – the episodes of violence in each have vastly different registers of cause and effect and so on. But they are urban conditions which produce separate and singular ethnographic documents that can be made to ‘encounter’ each other, communicate with each other through the language of common urban formations. It is an encounter between sets of representations and experiences that bring about simultaneity, a ‘sameness in difference’ that allows for an analytical perspective. *What kinds of questions can I ask these registers of the south in order to carve out an epistemological insight?*

The analytical formulation that strikes me is one that connects what I would call a religio - biopolitics in the practices of rehabilitation. I draw my cue from Zizek (2002) who writes about an “underlying shift in ‘biopolitics’, post 9/11, since the alleged war on terror defined the new politics of the globe. I would like to present a significant suggestion he makes, (this is an idea that bears remarkable relevance to some of the presentations we have heard in this symposium)

..the distinction between criminals and non-criminals does not overlap with the distinction between ‘lawful’ citizens and what in France are called sans –papiers. The excluded are not only terrorists, but also those who are on the receiving end of the humanitarian help (Rwandans, Bosnians, Afghans...): today’s Homo sacer is the privileged object of humanitarian biopolitics: the one who is deprived of his or her full humanity being taken care of in a very patronizing way. We should therefore recognize the paradox that concentration camps and refugee camps for the delivery of humanitarian aid are two faces, ‘human’ and ‘inhuman’, of the same socio-logical matrix. ... In both cases, the population is reduced to an object of biopolitics. So, it is not enough to enumerate examples of today’s Homo Sacer: the sans papiers in France; the inhabitants of the favelas in Brazil, people in African American ghettos in the USA, and so on. It is absolutely crucial to supplement this list with the humanitarian side: perhaps those who are perceived as recipients of humanitarian aid are the figures of Homo sacer today.⁶

Zizek talks about a new biopolitic that enumerates a category of population which come under technologies of power and surveillance specifically because they have to be rehabilitated. In my brief sketches, in the cities that witness large scale massacres, pogroms or riots, there is a certain resonance, in so much that a ‘suspect’ part of the population (Shi’as or Muslims in general or Sikhs) comes to be attacked and in due

⁶ Slavoj Zizek, 2002. Welcome to the Desert of the Real. London, Verso. Pp- 91-92.

course the same population requires rehabilitation. In the episodes I have mentioned, these are those groups of people that come to bear insurmountable losses of family and kin, they are also dispossessed of their homes, their livelihood. The attacks that they face cause them to flee from their original homes to new places of domicile where they have to start over again – most often negotiating their own considerably diminished capacity on one hand and on the other sustained hostility from their attackers. In each of my illustrations, the rehabilitation and humanitarian aid that is made available comes to be sustained either exclusively or largely by religious groups. The abdication of this responsibility by the state for various reasons transfers the potential power of surveillance, control as well as the mantle of responsibility to the religious body itself. The rehabilitative technique comes to be located in the body of the survivor – the recipient of aid and to the body of the provider. Is it possible, then, to ask - Does religiously motivated humanitarian aid enumerate a population of aid receivers/providers in which a certain religiously coded biopolitics come to be practiced?

In the connectivity between faith and rehabilitated life that I find compelling, the questions that arise are – do agents of faith or/and the practice of religiosity mark out a new mapping of violent cities? Do forms of religious consciousness – either in production of identities, in sustenance of support networks, in enhanced religious practices, in political subjectivities – produce community spatialities and biographies? Does that consciousness contribute to the understanding of contemporary urban social formations? Ultimately, does this indicate a new bio-politics of faithful bodies and rehabilitated life that emerge out of political violence? In Delhi, a relocation Colony; in Beirut, a community territory; in Ahmedabad, a ‘relief colony’ – in each, the signification of religion marks both the body of the provider and the receiver. Simultaneously, these are bodies located resolutely within the confines of limited and controlled space which can be geographically delimited from other spaces in the city. They are clearly marked spaces that are constituted by an enumerated population of survivors engendered by an occasion which in itself has been the violent extension of religious identity. The peculiar addition of religiously motivated aid to this already dense inscription of religion on this population makes for the potential of a new bio – politics, where the techniques of the self or the strategies of subjugation and governance does not emanate from the political

economy of the state, but rather from that of faith.⁷

How do we relate these sorts of explorations to our main quest of the ‘south – south’ connectivity? I could offer a couple of points for substantive reflection. Leaving aside the basic issue of surveillance and humanitarian aid, what we are looking at in these separate but similar contexts of the south is a constitution of the idea of life after devastation. In this constitution, a peculiar tension arises between secular framings of life and the aid required to reclaim that life and similar framings made by religious discourse. I have indicated here the commonality amongst situations of political violence – I am convinced extensions can be made to include other catastrophes like natural disasters, developmental projects and so on as other groups of people or locations, where similar regimes of aid are present. When presented for analysis, these alternate conceptions of aid, especially when evaluated against the wider humanitarian activity practiced by western international aid regimes can point towards an oppositional explanation. It could be suggested that these alternate conceptions are in effect - local, cultural and situated notions and practices of the global south. Very simply, from the north, they may appear as localized limitations and from the south they may appear to be resistances to the propagation of western values.

But, what if we consider these alternate conceptions of local religion and culture as alternate epistemologies that allow us to understand global equations between statecraft and religion, or destabilized notions of the secular and spiritual in modern citizenship. Does this kind of space bring about a new way of understanding how experiences of the “legal” in the north and the south occupy different registers? Yet another question could be – is this also a relationship of alternates between Christian and other conceptions of humanitarian aid and consequently of human life? In another way, are we also looking at interlinked planetary formations that are making for new subjects, new precedents in practice – ones that no longer inhabit the regime of the particular in local contexts but in effect are in the process of creating new alternate universals of human life and experience? It is my contention that these new ontologies of planetary linkings, through isomorphic positions of the south make for the terrain of alternate globalities. These alternate globalities will and can provide the forces required for

⁷ However, the state is not entirely absent because its failure to provide ‘secular’ humanitarian aid leads to the intended or unintended consequence of exclusive religion based aid.

knowledge production that is more encompassing than the force of opposition alone. Of course, I do not argue this as a proved and demonstrated conclusion but as an analytical aspiration as much as a political hope in the arenas of knowledge production. In conclusion then, my last query -

What could be kind of knowledge that will get constituted in this interfacing?

Taking a cue from an anthropological insight, from David Scott again⁸,

The anthropological journey – like all true journeys – entails a continuously recursive movement or drift: at once a departure and a return in which knowledge is always at least double – simultaneously knowledge of something other and self knowledge, and each but a term in the invention of the other. This idea of a knowledge that must always emerge within the play of figure and ground (in which Stanley Diamond has insisted, contrast is the only way of seeing) is, it seems to me, the distinctive edge of any anthropological endeavor. And it is this movement, I want to argue, of going and returning that organizes the epistemological and geographical disposition of the anthropological gaze.

Scott goes on to say that the direction of this journey has been far from innocent – his reasons are the colonial history of anthropology and its moorings, which I need not belabor here again. However, what is at stake here is that, in the course of these journeys what has remained authoritative is the constitution of what figure on what ground, and the fairly stabilized constitution of what can be deemed as contrast between the two. In other words – I would view this reference to figure and ground, as the figure of the western *cogito* in reference to a constantly changing ground of contrast – each change the result of a journey from the west to a known or unknown ‘peripheral’ ground. So much so, that the idea of difference itself comes to be cohered into a singularity – the going and returning is actually crystallizing a sense of difference which, because its author has been an unchanging subject, the epistemology of that difference has itself remained unchanged. However, in the transgressive south–south interlinking, the figure/ground contrast is radically altered. The constructive movement here is the appropriation of the figure /ground contrast by initiating a multiplicity of figures in heterogeneous grounds, the entanglement of many selves with many others – in my examples - many contexts of violence, many survivors and many rehabilitated bodies. In these assemblages and multiple connections there is no longer a place for a singular hegemonic epistemology because it is interrogated and destabilized not just by opposition, but by a substantiation of other interlinking epistemologies.

⁸ David Scott, op cit.78.

Multiple dialectics of visiting and returning, a plurality of compare – contrast between heterogeneous subjects/objects need fundamentally a reformulation of the self – other. We need to appropriate this “self–other” for reasons different from its genealogies, retain its constructive core and multiply it in ways that suit not inequity but conversability. Feminist dilemmas of a sort have helped to put further shape to this idea, especially when you think of the specific parameter of the south. Speaking to and for women cannot imply speaking to and for all women. Giving voice to feminism does not necessarily exhaustively articulate the condition of womanhood. But, nonetheless, it can be a positioning where there is the inevitability of a self – other problem (the western feminist does not necessarily endorse the veil nor is there any reverse endorsement). Yet, instead of breaking down into incoherent relativism, there is an epistemological dynamic that can animate feminist theory, by the simple fact of resonance and difference. There comes about an inherent heterogeneity of context, a multiplicity of self–others that come together under the rubric of totalizing, planetary experience of gender. Hence the constant need for shifting positionalities of objects and subjects, symbiosis and dialectic, the common and the similar as well as the separate and the unique. I am persuaded that if the figures in the ground is continually created by a position (figure) of the south in an area of the south (the ground) the resulting volatility, energy of knowledge exchange can lead to epistemological innovation.

To my mind, the post–colonial interruption of history in the south is a premise to start with rather than a conclusion to end an investigation with. For my project at least, I would propose that acquiring agency to author epistemology is not about denying, opposing or brushing aside colonial knowledge or western reason and practice but about taking into reckoning a broader geo-political historical canvass – both temporally, spatially and linguistically. Looking the farthest back can also help looking the farthest forward temporally (as W. Churchill said), and I would add - gazing at a wider horizon (of new cartographic connections composed of the many selves and others of the peripheries) may help in illuminating a larger vista, spatially. The purpose of proposing a new epistemology is to broaden the prospect of theory (and simultaneously practice) to be more inclusive rather than exclusive. If theory is to mean interpretation, abstraction, analysis and critique that leads to ideas and concepts – the theoretical ground that southern connectivity can produce is that which will be found in translation rather than lost in it. Two reasons are evident – first, it will be a dialogue with existing knowledges –

both dominant and critical which is continually augmented with the plurality of the multiverse. At the same time it will not have the monitored traffic on the west and the rest highway nor the cacophony of spurious postmodernism.

Once again, these sorts of epistemological, theoretical practices will have to be based on a strong commitment to the belief that, in our lives and times while plural worlds find place, some generalizable, translatable human orientations and insights are equally necessary, so that the local does not become a trap and the universal does not become oppressive. Violence and terror, fear and danger, poverty, disease, work and livelihood are conditions that do not need only localized descriptions and explanations, they also need translatable points of reference. These are the challenges that the 'south' deals with and these are the areas in which the interfacing, the dialoguing, the intermeshing of ideas is required. I will end with an echo of Fernando Coronil's (1996: 51-51) search for a 'decentralized poetics' of a 'non-imperial' world where a future builds on its pasts but is not imprisoned by its horror.