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BORDERS AND VACUUMS

Whoever said that the more thresholds we draw, the more marginal spaces we create, was certainly right. The indefinite character of liminality seems to infallibly invite radical solutions: the margin is the *locus* of the aporia: a non-encounter with a non-language in a non-space. It is there that the Spanish conquistadors located the native peoples of the Americas, construing them as “out of place” in the place in which they had dwelled since the times immemorial; it is there that the thinkers of the Age of Reason would relegate phenomena defying rationalist argumentation or empirical proof, yet undeniably *felt as present*; it is finally there that individuals driven by empathy end up today amidst the ruthless political tug-of-war between 21st century nationalisms and progressive advocacy of freedom and equality. The mirage of greatness, poisoning the minds of many, calls into existence discourses of degradation and deprivation; the self-proclaimed “righteous” need a scapegoat to purge their own sins; the necessary condition of “being great” is the legitimization of the fallacy of someone else’s insignificance. With alt-facts ousting hard facts from the public space, with Orwellian media shamelessly creating realities based on the binarity of familiarity and enmity, with all visible attempts to silence the academic humanities, arts and letters by means of massive cuts in funding, the marginalization of those who find the “he who is not with us is against us” philosophy abhorrent gains significant momentum. But it is not in the margins that the monsters awaken: it is in the very heart of the well-defined center that fear rules unchecked while coercion, wearing white gloves, and walking hand in hand with blatant lies that boost fearful egos, facilitates turning a blind eye to cynical oppression, rendering the alleged winners actual victims of their own would-be “greatness.” More thresholds, more limits, all designed to keep the Others

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out, but all trapping those drawing the demarcation lines *within*, are being called into existence with increasing speed and intensity; yet the tighter the grip of the stultifying discourse is, the larger the space of the margin, the more obvious the aporias. In the non-space ruled by non-language, the non-encounter happens in art and “incomprehensible” philosophical musings: Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* invigorates common people to take up arms in 1776, Lluís Llach’s “L’Estaca,” written in 1968, did not only rekindle hope for the end of Franco’s dictatorship in Spain, but also, translated into many languages, has since become a universal anthem of freedom fighters world-wide. When Wojciech Kalaga, Tadeusz Sławek, Tadeusz Rachwał and Emanuel Prower wrote their provocatively Derridian book *Tekst–Czytelnik–Margines (Text–Reader–Margin)* in 1988, the communist censors failed to understand the obvious message from the Margin, which, in fact, is a *speaking character* in the text, and because it *speaks*, it effectively dethrones the center, mocking the centralized political power, questioning the centralized communist economy, and ridiculing the centralized, structuralist, non-revolutionary, yet “revolutionary” humanities.

The margin, clearly, is far from voiceless: the larger it is, the more emphatically its voice reverberates; it is the “dangerous supplement” that has always had the power to overthrow the hegemony of the “main” text. Contrary to the fantasies of the center, the margin is not a vacuum: its torturous, aporetic, reality lies beyond (dominant) discourse and therefore is not expressible in a language comprehensible to those locked within the limits they created to keep “intruders” at bay. Pain is not translatable. But those who dwell in pain understand one another without words. Yet when their condition becomes utterly unbearable, like Lluís Llach’s characters, together they pull the lines that tie them to the heavy stake that has kept them inert for too long:

Si jo l'estiro fort per aquí	If I pull this way
i tu l'estires fort per allà,	and you pull that way
segur que tomba, tomba, tomba...	it will surely fall, fall, fall...

Pulling together, in the compassionate spirit of IASA, with this issue of *RIAS* we celebrate the voice of the margin.

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