

# *Learning from Dhaka*

Article

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# Learning from Dhaka

## Dorothee Richter

### 1. Seeing

The phrase 'I know that I know nothing' came to my mind when we all met in Dhaka for the Critical Writing Ensembles.<sup>1</sup> I understood that I had a lot to learn from this wonderful, colourful, crowded city. On my way to the hotel, I saw a lot of people on the streets, all sorts of cars, rickshaws, businesses. I saw exquisite displays of fruit in pyramid forms. I saw illuminated shops filled with sparkling lamps and lights. I saw graciously written letters, which I could not decipher, contrasted with well-known advertisements. Nice people stared at me. A small young woman who was in charge of cleaning the bathroom of the exhibition spaces wanted to take a photo with me. I felt like a white elephant.

I saw interesting exhibitions in the city, met old friends, and made new ones. As colleagues, we talked a lot about what decolonisation in the arts, in art history, and in curating might be. We saw all sorts of existing power relations, old ones and new ones, local ones and depressingly global ones. I read in the local newspaper about a person who had died of injuries caused by a fire because he had used a small ceresin oven to cook and sell something, but had been ordered by a policeman to go away;<sup>2</sup> the policeman had kicked the oven, which had caused the ceresin to explode over the man and he later died in hospital. I also heard about the death of a professor, living openly as a homosexual. I was quite insecure about how to write about a society I do not know—describing just one's impressions can be totally misleading. As Ananya Roy argues, it is necessary to change and transform the ways in which the cities of the Global South are studied and represented. She describes how the film *Slumdog Millionaire* created a new narrative of a touristic vision of slums, a frozen essentialist image. 'Slumdog Millionaire can be read as poverty pornography. It can also be read as a metonym, a way of designating the megacity that is Mumbai.'<sup>3</sup> She contrasts this narration with another perspective, following the notion of the subaltern by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; Roy projects a specific kind of agency, which is not connected to a specific identity but to the subaltern as a kind of political (and economic) agency: 'In my earlier work, I have argued that the study of the twenty-first-century metropolis requires new geographies of theory. Subaltern urbanism is indeed one such approach. It is a vital and even radical challenge to apocalyptic and dystopian narratives of the megacity. However, subaltern urbanism tends to remain bound to the study of spaces of poverty, of essential forms of popular agency, of the habitus of the dispossessed, of the entrepreneurialism of self-organizing economies. I am interested in a set of theoretical projects that disrupt subaltern urbanism and thus break with ontological and topological understandings of subalternity.'<sup>4</sup> To this analysis I want to relate a strong argument, which was delivered by Johan Hartle at a symposium that we organised during Manifesta (and which we used to criticise the naïve notion of work proposed by Manifesta):<sup>5</sup> to start from empirical effects means to legitimate social conditions implicitly, and this could be described as a theoretical notion of fetishism, Hartle established.<sup>6</sup> He also quotes Bertolt Brecht, who problematised a photographic depiction of social situations at a Krupp Werke factory. To translate it roughly, Brecht explains that a photograph does not say anything about the instituted factory. The reification of human relations does not show in this way; it is held back by the factory.

The production of ‘truth’ needs something that is to be built up, something artificial, to show the social relations.

At the Dhaka Art summit, I saw a video on the living conditions of a neighbourhood that had been relocated to another site near the Airport of Chittagong. Small naked children were carrying car tyres, not for fun, but to sell them. I saw the exhibition of thirteen artists from Bangladesh, curated by Daniel Baumann. One of them, Rasel Chowdhury, had been awarded the ‘Samdani Art Award’. ‘His body of work deals with unplanned desperate urbanization, the dying River Buriganga, the lost city of Sonargaon, the Mega City of Dhaka, and newly transformed spaces around Bangladesh railroads to explore the change of the environment, unplanned urban structures and new form of landscapes.’<sup>7</sup> I saw us—curators, theoreticians and professors from the US and Europe—the usual suspects at major art events, walking through the overcrowded streets of Dhaka. I saw children sorting rubbish in the streets. I became acutely aware that we are globally connected in economic ways more deeply than I could ever have imagined, and how dependent the economy of the West is on this exploitative relation.

In the midst of the bunch of writers, artists and curators, I remembered the feeling Lacan describes when he recognises himself as ‘being seen’ by a box of sardines on a fishing trip. He then suddenly realises that he, when seen from the outside, is somehow weird in the picture, out of place, being a young bourgeois student in the midst of the fishermen on a boat. The gaze captured him. He encountered being a split subject, a subject that is not situated in the central point of a central perspective; instead, he recognises that he is being registered from the outside.<sup>8</sup> This moment of seeing myself in a picture, in a context that I hardly understood, stayed with me. I remember the argument made by Andrea Fraser claiming that the art market is strongest in countries with the biggest gap in income between the super rich and the very poor. (She explores this using the GINI Index, Income Disparity since World War II in many different countries.)<sup>9</sup> I wondered what kind of art a society needs, when struggling to provide basic services to its community, unpolluted air and water, a challenge faced by so many countries around the world within and beyond the Western hemisphere. I wondered what decolonising art might mean. In what way should art institutions be revisited, reorganised? In which ways could cultural production in different media and with other protocols be developed and shown (and would showing be the format)? How could a chain of equivalence be realised, between art and politics, art and social issues?<sup>10</sup> Shukla Sawant asked during a bus tour (stuck in traffic for two hours to go seven kilometres), what would a concept of modernity mean in an Indian context if one took into consideration the Indian tradition of Mandalas as an already existing version of abstraction—instead of positioning Western art as the great revelation? I wonder what a show of contemporary art will do in Bangladesh’s society of today.

When I was back home, Shukla wrote to me that the University where she works (1,700 km and a 2.5-hour flight away from Dhaka, in Delhi, India) is in turmoil: ‘JNU [Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi] is going through a major crisis, and we have been on protest regarding police action against our students and arrest of the student union leader for organising an event that was deemed “seditious” by the government. You may have heard of it by now.’<sup>11</sup> But (a nine-hour flight away from Delhi and twelve-hour flight away from Dhaka) I hadn’t heard about it; the information I got, if at all, is vague, so again, I know nothing.

When reading my text, the curatorial assistant of CWE Ruxmini Choudhury disliked that I had mainly pointed out problems and wrote: ‘In the USA, every six months we



Impressions from Dhaka, Bangladesh: street views, exhibition views of Dhaka Art Summit 2016, Critical Writing Ensemble, Photo: the author and Ronald Kolb, 2016

hear the news of gun-shooting in schools, we hear of police killing black youth. Just yesterday, I read in an article that Germany has proposed to ban the burka. I read in the news about how a woman was stripped out of her burkini by the French police [...]. A few months ago, an Orlando shooter killed 49 people in a gay nightclub. So why highlight the killing of one gay activist? Is it because we are a third world country? I understand your concern, but I am writing against right-wing attitudes and politics in other parts of the world as well; we should write against suppression and violence based on so-called 'race' issues, on gender-related exclusions and systems wherever we detect them.<sup>12</sup> I confess, to see and write in Dhaka, means to put humbly some pieces of a puzzle together, to guess about relations and dependencies. Especially as there is today, moreover, as Hartle has described, a more general crisis of work and the representation and visualisation of work, and therefore of surplus value. Immaterial labour—this important contemporary form of production/consumption worldwide—hides the processes of its formation, it hides the social relations in which it is produced.<sup>13</sup> I am well aware that all glimpses and impressions that I tried to sketch are embedded in a social hierarchy, in global and local social dependencies, and it means and produces great differences in access and power. As, by the way, it does in Zurich, were the sex workers and Sans Papiers, the artists and cultural producers (whom we interviewed for issue 30 of OnCurating.org) have decidedly different access, especially in comparison to the white-collar workers in the financial district (even if all of them might be denied the right to vote because they most likely do not have a Swiss passport). Talking in Zurich, while working on the critical issue of OnCurating.org, we argued: 'To this day, changes in working processes and migration movements are usually regarded as mutually isolated "problems". However, we see the connection between them as a geopolitical reality rooted in political and economic power structures, aspirations to hegemony and the battle for resources, a reality that already began to take shape in the harbingers of neoliberalism. Whereas in the eighteenth century the impoverished working class still found itself directly confronted with a wealthy upper class, today these lines of conflict traverse the globe horizontally.'<sup>14</sup> In this issue we undertook to enfold notions of 'work' and to explore modes of counter-hegemonic actions and cultural production.

But as Ananya Roy argues, in the social fabric of megacities like Dhaka, the social fabric of the city could also imply spaces of subaltern urbanism, whose strategies of resistance are not yet defined and would elude simple definitions. As I understand her, spaces of subaltern urbanism would mean developing a utopian horizon.

## 2. Writing

Coming to Dhaka as the publisher of OnCurating.org, an independent international journal (both on the web and in print) that focuses on questions surrounding curatorial practice and theory, I was grateful for the opportunity to rethink the options of writing in relation to the arts. I was also quite overwhelmed by new approaches to art writing, which were presented by my younger colleagues such as Quinn Latimer, Nida Ghouse and Rosalyn D'Mello. When context, personal histories, the traces of memory and cultural inscriptions become a new format for making the personal political, I am all for it. The persistent questions were: What constitutes memory? What constitutes urgency and longing? And what constitutes writing about art?

My colleague Helmut Draxler inscribed half ironic slogans on the walls of the exhibition he had curated at Generali Foundation in Vienna that reviewed exhibition history both from a personal perspective and from an engaged political understanding of

exhibiting as a formulation in a space of representation. He proposed: 'Always historicise, always contextualise and always localise'.<sup>15</sup> I felt quite uneasy with Daniel Baumann's claim that theoretical approaches to art should be avoided, as he stated in a poster at the beginning of the exhibition: 'To my surprise, there was no advancing of pretentious discourse of the kind one often meets in similar situations in Europe or North America. No talks about the post-Fordist situation, the need for deconstruction, the era of post-Internet or that thing called anthropocene—just to name a few'.<sup>16</sup> But, I would like to ask, who needs a deconstruction of a certain situation and who doesn't? And there is no way to deal with theory properly; there is an embarking into theory and a lifelong obligation to go on reading and discussing, to re-read, to change attitudes, to build up new conglomerates of theory and practice, and to start again. Embarking into theory means that you will never know enough, that you will always remain in the humble situation of a scholar. Dealing with theory means that you will never be satisfied with your practice in any medium whatsoever, an uncanny position with which one constantly has to deal. And in the context of writing about art, I would like to emphasise certain points of departure, relating to issues that other speakers brought up.

I will do this by quickly, and I guess unduly, condensing and describing which thoughts resonated with me in the last few days. First of all, in writing about unseen exhibitions, Filipa Ramos pointed out a problem that we all—especially researchers and writers on complex arts pieces—have nowadays. It is difficult to define what constructs the memory of an actual artwork or an art exhibition. As a Fluxus researcher, I understand this problem. And since the 1960s, this has been the case for most installations and art projects: the projects, the events, the actual encounters are long gone; some relics and some photographs might exist, many artists' descriptions exist, some ephemera exist, posters, invitation cards and a variety of leftovers or scores or weird musical instruments exist, and so on.

I would like to argue that it is certainly not a specific object or project, or installation or exhibition; often it is precisely the whole discourse existing in a variety of written, spoken, photographic, object-based media, and their institutionalised relations. This whole media complex is what Roland Barthes described in 'Myth Today'.<sup>17</sup> The sign systems are connected, and they create meaning through their special constellation. This meaning production is never objective or transhistorical: it operates in a historical moment and environment in a specific way.

And again: this production of meaning is most definitely connected to the context into which it is placed. A smashed piano would mean something in 1962 in Germany and something different in 2016 in the same place; any historical and political issue would change the meaning of an artwork or an exhibition. The exhibition and the artwork consist of materiality and of what is considered to be true or false, right or wrong, good art or bad art; it is constituted and consecrated through discourse. It can be understood by means of what Foucault called a discursive formation, with its material and verbal sides and its institutions. This discursive formation that we could call art has its very real effects. The real effects are that some cultural utterances are positioned as 'art', while others are not. Some might enter the art market, others are seen to be just 'cultural artefacts', just hairstyles, just LP covers, or displays in shops.<sup>18</sup> And from a historical position, we can simply trace and guess what it might feel like to have an encounter somewhere else and at another time; this must be explored and unfolded. As mentioned before: what does it mean to read Indian modernity through a tantric tradition?

What does an actual encounter mean in the here and now anyway? 'Is it now?' is a consistent, ongoing question: is it now that we experience, here, now? Together? I remember the famous image that Freud put forward for the cultural and social traces that are inscribed into our minds subconsciously: he proposed thinking of a Wunderblock, a 'Mystic Writing Pad', with a sheet of paper and a wax layer, which can be rewritten again and again, but keeps traces of former inscriptions.<sup>19</sup> Analogously, we also keep traces of former acts, and these are part of what we encounter in the now.

Is it now? This contains a whole bundle of layers of assumptions about gender, truth, society and so on (on what art and beauty are). This is an even more urgent question in the digital age, where the boundaries between original and copy are non-existent on the one hand, and on the other the constant overflow of not necessarily critical images creates worldwide traces in our minds and changes our perceptions. Distances are collapsing; we meet these days in Dhaka, and in March in Hong Kong, in June in Basel; in-between we exchange emails or Skype. The North Sea might be at our doorstep, as Peter Weibel put it, but the poverty, the wars and the suffering are all banned into a shiny image on a monitor. Who is able to move and who has to stay is still absolutely related to race, class and gender.

But let's get back to art and critical writing about art—which could perhaps happen in digital space, but should be played back in order to discuss it locally: art is produced in a complex way through consecration processes, through institutions such as Kunsthallen, venues for contemporary art, art academies, art criticism and through verbal and visual discourses and artefacts. The basic concept of contemporary art is formulated historically through a Western context.

It is definitely no longer any 'thing as such' (and never was by the way) and the 'thing' has no agency of its own; here the simplified understanding of the actor network theory of Bruno Latour is dramatically misleading: 'a thing' has agency, but only as a sign in the abovementioned constellation that produces meaning. Any sign is constructed through a visual and an acoustic interrelation, which forms an entity; you cannot think 'arbre' or 'tree' or 'Baum' without projecting an image. A sign will produce meaning in a context, which means in a historical, cultural and social constellation. I would therefore also reject the embedded notion of a communality of matter and human entities developed by Jean-Luc Nancy, especially since we had the opportunity to ask Nancy during a symposium about power relations in the notion of 'being-with'.<sup>20</sup> He is just not as interested in this part, he told us.

Anyway, to conceive art as a discursive formation, as developed above, I deeply disagree with anybody who claims a universal validity for the arts: 'Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate',<sup>21</sup> as Edward Said has put it.

It is this, what Hamid Dabashi expresses vigorously with his outcry "Fuck You Žižek!"<sup>22</sup> He strongly argues against the pretention of an interpretative philosophical supremacy that is often displayed by Western intellectuals. In this case by Žižek, who triggered this debate by his own aggressive wording on a text by Walter Dignolo, who analysed conditions and possibilities of decolonization. The accusation Dabashi formulates aims against the arrogant neglecting of theoreticians on postcolonial questions who actually come from a postcolonial background and whose reference point might not be exclusively dedicated to the history of Western philosophy. The critique he utters

resonates in me from another, feminist perspective, the typical Žižek presentation of a self-centred meta-philosopher and his aggressive conviction of being in the right is problematic; strangely enough, Dabshi answers in a similar tone and vigour, even if his claim is substantial. Still interested in the notion and possibilities of decolonization, I turn to Walter Dignolo. Most important in his view is decoloniality's point of origin in the Third World, which connects to 'immigrant consciousness' in Western Europe and the US today. 'Immigrant consciousness' is located in the routes of dispersion of decolonial and border thinking.<sup>23</sup> He goes on: 'Points of origination and routes of dispersion are key concepts to trace geo-politics of knowing/sensing/believing as well as body-politics of knowing/sensing/understanding. When Frantz Fanon closes his exploration in *Black Skin/White Masks* (1952) with a prayer: Oh my body, make of me always a man who questions! And a woman who questions—I take the liberty to add. In this sentence, says Dignolo, Frantz Fanon expressed the basic categories of border epistemology:

The biographical sensing of the Black body in the Third World, anchoring a politics of knowledge that is both ingrained in the body and in local histories. That is, thinking geo- and body-politically. Now if the point of origination of border thinking/sensing and doing is the Third World, and its routes of dispersion travelled through migrants from the Third to the First World, then border thinking created the conditions to link border epistemology with immigrant consciousness and, consequently, delink from territorial and imperial epistemology grounded on theological (Renaissance) and egological (Enlightenment) politics of knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

The migration he mentions might mean more and complex forms of going back and forth between countries and continents, forced, out of free will, in pursue of work or studies. He describes the situation of the immigrant, and I believe that his proposal for a new understanding of a migrant position might also imply a proposal for how to transfer the idea of decolonizing art (institutions):

Languages that were not apt for rational thinking (either theological or secular) were considered languages that revealed the inferiority of the human beings speaking them. What could a person that was not born speaking one of the privileged languages and that was not educated in privileged institutions do? Either he or she accepts his or her inferiority or makes an effort to demonstrate that he or she was a human being equal to those who placed him or her as second class. That is, two of the choices are to accept the humiliation of being inferior to those who decided that you are inferior or to assimilate. And to assimilate means that you accepted your inferiority and resigned to playing the game that is not yours, but that has been imposed upon you—or the third option is border thinking and border epistemology.

How does it work? Suppose that you belong to the category of the anthropos—the anthropos stands for the concept of the "other" in most contemporary debates about alterity—the "other," however, doesn't exist ontologically. It is a discursive invention. Who invented "the other" if not the same in the process of constructing the same? Such an invention is the outcome of an enunciation. The enunciation doesn't name an existing entity, but invents it. The enunciation needs an enunciator (agent), an institution (not everyone can invent the anthropos), but to impose the anthropos as "the other" in the collective imaginary, it is necessary to be in a position of managing the discourse (verbal,

visual, audial) by which you name and describe an entity (the anthropos or “the other”) and succeed in making believe that it exists.<sup>25</sup>

So the solution would be to become aware of the discursive system, the agent, the institution, the power to manage discourse, to understand the constructedness of it. ‘So once you realize that your inferiority is a fiction created to dominate you, and you do not want to either assimilate or accept in resignation the bad luck of having been born equal to all human beings, but having lost your equality shortly after being born, because of the place you were born, then you delink. Delinking means that you do not accept the options that are available to you.’<sup>26</sup>

Analogous to this, I think that art is a discourse—material, ideological, institutionalised, verbalised, disputable—and one does not alter this by ignoring it. ‘There is nothing outside the text’,<sup>27</sup> as Derrida once put it so overwhelmingly precisely. Some try to ignore the persistent what, why and for whom questions, but the only outcome of ignoring the discursive production of an artwork and of exhibitions is that one does not have access to a broader understanding of what one is doing as an artist or a curator or an author, a filmmaker or an art critic. It means to ignore the possibility of delinking.

Just to mention it briefly, there are nevertheless some means of resistance. ‘So capital is in fact borderless; that’s the problem. On the other hand capital has to keep borders alive in order for this kind of cross-border trade to happen. So therefore the idea of borderlessness has a performative contradiction within it which has to be kept alive’,<sup>28</sup> to quote how Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has formulated this repeatedly performed and acted pressure.

A conclusion of my above-formulated assumptions would be that art critique is part of a constant reformulating, rereading and reinterpreting of an artwork; it changes the understanding and meaning, it is part of constituting an artwork, together with institutional settings.

I would totally agree with my younger colleagues that there can be something hidden in an artwork, something that hits you, that strikes and penetrates, that blows your mind, something that shakes your understanding of your own subjectivity. This moment of destabilisation, which is beyond the aesthetic, which is described so artfully by my younger colleagues, is the quality of being untamed, of disturbing institutions and conventions—with art, with writing. This is something beyond the register of the symbolic, to use Lacan’s notion; it is the touch of the Real, but only if it again plays back into the symbolic register can it become political. Then it can be understood that pollution is due to structural power, as Nabil Ahmed argued, when it is possible to join forces with political agendas, when we form chains of equivalence with other societal groups.

So, for me, it is essential to come back again and again in a ‘compulsion to repeat’ (Wiederholungszwang) to discuss these issues within temporary and local groups and on international platforms, and to play back what is now: what is the political and the social, which interpellations does an artwork or an exhibition produce, which effects does it produce, what does criticality mean in the given moment? And to learn something from a place—whether from Warsaw, from Athens, or from Dhaka—means one has to learn about the way the money circulates, what this means for art and art production, which layers of culture exist, and what could be a critical type of cultural

production. It would mean being curious about what is happening, and how the local production of goods and commodities of all sorts are related to the international market.

In what way is cultural production understood in a context? Is art or cultural production just a commodity, or does it open up new ways of living or thinking, of being a subject or defining community? Which power structure does art production help to establish or de-establish, and which parts of society are uncovered, which transactions and flows of money, which power relations? Learning from Dhaka means discussing hegemonic takeovers in art and culture, it means discussing where Dhaka 'Swiss' Design comes from, as mentioned by Sharmini Pereira, and who earns the surplus. Culture is something that happens alongside infrastructures and monetary flows, as comment, as affirmation, or as opposition. These pathways of discussion and understanding did open up, especially in the critical writing summit, which was central to understanding the context and in questioning paradigms and protocols.

I would like to close with a quotation from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:

What people call transculture is culture as it happens. Culture alive is its own counter-example. Transculturation is not something special and different. It is a moment in a taxonomy of the normality of what is called culture. To assign oneself the special task of cultural translation or plotting cultural translation has therefore to be put within a political context.<sup>29</sup>

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## Notes

**1** I am grateful for the discussions I was able to have with Rohit Jain, Nkule Mabaso, Adaobi Udoji, Mike Sperlinger, Nabil Ahmed and Katya Garcia Anton for this text.

**2** To add some more information about LGBT rights in Bangladesh as provided by Wikipedia, not many rights are instituted, but in Bangladesh—and this contradicts a strict ordering of binary sexuality in a Western sense, a third sex is officially acknowledged. So, as a preliminary conclusion, it is obvious that the dispositive of sexuality has different layers, which are not congruent with a Western binary ordering; quote from Wikipedia: "In Bangladesh same-sex sexual or romantic activities are not respected, with LGBT people facing discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, and unique legal and social challenges. Same-sex sexual activity, whether in public or private, is illegal and punishable with fines and up to life imprisonment. Consequently, Bangladesh does not recognize a marriage, civil union or domestic partnership between adults of the same sex.[...] In January 2014, Bangladesh's first LGBT magazine was published. The magazine's name is Roopbaan, a Bengali folk character who represents the power of love." [15] At the magazine's launch, British High Commissioner Robert Gibson and Barrister Sara Hossain were present to hear the speakers. The magazine is being printed in Bangla and is accepting submissions from volunteers. The editor said the main goal of the magazine is to promote love.

Beginning in 2014, every year at the beginning of the Bengali New Year on 14 April, a Pride event called Rainbow Rally was organised in Dhaka. After threats, the 2016 event had to be cancelled. On 25 April 2016, Xulhaz Mannan, one of the founders of Roopbaan and organiser of the Rainbow Rally, was killed in his apartment together with a

friend.[16] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_rights\\_in\\_Bangladesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Bangladesh), accessed 23 Sept. 2016.

**3** Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 35.2, March 2011, pp. 223-38. I am grateful to Rohit Jain for having made me aware of this article.

**4** Ibid.

**5** See Tanja Trampe, Dorothee Richter, Eleonora Stassi, "Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics," *OnCurating.org*, No. 30, June 2016.

**6** Johan Hartle, "Arbeit denken, zeigen, abschaffen, Fragen an die Manifesta 11 in Zurich," talk delivered at the Symposium, Work, Migration, Personal Geopolitics, Zurich University of the Arts, September 8, 2016.

**7** See Afsana Khannom Asha. 2016. "Dhaka Art Summit 2016 ends today, in the independent Dhakalife." *The Independent*. 8 February 2016. Accessed 21 February 2016. <http://www.theindependentbd.com/arcprint/details/33227/2016-02-08>.

**8** Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Jacques-Alain Miller, ed., Penguin, New York, 1994.

**9** Andrea Fraser, "L'1 %, c'est moi," in *Texte zur Kunst* No. 83, "The Collectors," Sept. 2011, p. 119.

**10** 'Chains of equivalence' is a notion put forward by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau; it means to formulate solidarity for a specific cause. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, New York, 1985.

**11** Shukla Sawant in an email to Dorothee Richter, February 2016.

**12** See for example: Elke Krasny, Lara Perry, Dorothee Richter (eds.), "Curating in Feminist Thought," *OnCurating.org*, No. 29, May 2016.

**13** Johan Hartle, "Arbeit denken, zeigen, abschaffen, Fragen an die Manifesta 11 in Zurich."

**14** See Tanja Trampe, Dorothee Richter, Eleonora Stassi, "Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics," *OnCurating.org* No. 30, June 2016.

**15** Exhibition, *The Content of Form*. The Collection represented by Helmut Draxler, Generali Foundation, Vienna; 17 May – 25 August 2013.

**16** Daniel Baumann, introduction poster at Dhaka Art Summit, exhibition of Samdani Art Award, February 2016.

**17** Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', in *Mythologies*, The Noonday Press, New York, 1972, pp. 109–64.

**18** This is why the exhibition by Okwui Enwezor, *The Short Century*, had such a revolutionary impact; it proposes very different kinds of cultural production—it does not only expand the notion of cultural production, it also puts into question the difference between so-called high and low art, everyday objects and painting, for example. See *The Short Century. Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*.

**19** Sigmund Freud, "Ueber den Wunderblock, A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'" (1925), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Volume XIX, ed. and trans. James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, London, 1961.

**20** Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000.

**21** Edward Said. 2003. "Blind Imperial Arrogance: Vile Stereotyping of Arabs by the US ensures years of turmoil." *Los Angeles Times*. July 20.

**22** Rohit Jain brought this interesting text to my attention. Hamid Dabashi, "Fuck you Žižek!," in *Can Non-Europeans Think*, 2016, see <https://www.zedbooks.net/blog/posts/fuck-you-zizek/>. ZED is a platform for marginalized voices across the globe.

**23** Walter Derrida, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience," eipcp.net, Sept. 2011, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en>.

**24** Ibid.

**25** Ibid.

**26** Ibid.

**27** Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976, p.158.

**28** Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Borderless World," University of Arizona, 19 January 2012, accessed 11 March 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3LYRYR\\_-XA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3LYRYR_-XA).

**29** Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "More Thoughts on Cultural Translation," eipcp.net, April 2008, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>.

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