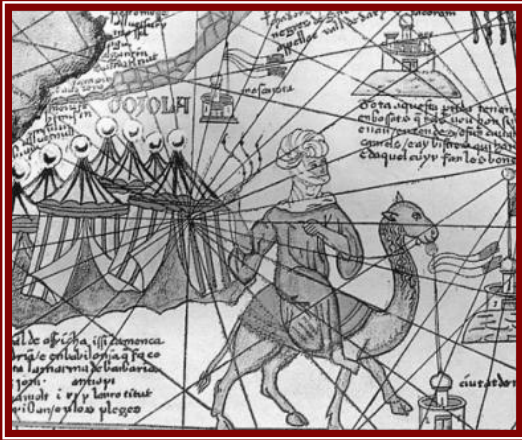


## Editorial Note

### *Itinerant Subjects*

Miguel Malagreca & Soledad Venturini



Among its many facets, the current stage of the expansion of capitalism imposes a challenge to rethink categories of analysis used in cultural studies and psychoanalysis. This challenge is most evident regarding issues like subjectivity, nomadic identities, diasporas and postcolonial displacement. For the subjects who are affected by the increasing space mobility, new migratory policies, or labor precariousness, this challenge is expressed as a

malaise that takes morbid forms, associated but also beyond the phenomenology of crossing borders or changing physical locations. More radically, it is a malaise bound to the uncertainty of having to remake one's own history, the malaise of an itinerant identity. Of course, it is possible to be an itinerant subject without ever having to move from one's house. Allegedly, today is possible to choose not only what to consume, but where to live or what culture to *assume*. This fantasy of limitless choice veils an enjoyment of incorporation (consumption, assimilation, digestion), in which the subject chokes instead of being able to speak; a malaise whose most illustrative symptom (but not the only one) is a whole series of addictions, obsessive consumptions and eating disorders.

In this paradox we see the outline of a morbid historical symptom: While the consumer of the new millennium attempts to take hold of an ideal codified in the chimeras of globalization, of the instant telecommunications, electronic commerce, genetic programming and online consumption, the subject stammers in front of the renewed wave of xenophobia, of border closings, of long distance family relations, and of temporary and insecure job conditions. This is not a system on the verge of exploding. It is a system that has already made implosion on itself, although few seem to notice it.

Nevertheless, this malaise is not completely new, and this is the reason why we speak of rethinking subjectivity more than undoing it. The movement of people throughout physical and

cultural geographies is as old as humanity. In fact, the first human communities were nomadic. Nevertheless, itinerancy takes on a different connotation today, since migration and dislocation can happen, let's repeat it, without physical displacement. And although the possibilities of choice might have multiplied, the conditions on which these choices are made can be sometimes very debilitating.

We begin this issue of *Aesthetika* wondering about the meaning of being an itinerant subject. According to some sources, the term *itinerant*, of Indo-European root, goes back to the sixteenth century, and became of frequent use in coincidence with the colonial expansion of Europe upon the New World. At first, the term was reserved to describe the activity of jurists and merchants from the Old Continent, who improvised rules for the traffic of merchandise and slaves, benefiting with their regulations the interests of the colonizers. Interestingly, however, the term *itinerant* conveys other meanings as well, as it was used, even earlier, in passages of the Old and New Testament. In these texts, *itinerant* is a quality characteristic of the Teacher, who travels from village to village preserving the religious lessons of a community through oral expositions in public or to initiated disciples--in other words, here the law is not improvised but is transmitted, an act in which law itself is validated by being transferred to others. In this vein, the semantic core of the signifier *itinerant* insinuates a peculiar relation between law and transmission of a symbolic patrimony: a knotting between what needs to be preserved as historical founding or organizing legacy and what is affected by the eventful forces that widen the margins of the symbolic universe.

Ironically, in the Latin root at the heart of the signifier *itinerant* there beats its own unpredictability or fallibility, in the sense that the term hides in its last letters an ominous similarity with another Latin word, *erratic*. In fact, the effectiveness of the symbolic does not depend so much on its power to determine a destiny as on its potency to arrange the means for the realization of the humankind, that is to say, the symbolic is that which actualizes itself constantly while remaining an incomplete universe. Such openness of the symbolic confronts the human condition with *itineraries* beyond the margins of pure chance or absolute determination. In this sense, it is worth noting that what characterizes the subject is a certain movement, in the sense that it emerges only to disappear, and in the sense of a certain confrontation that happens in desiring only what is unattainable. But this same movement is possible only in as much one

significant element serves at least as anchorage, by founding a beginning that pacifies and limits the otherwise unbearable instability of all the other signifiers.

With the call for papers for this fourth issue of *Aesthetika*, we wanted authors to enter into a dialogue around some of these ideas. The responses of writers, artists and students did not keep us waiting long. The result is another extraordinary issue with critical perspectives that contribute with original methodologies and interventions in the fields of cultural studies, ethics, art, education and psychoanalysis. Finally, the writings published in this issue also represent the international projection of the journal; they come from authors from Argentina, Colombia, France, the United States, Ireland and Spain. We hope that the readers of the journal find the analysis of these five texts as stimulating as the editors and reviewers do.

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