

Methods for Studying Non-U.S. Television

“Thoughts on Academic production in authoritarian and precarious contexts”

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This work is a reflection on the agonizing process upon academic work to produce its objects with immediate effects in spaces overdetermined by history or political contexts. These cultural processes bring up conditions of risks and insecurities on one hand and academic focus, autonomy and sovereignty on the other. These categories invoke the traps of the present and how the material and physical constraints of the contemporary may influence academic work. I argue that questions of translation and the cultural autonomy and sovereignty of academia is paramount. Now, the goal is not to play Indiana Jones or Lawrence of Arabia because the new politics of viscerality won't allow. One can, however, still practice a competent sociology of institutions and the internal contradictions embedded in how these institutions assign identities and control power and knowledge. The methodology involves new creative and discursive positions by engaging the Foucauldian combo power/ knowledge to discuss notion of violence versus force and other forms of hegemonic processes in authoritarian regimes.

Consequently, how political struggles can take other forms, particularly, on the social usage of archives and the multiplication of forms and the production of regimes of truth based on the distinction between truth as an autonomous and objective reality independent of human cognition and truth as the effects of power. The question becomes how to make knowledge desirable because rational discourses by themselves are not sufficient enough to become motivational and energize moments of conversion. Hence, the recognition that academic production must meet already pre-existing objective realities and ethics which brings up notions of Paresis, values and valorization and how to recognize processes of self-constitution and practices of the self and safe spaces of communication for what Foucault calls “le souci de soi” or technology of the self.

This reflection will be alimeted by the case of the Boko Haram and the proliferation of that apocalyptic blood-soaked Islamic sect in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad and Alain Badiou notion of event in relation to academic work. First, academic work cannot be defined by headline news and requires a profound knowledge of what Alain Badiou calls event. Badiou's notion of event has to be part of the important work to contextualized African indigenous archives with emerging rationalities with the knowledge that the fight for freedom is never over and the importance of creativity and the constant production of events to face barrages of impossibilities. This author relies on Alain Badiou's notion of events that he defines as the irruption of marginalized subjectivities disrupting conventional notions of reality. Reality for Badiou is nothing more than the void and the excesses that are cover up by ideology and propaganda to give a sense of normalcy. Badiou's notions of event, however, shows that even though marginal subjectivities are shaped by relationship of power, they are capable of critical autonomy and intervention which open up avenues to trace the gap between African subversive marginal practices and highly normative and oppressive structures and how that gap allows for the smuggling of alternative forms of subjectivities and new social systems. Notions of events, within this context, are instruments to connect historical dots through a cinema that frames

spaces as layers to be open to make sense of the sedimented knowledge about Africa for practices of self-understanding and logics of contribution. The notion of event, consequently, pays attention to persistent dynamic forces that signal productive capacities in an economy of precarity through the production of living knowledge, living experiences and recognizability.

Badiou's notion is predicated on the Sartrean's knowledge that existence precedes essence and becoming human is predicated on the capacity to understand events because the truth is the knowledge that is constructed after the event. In that subjective experience, there are elements of universal values and the ability to recognize these values participate in the universal positive construction of the truth. The universal positive construction of the truth that Badiou calls truth-procedure is important to make the distinction between truth, risk and superstition.

The relationship between risk-taking and Badiou's notion of events is important to define the relationship between excess realities compared to the previous pre-existing context. Reading the gap between the pre-existing context and the new context allow for the possibility to read an event. However, it is important to note here that there is never a return to a form of normality because there are no hierarchies between events, therefore, one event does not necessarily supersede the other because as Badiou writes truth processes generate by these events can still be unfinished (2003, 67) ... In practice, it means how do we think about risk-taking. Badiou writes that "life is devoted to calculating security, and this obsession with security is contrary to the Mallarmean's hypothesis that thought begets a throw of the dice, because in such a world there are infinitely too much risk in a throw of the dice (2003, 41). My reading of Badiou centers around risk-taking, political rupture and the production of new subjectivities and violence. For Badiou, violence is necessary to sustain political event which is defined by the irruption of the "non-existents" or the "rejects" on the political scene. However, I make a distinction between violence, forms of self-harm and superstition. The Boko haram's Islamic insurrection is not an event but a form of what Badiou calls "excessive destructionism" which is another form of excessive loyalty to fascistic idea of purity that seeks to destroy the past for the sacrifice the present requires. The Jihadist, as Sanjay Subramanyam writes in connected histories, does not connect events but obliterates them. Subramanyam's connected histories is a strong proposition against compartmentalization for multifaceted histories to provide an alternative narrative to Jihadist discourses that focuses on exaggerated notions of us versus the other and manufactured cultural differences. Rather, the academic goal must be to capture objects and subjects that are consistently overlooked or render invisible by these fundamentalist discourses.

The Jihadist is, consequently, an excessive destructive subject driven by an idea or a superstition based on an univocal terroristic truth that he has totally given himself to and follows all the way to the point of horror and into a black hole. The Jihadist refuses to deal with the void, the hole and the tragic that compose the everyday life which in fact constitutes its complexities. Hence, through extravagance and absolutism, the terrorist, in fact, refuses to deal with complex issues. In this context, however, the renunciation to utopic values is neither a better approach. Alain Badiou, through his notion of event, makes the case for loyalty and fidelity which means a refusal to settle in the routine social conditioning of the everyday life. This refusal to settle does not mean an obsessive production of the new but also ways in which forms of genealogy can

inform on the present. This is where, the insurgency of the Boko Haram is not an event. This apocalyptic jihadism is an opportunity to reflect on the energy to dream versus despair and how through these interactions opening up new procedures for the truth. The notion of fidelity and loyalty, moreover, puts front and center issues of social relation and how catastrophes such as Islamic Jihadism is also a failure of social relationships. These catastrophes are, therefore, important to analyze how groups of people confront or cope with traumatic events with the knowledge that the encounter with the truth itself can constitute a traumatic event but can also be the basis to constantly revitalize self-worth and meaning in life.