

A Conversation with Alberto Moreiras regarding the Notion of Infrapolitics. With Alejandra Castillo, Jorge Álvarez Yáguez, Maddalena Cerrato, Sam Steinberg, Ángel Octavio Álvarez Solís. July 2014-January 2015

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The conversation was proposed and initiated by Alejandra Castillo. The first questions and answers were discussed indirectly in a Facebook group, which led to further questions and comments from the other signing interlocutors.

Alejandra Castillo: In your book *Tercer espacio: Literatura y duelo en América Latina*, you indicate that autographic writing is index and ruin of the figurative project of writing. Described in those terms, autography seems to be framed between reflexivity, mourning, and survival. Following this thread, you indicated that figurality is both the condition of reflexivity and its very limit. In your forthcoming book *Piel de lobo*, you take up once again the problem of writing and life. In the tie that binds those words together, you describe autography as a “writing in subjective destitution.” I would like to begin this dialogue by asking about this description: what are you referring to when you say writing in subjective destitution?

Alberto Moreiras: The problem with figurative language is that it posits or invents the necessary existence of a non-literal or catachrestic plane, and this plane is always and necessarily phantasmatic. If I say that the horsemen approach beating the drum of the plains, the noise of the drum is my phantasm: music. If I realize this, the music stops. And that has destituting effects. There is a destituting drive in what you call reflexive writing (I no longer remember what I said in *Tercer espacio*) that is always already tragic, and with which we can only relate in mourning if we are to survive, which can never be taken for granted. I suppose that there is constituting writing and destituting writing, though such a division is far from exhaustive as a phenomenology of writing. In any case, I speak of tendencies in writing, not of achievements: everything is always ambiguous and complicated in this terrain because nobody owns their writing, one can only struggle with it. For some, writing could be

constitutive in a symbolic sense—for instance, if we accept Alain Badiou’s schema, when writing is fidelity to some event of truth in love, science, art or politics. But I cannot believe that writing exhausts itself in that constitution of subjective truth, and I tend to think the opposite is the case: the writing that interests me does not seek to constitute a truth; rather, it seeks truth and produces destitution. It seeks truth in the sense that it attempts to traverse the phantasm in every case, and it produces destitution in the sense that traversing the phantasm brings us closer to the abyss of the real. This is a Lacanian vocabulary, but we could rewrite it in deconstructive terms. Where Lacan would say *sinthome* Derrida could speak of the secret. For me, in fact, there is no other writing than the writing of the secret. Or, there is another, but it does not work (for me). The question that arises, then, is that of the use of the writing of the secret, but that is a question that I don’t think I am prepared to answer.

AC: While it is true that autographic writing leads us towards a certain politics of the proper name, it is no less true that such a name is but the inscription of death in the ownership of the name. In this sense, every auto-bio(thanato)-graphic gesture would imply the failed gesture of seeking to be faithful to writing one’s self, while always writing, nevertheless, an other. In spite of this auto-hetero-graphic logic that is inscribed in writing, you seem to insist in some of the materials for your new book, *Piel de lobo*, on the necessity of giving testimony of the truth: “books have to be true,” you state. What is the limit between truth and fiction in an autographic project?

AM: I think that every act of writing fails. The only act without recoil would be total silence, which is also death. But, precisely to the extent that we write in spite of everything, death is inscribed apotropically: we inscribe it in order to resist it. It does not seem to me to be so much the work of fidelity. It is more of an enterprise without fidelity, always ready to betray everything in order to achieve its ends, if one were shrewd enough to know when to betray, when betrayal is the best way to avoid the lethal inscription. That is why writing acts have to be true, because without that truth nothing works—as we know, in each case, only truth orients betrayal. Every reflexive act of writing is, therefore, never more than a theoretical fiction. But I would also resist the notion of testimony in this context. Testimony is only one modality of theoretical fiction among others, it does not define them all; although we could entertain the idea that testimony is always already nothing more than the theoretical dimension of fiction. We could say that there is always testimony in reflexive writing, there is

always a testimonial dimension, but that testimony remains suspended in every case by what escapes it, by what the testimony produces as its own excess. That is what I call autographic writing.

AC: Is the definition of writing you are proposing related to the concept of “infrapolitics,” which you have been developing more recently?

AM: Yes, and both are related to what, on a different occasion, I called the instance of the non-subject. I suppose that the same intuition makes its way throughout this quasi-conceptual framework. Autography and infrapolitics refer to a practico-speculative space that is not regulated by even the slightest certainties, which are always ideological, and which determine our relation with the everyday, and thus remain outside of the horizon of capture defined by the legal apparatus, by the political and administrative institution, by the national instantiation, by gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, in sum, by any identitarian artifact. It is not only an attempt to think writing, but also the course of experience itself, in what exceeds and from what exceeds that subjective capture.

AC: Could you elaborate on your idea of “infrapolitics”?

AM: I just spoke of it as a quasi-conceptual instance that resists every ideological apparatus of capture, which refers to an unregulated practico-speculative “third” space, which is to say, outside of rule and regulation. It is not that it is impossible to think it, for now (I think it is the easiest thing to think, what is closest to all of us, but someone said that the narrowest abyss is also the hardest to cross), but it is a contradiction to attempt to give it a theoretical formulation, or a definition. It is important to invoke here the notion of “resistance to theory,” not from the vantage point of the will that seeks to undo that resistance, but in order to fold into it, to understand it in so far as such a thing is possible for each of us. I imagine that what is important, then, is not to secure a stable definition, but to invoke a reflexive process that would allow for a liberation of the ear, the eye, touch, and that leaves space, or makes it possible to conceive of an alternative site for thought. If I knew how to do it, I would have already written four or five more books. But we can make an attempt: let us say that infrapolitics refers to deconstruction in politics, or that it is deconstruction of politics or politics in deconstruction. Jacques Derrida’s 1964 seminar, at the École Normale Supérieure, on the question of being and history in Heidegger, was published last year. There, Derrida comes very close to saying that deconstruction is the constant attempt to thematize the ontico-ontological difference, that is to say, the forgetting

of Being which Heidegger diagnosed in *Being and Time* as infection or in-fiction of the metaphysical tradition as a whole, which is the hegemonic tradition of thought in the West. It is clear that my genealogy of work has strong Heideggerian and Derridean ties. I would say, then, that infrapolitics is the name of deconstruction in politics, understanding deconstruction as the attempt (always unfulfilled) to thematize the forgetting of the onto-ontological difference. To carry this thematic over to political reflection has proven a difficult task—it would be possible to think that Levinas, as much as Blanchot, Derrida, or Nancy, among others, were always attempting to come to terms with this, but, as we know, always in a manner that was not too frontal. We don't have to abandon the project, however; to the extent that the modes of oppression most characteristic of our time, and perhaps of all times, always transcend what we might call representational politics, the politics that is mere confrontation between doctrines and positions, mere alternation of measures that come to take on the form of law, they always enter into the region of infrapolitics. If the latter is the place where the auto-heterographic inscription is or is not produced in its real form, that is, if infrapolitics is the place of experience and the instance of the singular manifestation of every politics, then, the change of perspective, with regard to what could be termed the great "heliopolitical" parameters that define ostensible political life in modernity, would be of critical importance. As we know, the problem of liberalism, for example, is not liberalism in itself, but the falsity of its application, and the same applies to communism. For instance, the problem of a society politically structured according to Ernesto Laclau's theory of hegemony is not the given hegemonic articulation, but what that articulation is incapable of dealing with. Let us say that every heliopolitics imposes a metaphorization, a way of understanding the space of the community. The infrapolitics of any politics is permanent demetaphorization. And in that always ongoing process of demetaphorization, which is, among other things, time, and, among other things, what exceeds any will to control, and, among other things, accident and catastrophe, but which can also be freedom and *jouissance*, or an opening for pleasure—it is here where, I would say, the possibility of invention, which is also the possibility of revolt, of subtraction, of restitution and even, why not, of vengeance is kept, even if it is in and through the retreat, the permanent retreat, of that very possibility. I don't think it is banal to insist on the idea that the attempt to resist this demetaphorization is the real name of antidemocratic

authoritarianism, that is, of the oppression of the human by the human. From the right or from the left.

AC: Then, do we always have to search for the demetaphorization of any system?

AM: Demetaphorization happens on its own, since political life is always in every case a struggle that begins with the entropy of the concept. What is important, certainly in the university, but not only there, not at all, is to remain alert to the constant attempts to avert the entropic demetaphorization of any system. Any project of justice and freedom for all, that is, of demotic equality, of preventing anyone from being more than anyone else, passes through the facilitation of the work of entropic demetaphorization, which in many cases has as a consequence the production of new alternative metaphors that are in turn provisional and subject to new losses themselves. Democratic Republicanism is perhaps nothing other than that sustained process of rejection of any reification or biopoliticization of the concept. That is why I insist that we should recognize in it the call of forgetfulness. Western metaphysics constitutes itself in that forgetting, according to Heidegger, in favor of the onto-theological constitution of the polis, or of what takes its place, perhaps the State. Parmenides's poem incorporates in its very form the link between aristocracy and ontological ground, which is thus defined for the next two thousand five hundred years. To search for the difficult outside of onto-theology, or, in infrapolitics, to search for the difficult outside of politics, is not to wager on an anarchic demetaphorization, but its point of departure is that there is no stable archy, that any archy is already a consequence of the forgetting that constitutes it as such. Heidegger gave the name of Being to that instance of forgetting, to that instance which is always in retreat, because that was the word used in the tradition, but already in the 1930s Heidegger begins to emphasize that it is not necessary to speak of the Being of the tradition, that Being as it is understood in that tradition is not the reference. That is why he writes *Seyn*, with a "y," or he crosses out the word. Or he renames it *Ereignis*. But we could also call that forgetting infrapolitical experience. We can only refer to it in a tangential manner, itself metaphorical or metaphorized in every instance, precisely because it is not vulnerable to theoretical appropriation, because our language does not allow for theoretical appropriation without destructive capture. The forgetting cannot be fetishized into a new name of Being, onto-theological foundation, even as infrapolitics cannot constitute itself as a formal practice. Both forgetting and infrapolitics are only susceptible to a poetic quasi-nomination that makes possible the intuition of a trail, a trace in which the

future of our planet is at stake, in my estimation. We can call it the Lacanian Chose, or the Freudian navel of the dream, Derridean *différance* or the face of the other, or the neuter, or even all that appertains to the thought of the animal or the earthly outside of the Anthropocene—these are impossible names, catachrestic names for thinking the forgetting, in the same way that infrapolitics is an impossible name for thinking politics.

Jorge Álvarez Yáguez: One of the striking features of your thought is that you tend to use authors that are not generally regarded as political philosophers, who don't belong to any history of political thought as it is usually understood, whose thought is not, at least not in a central way, political, such as Heidegger, Lacan, Levinas, Derrida... but you do it, precisely, in order to think the political or an alternative to the political as such.

AM: I have never had or attempted to have a technical relation with politics, neither in terms of what certain academic traditions call political science nor of what yet others call political theory. In fact, I always thought or felt, as many others, that politics oscillates, at least in what interests me, between being essentially corrupt and despicable, and being charged with the greatest possible dignity and importance, and that this variation within existing politics has little to do with its concept. So when I decided, without a doubt driven, as far as I can remember, by contextual ideological pressures within the university, when I decided that I was to thematize politics or the political in my writing, it was always a matter of speaking from the place where I was, without any imperative for self-reformation whatsoever. Then I began, for example, to become interested in what there is of politics in processes of philosophical, critical, or literary writing and thought, perhaps paying undue attention to my own notion regarding the essential variation between its two abysses, its loftiness and its baseness. The truth is that one discovers, without setting out to do so, that real politics, at least in texts, is not where it says it is, or rarely. It is more common to find that the most radical democrat, as soon as one makes an effort to read his texts, ends up revealing, more or less naively, his intrinsic despotism, that the fiercest subalternist reveals himself as the perfect policeman, or that the noblest feminist could be understood as an extraordinary case of opportunism. Or that the internal contradictions of political thought end up producing the destruction of the concept of politics itself, as perhaps is the case in the work of Louis Althusser. It is also common, and this is obviously more interesting and productive, that people who usually prefer to remain on the verge of a direct confrontation with political matters, out of respect or disdain, as I mention, end up offering insights of great intensity

regarding political life. Perhaps that is the case with the authors that you mention in your question—Heidegger, Lacan, Levinas, Derrida, all of them are people whose work cannot be directly classified as political, but who have nevertheless provided insights, more or less indirect, which in many cases go further than their apparent intentions. I would say that Heidegger’s work, for example, is not fascist in an organic manner, despite the catastrophic personal fascistization of the author that lasted many years, and that Lacan is not as conservative a gentleman as some suggest, and the writings of Derrida and Levinas, in different ways, have yet to be politically exhausted in relation to any possible understanding of the contemporary notion of democracy. In comparison with them, most political scientists or political theorists, certainly during the twentieth century, appear lamentably poor and narrow in spirit. There are exceptions, of course, but they tend to be exceptions that fall within that rule—thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Luce Irigaray or Wendy Brown, Miguel Abensour or Claude Lefort, all figures with one leg or ear outside of the circumscribed social-scientific disciplinary field. Another way of saying the same thing, perhaps, would be to emphasize that what seems interesting today in the field of thought, at least for me, in relation to politics, is not so much political thought as thought that seeks to question the hyperbolic conditions of politics. This is not by chance—of course it has to do with the general conditions for thought during the twentieth century, which we now inherit. They are definable for me, taking as a point of departure what people like Althusser himself, and his more astute followers, in the wake of Marx, or people like Roberto Esposito or Carlo Galli, in the wake of Carl Schmitt, have termed implicitly or explicitly the conceptual end, that is, the productive exhaustion of the political architectonics of modernity.

JAY: For some time now, your work has dealt with two key ideas, which we could say constitute two separate “research agendas,” to use a concept from the theory of science, namely, posthegemony and infrapolitics. Could you comment on their relation?

AM: Speaking of hyperbolic conditions, one of my earliest memories is how I gutted my favorite toy, which was a model plane, I guess it must have been a Douglas or a Boeing, which the Three Magi had brought me. That spring my parents took me to a pigeon shooting contest in Vigo’s Aeroclub, but I soon lost interest in the killing because I was much more fascinated by the two or three planes that came into or left the airport, which I could see directly beyond the firing range. When I returned home I paid a visit to my friend Fidelín, with the purpose of finding out why my plane didn’t fly like the ones at the airport. I

couldn't think of anything other than borrowing the pliers that belonged to Fidelín's dad and setting to work. After much effort and great sadness, since, after all, it was my favorite toy, I saw that the plane had a wooden ball inside (which was by that time all that remained usable of the toy). I didn't know how to think of the connection between the ball and flying or not flying, and I think that experience of perplexity and disenchantment, and of loss, ended up causing a fixation of the fort-da type in me. I mean, it occurs to me that it could be like that, and that therefore we could relate your question regarding infrapolitics and posthegemony to this situation, for in the end both notions or figures are perhaps intuitively accessible as conditions for flying and conditions for freedom. That is to say, neither infrapolitics nor posthegemony are goals to be achieved, but conditions of life, or of practice, and of thought, and one must reach them, perhaps, or if at all possible, through a certain labor of destruction. They require, to enter into themselves, a certain destruction whose end result is never assured. In my previous answer, I said that real politics is not usually found where it seems to be but in a different place. Wherever it is, whoever finds it, neither infrapolitics nor posthegemony claim to occupy that place; rather, they occupy the place that allows for making the place of politics a question in each case. It is, of course, more complicated than it seems, above all because once the necessity of that step back appears, that step back opens another perspective, and then not even politics is a goal, and certainly not the privileged one. But, since you ask about the relation between the two notions, we could begin by saying that posthegemony is the intrapolitical transposition of what we have been calling infrapolitics. In other words, infrapolitics is not politics, it is not a modality of politics, but an other dimension of existence; yet if there is or if there were political infrapolitics, it would be posthegemonic politics in the precise sense of an opposition to any understanding of politics as a system of submission to hegemonic power *qua* hegemonic. It is, therefore, a radicalization of the so-called demotic principle of democracy. Infrapolitics understands that there is a region of existence, of existence in common, for which the political relation, although it is far from exhausting it, is determining in every case, but it also tries to understand that that political relation, as a region, is not exhaustive, does not consume or map out the space of human existence. This already tells us, for now, that politics is no goal at all, in any of its modalities, but is itself condition. To insist on posthegemony, in this context, is to insist on the fact that there is a region of common facticity, a sort of generalized state of things crossed by relations of exploitation and domination that any

hegemony sanctions also factically. Posthegemony asks to live that state of things from a certain distance, which is to refuse the naturalization of every system of exploitation and domination. However, that refusal does not have a political naturalization either, that distance does not belong to politics and is not founded upon it, for nothing in politics, despite what Machiavelli claims, can be understood as mere abstention from participation in the exploitation or domination of others. Therefore, infrapolitics is, to that extent, a necessary conceptual correlate to the posthegemonic relation, or non-relation. We could say that, even if there were infrapolitics without posthegemony, there is no posthegemony without infrapolitics, but posthegemony is a political practice, that is, it is a mode of inhabiting politics, whereas infrapolitics is rather the trace of a factico-temporal dimension of existence which precedes (or sub-ceeds) and at the same time exceeds every political determination.

Maddalena Cerrato: Infrapolitics points to a dimension of existence that exceeds both the political and the ethical dimension, which does not allow itself to be exhausted either by the two areas that have been understood since Aristotle as practical knowledge, or by their mere sum; this is so because infrapolitics points to the excess, the non-subjective remainder of experience, to the fact that not all experience falls within the subjectivist purview, not all action can be redirected toward a structure of decision. In doing this, infrapolitics reveals the aporetic condition of the political (which would be revealed also in the contradiction in Althusser between the theory of hegemony and aleatory materialism) and the exhaustion of the modern categories with which to think it, thus inaugurating the possibility of “inhabiting politics” in an an-archic and non-subjective form, that is, making possible posthegemony as a political practice. What happens with the ethical? Does infrapolitics also inaugurate the possibility of thinking and inhabiting the ethical in an an-archic and non-subjective manner? Would this be an ethics beyond the decision? And where would that lead? Who do you see as your interlocutors in that path? Would Lacanian psychoanalysis have a privileged place in it?

AM: I guess that we can say that the division of practical reason between ethics and politics belongs still, or belongs essentially, to what Heidegger in his “Letter on Humanism” called “the ‘technological’ interpretation of thought.” That technological interpretation has a lot to do with the Platonic-Aristotelian division between essence and existence, perhaps really Hellenistic in origin. The ethico-political relation would fall on the side of existence, but

already from this fallen form of the division, and absolutely tied to the old metaphysical humanism that saw the world as a mere projection of the subjectivity of the subject. For metaphysical humanism, which is the master ideology that lives through us, the subjectivity of the subject is the only horizon for thought and action. Thus, ethics has to be understood necessarily as a rule of subjectivity or a field of subjective expression. From that understanding, the ethico-political relation is subjected to the narrow predicament of conceiving itself as predominantly ethical (in the person of the Kantian “moral politician”) or predominantly political (in the person of the “political moralist”). The first attempts to follow the law rather than his own convenience, while the second, the subject of radical evil, does the opposite. But this determines our practical existence in a way that is too reductive—we are above all good or evil, or we are indeterminately bad-and-good, and politics is nothing but the field of action that justifies those appellations. Ethics, understood as technics, can only correct modalities of political conduct. But already in that text Heidegger is searching for an “other” thought “that abandons subjectivity.” The step back from all of this, which the notion of infrapolitics announces and tries to think, is consequently also a thought that takes a step back with regards to ethics, understood technically. I wrote all I could about the mysterious and famous fragment by Heraclitus, *ethos anthropoi daimon*, in my first book, *Interpretación y diferencia*. I imagine that what was at stake for me at that time was to begin thinking that step back. For Heraclitus, the *ethos* is neither law nor a set of rules of conduct; rather, it is essentially dwelling and inhabiting, a way of being, if we can venture that translation. In the concluding pages of his “Letter,” Heidegger comes to speak of an “originary ethics,” although in the same paragraph he discards the term, because for him it was no longer a matter of rescuing old metaphysical terms, with their equivocal chronology and temporalization. If that “originary” ethics, assuming that we put the first of those two words under erasure, promises a step back, promises the restitution of a thought that is no longer techno-conceptual, no longer crossed by the techno-ontological differentiation between essence and existence, we should understand that such a promise is nothing but the possibility of a difficult and destitute exercise that has no end. The word “exercise” can be useful if we understand it etymologically, from *ex-arcare*, unearthing what is hidden, un-secreting. Let us say, then, as provisional as it might result, that infrapolitics is an exercise in this sense—it seeks an exodus with regard to the technological ethico-political relation, it seeks its un-secreting destruction, in order to liberate an other existential practice. I

would not have any problem in using in this context an expression I have used elsewhere, that of “savage moralism.” Infrapolitics, in its reflexive condition, is an exercise in savage moralism, anti-political and anti-ethical, since it requires an exodus with regard to the subjective prison that constitutes an ethico-political relation ideologically imposed on us as a consequence of metaphysical humanism. Yes, that savage step back with regards to the ethico-political relation is an-archic, because it does not submit to any principle. And I harbor little doubt that it is possible that some kind of Lacanian or post-Lacanian analysis can serve to think it in its radical poverty.

Ángel Octavio Alvares Solís: In some of your work, particularly in *Línea de sombra*, you point to the possibility of a politics without a subject. A politics without a subject avoids the excess of subjectivity that comes with the arrival of the other and, by extension, makes possible a non onto-theological politics. Nevertheless, recently your work has taken an infrapolitical turn in which experience and existence appear as a space for a “savage moralism,” a space for avoiding the subjective and subjectivizing dimension of ethics. Is an ethic without subject possible? Is infrapolitics the anticomunitarian correlate of infraethics?

AM: Allow me to clarify that I don’t believe I have ever proposed a politics without a subject and, in any case, certainly not in order to settle the problem of the “other” by eradicating it from the start. What I was after in *Línea de sombra* was a dismantling of the odd equation that identifies the political field with the field of subjectivity, as if the subject were the final horizon of politics. To say that there is politics also and immediately beyond the subject, that there is politics beyond any figure of subjectivity, even if there is, of course, a role for the political subject at the same time, this seems so scandalous that even today it is cause for all sorts of misunderstandings and confusions. Yet what exceeds the activity of politics with regard to the subject is everywhere and is, in fact, much more overwhelmingly self-evident than the naïve notion according to which politics is always what the subject wants and seeks. For my part, I confess that I don’t understand why there are so many misunderstanding regarding this point. Or in any case, I should think that the constant misunderstanding is already proof of the ideological consecration of opting for the subject in politics. That our late modernity insists on making subjectivity and action coincide is, of course, consistent with the reluctant Cartesianism that still inspires our world, even when no one believes in it by now. But what one believes doesn’t matter, what matters is that one kneel before the altar. And that is a busy altar, it looks like a bar. I think that what you call a

“turn” with regards to *Línea de sombra* is in fact not the case. *Línea de sombra* is a book written against political philosophy, and from a certain deconstructive subalternism to which I sought to give some rigor. What has come after it, very slowly in terms of written production, for biographical reasons that are not irrelevant in this evolution, is an abandonment of politics as a primary thematic in my work, but it is a special kind of abandonment: it establishes itself as a critique of politics. It abandons politics in so far as it is a critique of politics and thus rather than depoliticize it hiperpoliticizes. Though it hiperpoliticizes not according to a new political will, but precisely in accord with an existential exodus that I understand as infrapolitical exercise. This existential exodus has consequences at every level, and each one will have to decide if these consequences are to their liking or not. The classic figures are those of retreat, refusal, abandonment, not by virtue of a quietist or contemplative path, but in relation with a possible radicalization of existential intensities, which in our world only find vulgar substitutions or ridiculous placebos. It is clear that the infrapolitical exercise is countercommunitarian, and that it does not seek any unifying subjectivizing process of the multitude à la Badiou or Rancière, Negri or Laclau (whose theories of politics seem to me ultimately consistent with the Cartesianism I was just alluding to). Clearly, it is not a question of proposing an opposition between a politics of more or less dirty hands and an ethics of more or less clean hands, but of not giving a damn about either of the two options. Politics is a massive factum in our lives, which are traversed by it in ways that far surpass our control; but ethics, in our time, and without entering into what it might have been in other epochs, is either farce, pretense and deceit (in so far as it is based on by now untenable faiths) or it is just pragmatic opportunism (a series of rules that it is convenient to follow in order to get along with friends, at work, or in the street). So there is no infraethics; ethics is always already fallen below itself. It is interesting but pathetic how ethics (as farce, pretense and deceit) is offered in a generalized and unquestioned manner as, for the most part, the obvious justification for the politics of the left in the academic world. Saying that can cost you your head, if you still care about having one or are still carrying it (not me). In short, no, there is no infraethics because there is no ethics, and in turn, there is infrapolitics because there is politics. It is important to be precise regarding savage moralism; it is not a “new ethics,” nothing of that sort. It is what befalls in a situation in which neither politics nor ethics are instances for an interesting praxis. Savage moralism is not a goal but a procedure, not a theology but a phenomenology,

and the formation of style, without which there is no existential intensity, depends on its specific forms in each case. This is why it is still possible to say that savage moralism is a hyperbolic condition of democracy, hence of the only possible politics we should care for.

AOAS: Literature in greater measure and cinema to a lesser extent are a constant presence in your writing. Yet this interest has been traversed by a preeminent concern with theory: literary theory as a modality of critical theory. Based on your way of writing, specifically in your latest texts and conferences, is there a critical nexus between autography and infrapolitical literature? If there is an infrapolitical cinema, what kind of images or what kind of thought about the image does infrapolitics produce?

AM: In fact, I have written what I have been able to on literature, but very little on film, even though I watch movies every day and incessantly. I imagine that I have the right to pose the question differently in order to be able to answer it. I don't think that there is in all rigor infrapolitical literature or infrapolitical cinema or anything of the sort—there are ways of approaching experience that can allow us to say, for example, that Gogol is closer to infrapolitics than Gorki, or Proust closer than Brecht, or Beckett closer than Faulkner. Without a doubt, one could extend that exercise to the whole of the western canon. We could say that *Don Quixote* is an infrapolitical book, and *La Celestina* also, but not particularly *War and Peace* or *Demons*. The Cézanne of the Mount St-Victoire series is an example of infrapolitical practice on the visible. Or the Velázquez of *La mulata* at the Art Institute of Chicago. As far as film goes, certainly the work of Raúl Ruiz is infrapolitical reflection, but with moments of intensity that vary quite a bit. His *Poética del cine* could be understood as a manual for infrapolitical cinema, couldn't it? Albert Serra is infrapolitical also, but not so much Bernardo Bertolucci. Laura Poitras's documentaries are, in a sense, infrapolitical. However, what matters is not that we create a new canon, but that, in order for these kinds of judgments to make sense, we change the way that we read. And the way that we read is always autographic. And autography changes, it moves. I have spent most of my life believing erroneously that the university is a friend to thought, and it is only recently that I have come to understand that this is not the case, that today the university is rather the enemy of thought, that it is necessary to think against the university, without negating the benefits we can garner from working in it. I always thought that, in any given field, the absolute priority was to take that field to its limit, only in order to realize very late that the professional field is nothing but a roost whose denizens seek constantly to reproduce in the

same form. I always believed that deep personal and institutional loyalty was a respectable moral value, until I found out that, if it is, it is so only for a few unhappy ones. The philosophical figure that interests me is that of the stranger in Plato's *Parmenides*, whom I imagine as the archetypal infrapolitical being, for whom there is no thought that is not autographic, precisely to the extent that his personal experience does not count and does not prevail. The stranger comes from other places above all because he is always on his way elsewhere, and this movement defines his freedom, unshareable, dangerous and so much more valuable in so far as it is the only conceivable dimension of real experience. To read others always as the stranger, to live narrated existence vicariously as the stranger—that is the best lesson of theoretical critique. And in comparison, banalities related to things like the eternal and interminable gloss of the novel from a particular country, or the poetry of such and such a generation, not to mention culture here or there, have little traction. I am not saying that these things are not necessary, or that there isn't a market or a desire for them. But it is not my desire. And it is less so every day. The other day in a discussion someone was telling me that in the US I am not white, but also that I could not usurp the person of color denomination. Then, if I am not white nor a person of color, I don't exist, or I only exist as abjection, I am a stranger at the borderline. Instead of lamenting it too much, I have to opt for making a virtue of such a paradoxical necessity, which was somehow chosen for me beyond any voluntary choice, and which also belongs to those non-subjectivizable conditions of my life. Sometimes we prefer to act as if our lives were perfectly homologizable to those of others, but I believe one must have the courage to realize that this is not the case. Perhaps that is the first commandment of the infrapolitical catechism, because all others follow from it, whatever they might be.

Sam Steinberg: In your writing I have found a certain resistance to canonization, or, to take up the term you used above, a certain intransigent task of demetaphorization—and I say this in a way that is necessarily equivocal and even foolish and naïve—which is governed, to say it somewhat ironically, by the development of different names that serve as a conceptual reserve against the instrumental capture of thought: third space, subalternity (at least in the sense you give it), posthegemony, infrapolitics, up to deconstructive practice (different from that practiced in Comparative Literature departments in the US). Do you identify with this pseudo-genealogy?

AM: Yes, those terms, and others that you do not mention, but among which are many that once were my favorites, I don't know, such as dirty atopism, or critical regionalism, or second order, I guess they are at once something like milestones in my itinerary and concentrations of desire, indifferently. Bergson used to say that no one gets to really think more than one idea, and that it is possible to spend an entire life thinking only to find out in the end, if you are lucky, that everything that was done goes to configure it. Maybe it is not true, maybe there are two or even three idea people around, perhaps even the occasional Don Juan of ideas who can have them all or buy them by the dozen; I have known some of those. In my case, I think that it is true that I never stopped thinking the same thing, without ever realizing what it could be. In other words, everything I write or say in my classes or meetings or papers are stubborn approaches to the same thing—I can glimpse enough of it now to understand it is this way. Certainly the terms condensed in those constellations that you mention are so many fleeting fetishes that are nevertheless indispensable for my own mental economy, and which after a time become useless and have to be renewed. Meanwhile, the truth is that nothing produces more solitary excitement than hitting upon one of those terms shining from the bottom of some drawer or some nook of the soul, as a Zahir that only the one who possesses it can feel as such, and which remains opaque or even irritating for others. It all depends on the kind of intellectual one has wanted to be. I don't think that I am or have wanted to be an organic intellectual or to militate in the name of any cause, that I am a specific intellectual or an intellectual of the state, that I can consider myself an academic intellectual except in an unbelieving and uncomfortable way, that I am an identitarian or that I enjoy unconditionally adhering to this or that. I am not even a specialist in anything. I have to entertain myself by allowing some stranger to arrive, perhaps a word that is usually announced by other words, and I honor it with a good meal and a glass of wine. That is why I like conversation. That has always been my problem—I like to talk to people that may not like to listen to me, I like to offer little naïve gifts that are sometimes received as shots. I get people's ears mixed up often—but then maybe not. But I haven't learned to domesticate my own tongue and to silence myself in the way that so many others keep quiet, which is by repeating what others say. In all modesty. The devil knows what it takes. But *la procesión va por dentro* and in the end, the important thing is to enjoy what one does.

SS: As it is always the case, one never finishes all the books that one should write or has to write or wants to write. What are Moreiras's unpublished books? And I am not only referring to future books (though I am also referring to those), but to those books that were left behind. I am thinking, for example, about a book on the *narco*. Where do you locate those books, from the past as well as the future, in the intellectual map?

AM: Thanks for the question, though I am going to blame you for the forced narcissism of the answer. Hell is cobbled with books that were left behind, and the truth is that it is a good place for them. The regime of intellectual production in which we live hypocritically wants that our publications proliferate on the basis of some vague appeal to competitive excellence—in which, moreover, no one, or no one in the administration, believes. For every Žižek or Derrida, capable of writing several books a year, and of making all the rest of us bite the dust, there are dozens of colleagues, excellent as they may be, from whom it is perhaps not advisable to ask that they write more than one book every fifteen or twenty years. I am not either Žižek or Derrida, and so everything that has been left behind deserves to have been left behind. The sorry fact, but there it is, is that I began my professional life mistakenly, I chose wrongly, with the wrong foot, for reasons that are hard to explain (I'll leave it for one of those books that I will never write), and I had to take on the responsibility of forming students, from the very beginning, for a career in an academic field that has inspired little personal interest in me, no particular passion (I don't think this is a mystery). For the last thirty years, I have carried that like a bird hanging from my neck, after the novelty wore off, the mere curiosity. But it was too late. Now, on the one hand, it could well be that the world is thankful for my relatively low, or, at best, medium rate of production. On the other, it is true that only recently (I can date it precisely: since July 2012) have I begun to think that there are books that I would like to write, and which are starting to knock at the door—strictly because now I no longer feel tied to any institutionally recognized professional field, and so I will never again write under a relative obligation to do so. Until now, truth be told, this has been a difficult issue. So, in addition to *Piel de lobo*, which will be published in Madrid this year, I have about five more or so in preparation, each one is semi-secret, and I hope to finish them all in two years (which, of course, won't happen). Then, I would like to write a book, I don't know, on the Marquis de Sade, and another on Antonio Gramsci, and another one on my favorite contemporary Spanish writers, Juan Benet and Javier Marías. And I have promised to write one on the infrapolitical

cinema of Raúl Ruiz. But I am sure that, among all of these that I just mentioned, perhaps I'll only write one or two, and that in turn other themes will emerge. What I do believe that I will be able to do, now that I have decided not to move anymore and to decline any invitation that would distract me, will be to write one book every year or year and a half, until my time comes to watch movies and read detective novels *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. Or perhaps not.