Introduction

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You mourn now as if the world will never be the same
And the rest of us hope
to hell it won't be.

Emmanuel Ortiz
'A Moment of Silence Before I Start This Poem [9/11/2002]'

Emmanuel Ortiz's poem, widely circulated in the lead-up to the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, is a fitting epigraph for this special issue, conceptualised as an attempt to remember other wars of terror, and other targets, especially in the global south.[1] As 'terror' has come to apply almost exclusively to the attacks on the United States and the catastrophic and expanding circles of violence and counter-violence that they set in motion, this issue is focused on the hidden genealogies and geopolitical configurations that enmesh the south, naturalised as the locus and source of terror, with the north. Simultaneously the contributions presented here destabilise the lines of demarcation between the present and the 'post' of terror, presenting terror as an unfolding historical sequence rather than a singular event or aberration.

The stories of ruined places, displaced bodies and identities shattered and remade that emerge from these pages indissociably bind together old and new projects of empire. They bring into view the socio-political systems, cultural geographies and regimes of territoriality through which terror is engendered and naturalised, and the institutions and imaginaries that continue to underpin them. In his study of the Somali diaspora Nuruddin Farrah provides the indispensable reminder that 'The Kurd, the Somali, the Cambodian, the Vietnamese, the Tamil-speaking Sri Lankan and the Palestinian share a common condition: their peoples have all been coerced into becoming part of an empire, and then cast off, and recast again as a new empire is constructed in place of the one that has been dismantled.' (2000, pp. 51–52) This volume refers us to the places and stories that cannot be obscured, cast off or disavowed as so much detritus of an-other order while our attention is fixed on new missions to salvage, civilise and democratise.

The title of this issue, *Living Through Terror*, is intended to refer both to the pervasiveness of terror in societies where extreme violence and war constitute the everyday processes of life *as well as* to the experience of surviving terror and living into the future. 'Terror', like its inseparable fellow, 'terrorism', is today a term so hopelessly 'propagandised', in Jeffrey Sluka's words, as to be virtually incapable of definition – not because of 'the failure of academics [and others] to understand its fundamental characteristics', but rather because of 'the interference of political motives in the debate.' (Sluka, 2008, p. 174) In a related discussion the editors of the new journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* point to the anomalies and inequities whereby:

> terrorism has become a negative ideograph of Western identity, making self-
> reflective, probing research difficult … It is a context in which fascination with

terrorism encourages moral panics and an excessive focus on violence, to the neglect of the wider social, historical, and often mundane milieu in which it is situated. It is also a context in which the much greater and more pervasive terror employed by states, including directly or indirectly by liberal-democratic states … has been ignored and silenced from the public and, to a significant degree, academic discourse. (Breen et al., 2008, p. 2)

In this issue we are less interested in defining or delimiting the meaning(s) of terror than in considering its effects precisely in those ignored and silenced locations where terror is either naturalised (the Philippines, South Africa, Timor Leste) or invisibilised (the neo-liberal democracies of Australia and Italy). The essays, literary writings and images collected here attend, in their different ways, to subjects living in and with terror as an element structurally incorporated in their everyday, and to the processes by which terror exercises itself in their lives, whether it is perpetrated by state or non-state actors. Simultaneously, the contributions attest to the tactics subjects deploy to confront and negotiate conditions of terror, and their attempts to live with and through terror in contexts where the ordinary and the everyday 'take on the nature of something *recovered* in the face of terrible tragedies' – and ultimately even provide the grounds for 'the making of hope'. (Das and Kleinman, 2000, pp. 7, 10).

The contributions in this issue testify to the resiliences, creativities and everyday survival practices of subjects in forgotten societies of terror.[2] Jacqueline Siapno begins her essay by declaring, 'I am so tired too of articles on "Living through Terror" that are just about victims being victimised. Victims, at one point in their lives, become more visionary, and get wise.' She proceeds to discuss, among other things, the tactics she adopts 'to focus, be centred and grounded, listen to and allow my heart to speak, and how, if one were to become a "target", to determine where one wants one's "attackers" to go, through processes of embodied agency, embodied presence, embodied peace.'

Siapno's essay, like a number of the other contributions, declines to deal in the simple categories of hero and victim, or to homogenise or romanticise terrorised subjects. Instead it seeks to name and inventory the embodied practices, the emotional and psychic states and the insights and knowledges that emerge from situations of extreme contingency, insecurity and trauma.

Disregarding the divide that conventionally separates academic essays from creative or aesthetic production, this issue includes fiction, poetry, testimony, art and photographic images alongside essays that theorise or critically reflect on aspects of living through terror. As Antonio Traverso points out, the empirical or '*raw data* of terror' – the histories and institutions through which terror becomes a social phenomenon; the strategies, technologies, and materials used in terror-inducing acts; the categories and statistics of the bodies involved – 'are indissociable from the cultural, linguistic and aesthetic forms through which subjects engage with the everyday presence of terror in their communities.' (Traverso, forthcoming) These contributions, emerging from the daily transactions and tactics in societies of terror, do not demarcate between the affective, sensory or imaginative dimensions of living through terror and the project of theorising, reflecting on and and analysing terror.

Living through terror is not a state of unrelieved despair, passivity or helplessness but is frequently a process of active engagement, creating and desiring. 'Salt, Sand and Water', an extraordinary text of narratives and images produced by women in settlements of the displaced in Sri Lanka exemplifies the embodied knowledges, sensuous intensities and complex modalities of analysis and reflection that the subjects of terror bring to their stories. In her afterword, Sivamohan Sumathy specifies that the

women's collective authoring of this text is an 'exercise in forming a political consciousness of ethnic marginality and of displacement' and an intervention in the discourse of the state from a position of theoretical strength:

> This is not an ethnographic project. 'We' as displaced women make and write theory, a theory of the state, of place, of displacement, of gender, class and ethnicity and of political activism. The marginality of the women here, working women, displaced women, is one of theoretical strength rather than of victimisation. The women here, and I, as researcher and facilitator, are political actors and political writers.

Theorising, building, storying, resignifying or moving from one place to another, becoming out of place: all are necessary acts of agency undertaken by subjects in societies of terror. Merlinda Bobis contributes a short story and an essay that illuminate 'the lived and the told stories about the Philippine government's total war (1987–1989) against communist insurgency,' exploring the power relations between what she calls 'grand narratives' and little stories, and between military and narrative deployments: the totalising authority of '"terrorism" carries so much more weight than the peripheral terms like "neutralising the village", "collateral damage", "movement of population" – all the little stories, the strategies and consequences of total war that are not even named for what they really are.' Against this silencing, Bobis continues to tell the stories of her family and home region: 'Our stories are not a collateral damage of war; they are the main event.'

Bobis's contributions are also concerned with relations of distance, memory and diaspora, between the lived stories of her region and family in the Philippines and the stories she tells of them in Australia, a place that is both haven and exile. Similar concerns shape the visual essay, 'Tales from the South', taken from Antonio Traverso's poetic short film of the same title. The film layers a woman's memories of being tortured during the Pinochet military dictatorship in Chile onto the landscape of her exile in Australia. As she performs an allegory of self-discovery and healing against a mythic Latin American landscape, the play of images weaves her past into the present of this other South Land, with reminders of its own effaced landscapes of violence and terror. Traverso's evocative title invites viewers to reflect on the unstable geopolitical and geographical significations of the south, and the unspoken relation to its invisible but ever-present twin, the north.

Siapno's essay shuttles between the war zones of Aceh and Timor Leste to provide a critique of prevailing understandings of displacement by examining 'some of the aspects of living displacement that escape the lens of the government's version … and formulaic human rights analysis of repertoires of violence.' Breaking with these normative modes of writing about displacement, Siapno explores 'dis-place-ment broadly defined, including the politics of dis-placing one's self to occupy new spaces … women assuming new roles, positions, and taking over spaces that are not traditionally theirs.'

Becoming displaced or dis-placing oneself, like the struggle to make new spaces, is often an intentional act both by those who remain and by those who flee. In his meditation on borders, Nevzat Soguk has made the crucial argument that 'borders are imbued through and through with intentionalities', not only by those who enforce, but also by those who transgress and violate them. (2007, p. 283) Even the places where escaping bodies face blockage and terminus, Soguk affirms, are markers in the 'stages

of an advance'. The ever-expanding register that records the names of those who die attempting to enter Fortress Europe:

> records not deaths alone, but also the borders' shifts and metamorphoses forward and backward, upward and downward … Surely where refugee, illegal, migrant or asylum seeker bodies fall, they mark borders in their resourceful and rich unfolding, temporally and spatially. Bodies fallen, drowned, frozen, mangled and suffocated highlight borders' capture of people daring to move unauthorized. On the other hand they also point to the trails through which border-crossing people turn insurrectional, capturing borders and harnessing them to their movements. (2007, pp. 290–91)

The insurrectional movements of border-crossing people, their transgressions of the border and its violent reassertions in the global north are the topic of two contributions in this issue. Joseph Pugliese's essay powerfully tracks the ways in which unauthorised migrant and refugee bodies resignify seemingly neutral and benign civil technologies and spaces such as containers, cargo holds and the wheelbays of aeroplanes so that they become at once the means of escape from terror and 'modes of necrological transport, self-incarceration and unseen death'. Pugliese juxtaposes these desperate deployments of civil technologies into means of escape against the modalities of 'vernacular violence' and terror mobilised by governments in the global north 'to confine and incarcerate undocumented subjects who have managed to penetrate either Fortress Europe or Fortress Australia.' In either case, he argues, 'a critical analysis of the differential uses to which civilian technologies are put effectively works to disclose the violent transnational asymmetries of biopower that continue to traumatise and kill refugees from the global south.'

Fortress Australia is also the subject of Kristen Phillips' essay examining the *gendered* biopolitics that enable what is in effect the waging of a war against asylum seekers and refugees. Phillips argues that the 'different ways in which male and female bodies are reduced to bare life, that is, stripped of political status' at the point of arrival in Australia is 'pivotal in allowing this war to be thought of as a rational, reasonable and just war.' By subjecting the bodies of male and female asylum seekers to differential forms of management, categorising them either as dangerous bodies to be mastered and punished or as reproductive bodies to be contained and protected, the Australian state disguises the violence of its own practices.

Both Pugliese and Phillips draw on Giorgio Agamben's theorisations of *homo sacer* in order to explore the line that distinguishes bare life from the citizen; the state's exercise of biopower, as well as what Achille Mbembe describes as necropower, over differently positioned bodies; and the unstable boundaries between practices of letting die and making die. 'Notes from a Tense Field', Joan Wardrop's essay on contemporary South Africa, focuses on the chilling afterlife of a regime in which black bodies signified as the ultimate form of bare life:

> South African bodies archive a colonial history of domination, regulation and violence … a collective history riven by repeated acts of inhumanity, by formalised, large-scale acts of creation of the Other, and by the non-consensual imposition of a structurally violent system through persistent terrorisation and intimidation.

Wardrop's account of post-apartheid South African cities as sites of terror can be contextualised against Lindsay Bremner's argument, in a previous issue of *Social Identities*, that as the rigidly segregated colonial cityscape of apartheid disintegrates, 'crime has replaced race in the ordering of the city.' (2004, p. 461) In this post-colonial Rainbow Nation, 'it is the criminal who re-establishes the boundaries, whose body reconfigures the categories of good and evil.' The criminal is the figure who now defines the boundaries of bare life: 'The criminal is not a person. It is a beast. It knows no respect for human life, savagely maiming and killing for pleasure. It has no limits other than the limits of its own body.' (Bremner, 2004, pp. 461–62)

Wardrop's precise, evocative narratives of daily violence in South Africa's townships and suburbs trace the continuities and the ruptures in the nation's designations of bare life – those who die, kill (each other) and are killed with impunity – in a generation once hopefully dubbed the born-frees:

> *Born frees*, the children who have grown up in the new South Africa, the Rainbow Nation, are called. In theory at least they are believed to possess particular resistance to the toxic effects of the previous era … to have a capacity to live free of the burdens of history, of oppression and domination, free of the impacts of families torn apart by the labour migration system that took millions of men away to work on the mines or in industry, free of the daily humiliations of the pass system and group areas and segregation of amenities, free of the emotional and psychological effects of the systematic destruction of black South African families.

The contributions by Romola Sanyal and Mohit Prasad refer to other definitive dates in the history of failed 'posts'. (Pugliese, 1995) Prasad's poem, 'After the Death of the Island', laments the 1987 coup in Fiji and the effective collapse of hopes for a multiracial post-independence nation in which indigenous Fijians and the descendants of Indian indentured labour could both claim to be full citizens. Sanyal's essay turns to a previous generation of midnight's children, post-partition Hindu refugees in East Bengal. She discusses the practices of occupying land, squatting and building adopted by the refugees, their laying claim to citizenship through relentless labour, coupled with the politics of making do, subterfuge, compliance and opposition.

> The establishment of a space for living for a refugee is highly fraught with meaning. Firstly, it is a concrete symbol of displacement and injustice. It is deeply politicised not only by the refugee or the country s/he has come from, but also by the host country as a symbol of the 'other' living within the space of the nation. The ways by which the refugees engage in building, and the meanings that are infused into these constructions speak to the larger political, social and emotional agendas of displaced people.

These 'larger political, social and emotional agendas' of the displaced and terrorised are central to each of the essays, whether they focus on the specificities of claiming space and citizenship in the camps of Timor Leste and Sri Lanka; the conflict zones of South Africa and the Philippines where one may become homeless without having ever left home; or at the militarised borders of Fortress Europe and Fortress Australia. Yet, Farrah reminds us, the minoritised other of the post-colony, the undocumented and the fugitive in the northern metropolis, the 'economic refugee' desperate to escape the uncoincidental poverty of the south – all these subjects of terror

also constitute a collectivity: they are 'the bastards of the idea of empire'. (2000, p. 55) In their small and large defiances of everyday violence, their insurrectionary movements and desires, these illegitimised and unacknowledged bodies 'claim space for living'. In the face of the daily erasures, the protestations of ignorance or innocence of their stories, they refute the naturalised and invisibilised terror of the south. They interrupt the program.

> *This is a September 11th poem for Chile, 1971*
> *This is a September 12th poem for Steven Biko in South Africa, 1977*
> *This is a September 13th poem for the brothers at Attica Prison, New York, 1971*
> *This is a September 14th poem for Somalia, 1992.*
> *This is a poem for every date that falls to the ground in ashes*
> *This is a poem for the 110 stories that were never told*
> *The 110 stories that history chose not to write in textbooks*
> *The 110 stories that that CNN, BBC, The New York Times, and Newsweek ignored*
> *This is a poem for interrupting this program.*

<div align="right">Ortiz, 2002</div>

Notes

[1] The poem 'A Moment of Silence' originally appeared as an email, then on the internet and eventually in print *in The Word Is a Machete: Post-Pocho/Puerto Rican Poems of the Personal and Political* (Pocho Rican Press 2003). I am grateful to the author for permission to cite it here.

~~**Note**~~

[2] I take the phrase 'societies of terror' from Sasanka Perera's book, *Living with Torturers.*

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