

Foreword

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This book presents a constellation of terms for describing a pressing problem that we could sum up as follows: What are the dynamics of capitalist violence today? There are myriads names, concepts, and categories for the political characterization of what is happening today: authoritarianism, the New Right, right-wing extremism, neoconservatism, neo-fascism; with each term also forming plurals with a concluding “s”. The urgency of understanding the manifestations of forms of sexism, racism, and classism as generalized affects that are crystallized in structures of power while also being encouraged by these structures is the first port of call when it comes to making sense of the current crisis. This task, which is a central part of all debates, requires efforts of characterization, of diagnosis, and of political strategy if we are to adequately name these phenomena. This collective work forms part of this saga.

There are two issues that ought to be emphasized in relation to this *multiplication* of categories. The first of these has to do with the fact that ascribing multiple names to a *reactionary* phenomenon illustrates that the phenomenon is responding to diverse realities and geographies at a particular historical moment. But it also highlights a second issue: that we must think *from within* historical conjunctures in order to produce concepts, include specificities, and broaden our capacity to find names for current events, accounting for their multiple determining factors. It is a procedure that runs contrary to the one that has been used all too often, namely of beginning by constructing a single concept and applying it to the rest of the world from a single primary location, in order to then measure the extent to which this category fits or does not fit with each manifestation.

If today these categories fail to attain the homogeneous unity they once had, it is because they are subjected to a provincialization of the Eurocentric rationalizations that produced theories which “spilled over” to other parts of the planet and which, for this very reason, guaranteed a unified origin and manifested as a set of clear and distinct definitions. As such, this multiplication does not reflect a simple lack of agreement or a volatility in the modes of conceptualization, but a categorical destabilization which responds to the effort to truly take seriously the notion that there are no central and peripheral experiences in theoretical practice.

Breaking out of the paradigm of smooth and definitive categories which can later be applied or interpreted in places which then go on to “embody” or “adjust” them, exposing imperfect “cases”, is not just a conceptual shift, it also implies a shift in the way that we think of theory itself.

In this book, there has been an explicit decision to define the problems from the perspective of the Global South (a category that is itself contested). But I would stress that this is not in order to provide a compilation of peripheral cases, not an exercise in shedding light on a neglected portion of the map, but forms part of a *general* analytical perspective which requires us to: 1) reveal colonial vectors, their currency, and their political memories; 2) refute methodological nationalisms in order to frame the analysis within a world economy; 3) question the modernizing ideals of progress and capitalist development; 4) foreground the questions of gender, ethnicity, and race rather than framing them as cultural epiphenomena; and 5) dismantle the passivization of the subaltern groups.

This is a mode of analysis which, as well as emphasizing the divisions between North and South, also repositions them outside of a static division between different continents in order to read the *multi-layered* forms in which this division prospers: souths within the metropolises of the North, norths within the regions of the South. This allows us to delineate the global logic of capitalism *as well as* the debates around mobility sparked by the trajectories of migrants, both decisive issues when it comes to understanding recent modifications of both urban space and non-urban and rural spaces. This proposition is also important when it comes to re-plotting the coordinates of key elements of modernity, such as war and colonialism, in which they take on new features and are played out in different landscapes and territories under the banner of the neoliberal era. At the same time, it is necessary—as has been done here—to more astutely outline the relationships between elements that seem unrelated, but are not: for example, religious fundamentalisms that propagate theologies of prosperity with algorithmic forms that order the exploitation of labour “without bosses”, to name just two.

Another key aspect that this work also illustrates is the urgency of *systematizing* the multiple manifestations of this phenomenon, both in its definitions and its varying proportions. Reading the book, we can gain a detailed picture of a certain *convergence* of elements that enables us to conceptualize the phenomenon of these “new” authoritarianisms as a combination of transformations in our political systems, in our states, and in the dynamics of governmentality, but also in the subjectivities and affects that are engendered, in the forms of organizing labour, and in the extractivist tendencies of neoliberalism. The various dimensions of these authoritarianisms are not merely a matter of semantics or reflective of an array of perspectives that can be picked and chosen in order to approach the phenomenon. On the contrary, they are an expression of the complexity of the subject that we must analyse if we are to gain an understanding of how these economic, political,

cultural, ideological, and subjective issues are articulated and reinforced. Or to put it more directly: why has capitalism always employed the strategy of segmenting and “autonomizing” these issues, as if they originated from independent spheres? The task we are faced with comprises no more and no less than fostering the emergence of a diagnostic framework for identifying the authoritarian, reactionary, and fascist forms—in their repetition and difference—to which contemporary capitalism makes recourse today in order to prop itself up.

In this sense, these debates are strongly linked with efforts to name the various mutations of neoliberalism, and with the attempts to think through its original, “primitive” violence in order to bring to light genealogies that broaden the frameworks of Euro-Atlantic analyses. There have also been debates about this kind of proliferation of neoliberalism as a rationality and mode of governance that is capable of taking on multiple adjectives as it goes along, chameleon-like, adapting to and recycling the attacks on its legitimacy. Nevertheless, we are not dealing with an apparatus that is always triumphant, with aimless mutations. Neoliberalism’s alliances with conservatism and various forms of authoritarianism merely give the lie to its propaganda of combatting violence by way of technologies of control that are growing ever more sophisticated, as well as exposing the intensification of the violence without which these modulations of control cannot function.

We must not forget that the violence of the arena we are confronting is the result of an attempt to shore up neoliberalism in the face of a crisis of political legitimacy that has been sparked by the transnational feminist movement, the forms of insubordination of the LGBTQI movements, the antiracist political practices of migrants, which represent forms of concrete politics that dispute neoliberalism both in its analysis of the crisis and in the way it approaches and confronts precarity on the labour market and more general, existential forms of precarity. These are the struggles that attack the structure of capitalist subordination and exploitation at a sensitive and strategic point: right where neoliberalism comes together with reactionary forces in the regime of the family, on the issues of sexuality, on judgments on who deserves social benefits, forms of non-renumerated labour, anti-immigrant legislation, and so on. This is a reality which has only accelerated with the progression from pandemic to war.

For both discussions, however, we cannot look at structural effects without keeping in mind the way they interweave “from below”, given that in this interrelation, a battlefield opens up that is plagued by ambiguities and tensions. The reactionary mood we are witnessing here is being managed from above, taking form in the victorious governments of the right and extreme right; but it also operates from below, disputing the terrain of the subjectivities engendered in the neoliberal cycle and in its specific production of affects.

In my opinion, one of the most important contributions made by feminist debates has been repositioning the term war, talking about a “state of permanent

war” against certain bodies and certain territories as a definition of contemporary neoliberalism. This allows us to understand a form of neoliberal violence that becomes authoritarian because it has not been subsumed in apparatuses of subjective pacification, because it has been contested and resisted. This highlights the need to renew our vocabulary and articulate a strategic notion of war that describes a situation which is no longer defined by two clearly identifiable sides in a single arena of conflict (even if this feminist debate was the precursor to the arena of war of 2022).

Finally, there is no doubt that the methodology of this book is linked to its political proposition: a mode of investigation that is militant and rigorous, capable of crystallizing collective debates and of offering a cartography of current issues from an internationalist perspective. Its wager also lies in proposing a geography that once again discusses dependency, forms of subordination and exploitation, ecologies of territories and knowledge systems, the racist legacies of state forms, and the ways that capital metabolizes that which combats it. From my point of view, the initiatives of militant investigation develop a kind of sensitivity in composing statements and resolving conflicts. It’s a form of action: it is not a mode of analysis that is devoid of imagination, and even less of calling on others to act. Understood in this way, militant investigation is less a thematization (in the sense of constructing an agenda) and more a question of method, and of a practical commitment. The gravity of the themes discussed here demands nothing less.