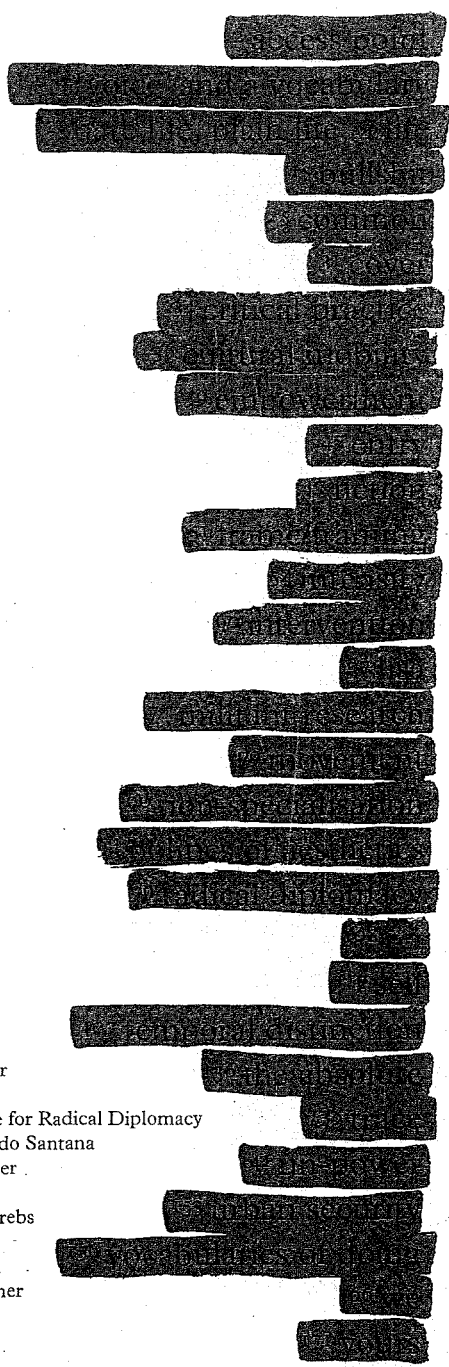


# VOCA- BULABORA- TORIES



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QUESTION

CONDITION

ADDRESS

CRISIS

ARTICULATION

VOICE

ENTITY

ACCESS (Point 1)

SUBJECTIVITY

PEX

DISCOURSE

BODY

VOCABULARY

DIAGRAMS

RIVER

LABORATORY

VULNERABILITY

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LEARNING

FACTION

METHODOLOGY

CONTEXT

SUPPORT POSITION

ACTION

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USE OF FON

## radical diplomacy

'A negotiator must have stamina – physical and mental stamina. He has got to be physically prepared, since he cannot always control the time of negotiations, because other people are involved. He must not tire easily.'

Zartman, W.I.; Burman, M.R., *The Practical Negotiator*, 1982.

'All men should have a drop or two of treason in their veins, if the nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears.'

West, R., *The Meaning Of Treason*, 1949.

Within the current cultural and political conjuncture, concepts of the 'relational', the 'authentic', the 'social' and the 'participatory' become buzzwords within the fields of art, marketing, urban regeneration and, increasingly, corporate education. This is the context within which many of us as cultural workers, mediators and pedagogues find ourselves increasingly mired in a set of deep and enduring ambivalences.

It is also in this context that we experience the unreality of collapsing distinctions between life and work, between home and elsewhere, between leisure and production, between debt and employment, less as the enactments of the emancipated worker or the generative relationality of Duchamp's anartist, but rather as

planes of individualised demands for authorship and hyper-productivity. Where such collapses hold the potential to build new possibilities, this potential is more often re-routed, reiterating and consolidating relations of property and value.

Traditional critiques of the leftist artist posit a polarisation between what is described as Institution and that which is outside or autonomous, a situation where one can choose sides for or against the institution. We, as critically and politically engaged conveners, as those who often act as bridges between constituencies and activities, no longer occupy discrete fields once described as 'Art', 'Politics', 'Culture', or the positions once referred to as 'Insider', 'Outsider', 'Artist' or 'Activist'. Rather, we increasingly occupy the murky sites of their encounter. We argue that, within the experience and staging of so many collapses, the struggle for the cultural worker today must be understood from their inhabitation of what *Art and Language* once described as the 'historical conditions we are really in' rather than those conditions 'we want, need, believe or feel intimidated into supporting...'

For many of us, such conditions do not permit a choice between spaces that are co-opted, recuperated or instrumentalised, and those which are outside. Indeed such choices are misplaced and belie our occupations of complex processes of organisation and re-organisation: of power, capital, affect, social and value reproduction. To point to this complexity is not to become an apologist for the 'institution' understood as dominant power, nor is it to resign oneself to a programme of small change and reform. In this context, it is rather more generative to attend to these planes of inhabitation, the dynamics of organisation in which the macropolitical, 'facts and lifestyles in their formal, sociological exteriority' (insides and outsides) and the micropolitical, 'the forces that shake reality, dissolving its forms' meet.<sup>1</sup> For these are the planes and sites where power, desire and subjectivity meet and become entangled. Rather than evoke the endless repetition of a rally cry ('cooptation', 'instrumentalisation'), we attempt to understand those moments of uncertainty, of oscillation and ambivalence, as the beginning of an analysis of the 'historical conditions we are re-

ally in' and what an equally deep and enduring resistant practice might entail.

Rather than the narratives of inside and outside, we read the situations in which we find ourselves on a continuum between what Ivan Illich describes as practices of manipulation and practices of conviviality. To attend to what is manipulating and what is convivial is to attend to the site of the relationships in which we are involved – be they personal or professional. For it is no strange coincidence that it is in these relationships that we often experience the greatest intensities of our practices, the ambivalences and both the euphoria of possibility and the strain of the limit.

By shifting our gaze to the site of the relationship and its attendant continuum of manipulation and conviviality, what we often experience is not a choice between becoming, or aligning ourselves with those, situated within what we might have called 'Institution' or 'community', or with those 'outside'. The experience is rather one of rapid oscillations between affective wonder, desire and collaborative sensibility, conviviality and their constraints: the budgets, fixed temporalities, and manipulation, the very capturing mechanisms of capitalist value production.

To resist these capturing mechanisms is rather, then, to search (in Guattari's words) for 'the devices that oppose the micropolitics of cooptation'.<sup>2</sup> It is into this emphasis on the microphysics of relations that we insert a notion of *diplomacy*.

### *Diplomacy*

Superficially, we might evoke some obvious similarities between socially engaged culture workers and the diplomatic stereotype: endless traveling, problem solving from the outside (the missions of the envoy), attention to the mechanisms of relationship building, constant negotiation, the production of novel communicative formalities.

To employ diplomacy in the current context is not, however, to

draw to mind men with cigars, stamping passports and drinking brandy behind closed doors. Nor is it to make a commentary on the globalisation of the arts, or the role that official 'culture' continues to play in the field of international relations. It is rather to evoke the intelligences of diplomats: their attention to the composition of the event, their 'soft skills in the negotiation of difference', (the 'art of handling hearts'<sup>3</sup>), their attention to the gestures, manners and 'the dissipation of uneasiness' (Swift), to 'listening to what is not said' (Rusk), their 'humility' (Lord Chesterfield), 'sincerity and good faith' (Plantey)<sup>4</sup>, friendship, flattery, and hospitality. Diplomacy, said early theorist Wicquefort, is akin to perpetually 'staging an opera'<sup>5</sup>. To invoke the diplomat, therefore, is to question in every moment how such intelligences are being deployed. It is to plot the orientation of these intelligences away from the pleasant play of relations of force (official diplomacy) and to locate our agitation on this very continuum of manipulation and conviviality.

Within each of our actions, the diplomatic is that which hovers between the qualities that we value – collaboration, communication, micro-political gestures of alliance, actions with consequence, festivity, conviviality – and the relations of force whose water we navigate.

We might read our own diplomatic terrain in relation to that of early modern diplomats, who narrated the moment in which their skills in sociability became the very site of a set of strategic deployments central to the tripartite apparatus of *security*.<sup>6</sup> In this moment, diplomats struggled with the instrumentalisation of their role, which had, until then, been predicated on the plays of character of an agent for hire: their creativity and dedication to the task at hand, the depth and duration of their relationships, their loyalty to this or that prince, and their ability to choreograph formal processes. Diplomats at that time struggled between the task of upholding at once the integrity of these relationships and the increasing demand to utilise them in the strategic dissipation of tensions, as the friendly face that could achieve equilibrium between states bound in unequal relations.

These tensions were manifested in a debate in the early texts of diplomatic conduct. Wicquefort and Callieres argued about the degree to which diplomats should locate their work in the 'subtle art of *entrée en grâces* (entering in the other party's graces)', or how their work might be better understood as the pursuit of an 'honourable spy'.<sup>7</sup> It is here that the strange hybridities now associated with diplomacy began to emerge: those 'virtues of disloyalty', that operate for example across Graham Greene's oeuvre of diplomatic fiction.

To attend to our current condition entails that we understand fully the diplomatic demand that is often made of us in the field of engaged art (and indeed post-Fordist production): that which asks us to be endlessly flexible, virtuosic, to reformulate ourselves in relation to this or that mandate (always ready to depart on a new mission), this or that opportunity, this or that *need*, while *at the same time* facilitating relationships that enable, rather than problematise, the smooth running of turgid social divisions, hierarchies and modes of producing wealth and value. By attending to our current condition as a kind of diplomatic terrain, a terrain full of ambivalence and potential for treachery and disloyalty of the right kind, we might get closer to plotting another kind of resistance through the staging and choreographing of other relational possibilities.

The terrain of relationships we often occupy in cultural work are littered with unsaid hierarchies, unspoken power relations, undeclared demands for performances of particular subjectivities and positions. These demands, power relations and hierarchies can force us to solely occupy the affective realm of the opportunistic, the strategic, or the vigilant, and the defensive. Suely Rolnik has written much about how post-Fordism has initiated a particular social and psychic anesthesia of our vulnerability to the other – 'an anesthesia all the more devastating when the other is represented by the ruling cartography as hierarchically inferior, because of his or her economic, social or racial condition...'<sup>8</sup> In operating on this terrain of relationships under these conditions, what is at stake in the diplomatic operations we attempt is not only the sub-



the subversion, occupation and re-staging of manipulations and convivialities across and beyond the terrains of our operation, but also the micropolitical work that might also allow us to re-construct what Suely Rolnik calls 'the territories of our existence – the changing contours of our subjectivity, as mutations of the sensible fabric of becoming'.<sup>9</sup>

Put another way, in terms lent to us by the anthropologist David Graeber, this entails a movement from relations of avoidance: those that emerge in situations of extreme hierarchy, in which there is much that one cannot say (as in an averted gaze in front of the queen or a question about money asked in the context of an art gallery), or the joking relation, to a kind of jostling or ravenous relation that enables the body to engage in acts of becoming that are 'continuous with the world'.<sup>10</sup>

### *Radical Diplomacy?*

Where diplomacy values the solution, the avoidance of a conflict, the covering over of structural and historical inequity through strategies and formalities of relations, a *radical diplomacy* is one which resolves *not to solve*. It provokes frictions and other modes of becoming: contra- hierarchy, manipulation and avoidance.

The radical diplomat might ask: if we are inhabitants of a field in which we are regularly implicated, subsumed and entangled in all that we had thought to oppose, if indeed we often find ourselves – in the words of the early modern negotiators, 'living in another's land', 'wearing two hats' or enacting the 'virtues of disloyalty' – how might we imagine a *radical diplomacy* that enables us to manipulate *the conducts* of the diplomatic to challenge our current circumstances?

Foucault has argued that conduct is both the 'activity of conducting, of conduction', but also how one conducts oneself, allows oneself to be conducted, is conducted...in which one behaves as an effect of a form of conduct, as the act of conducting'.<sup>11</sup> Conducts are acts of subjectivation, performatives, or could be seen as

persons-as-subjectivating acts. They are the many ways in which we become routinised, assigned roles and designated spheres; and, perhaps more insidiously, conducts are the ways in which we become embodied facilitators of these roles.

In a cultural field in which the social and relational practices of artists are increasingly entangled in the solving of social problems, the easing of gentrification schemes and the softening of impacts of a declining welfare state, these questions of conduct are very familiar. Such conducts might be said to uphold a set of behaviours that are central to political institution. In Foucault's reading however, 'counter-conduct' as a form of dissidence might take place at the edges of political institution. His examples include such formations as military desertion in 17th and 18th centuries, resistance to medical treatment by religious groups, or in secret societies (what we might now describe as instituent practices). Counter-conducts, he argues, 'are never autonomous but rather contingent'. They are the types of revolts that emerge from specific 'webs of resistance' in relation to forms of power 'that do not exercise sovereignty and do not exploit, but "conduct".'<sup>12</sup>

Counter-conducts might function in a way that is not unlike the character played by Peter Sellers' in *The Party*, the subaltern guest who, mistakenly invited and known to no one, hovers around the gathering's edges uncomfortably, knocking a glass, falling in the pool, making impossible the formal relations of its guests by mounting a series of seemingly unintentional acts. We might also think of such an invited but unknown figure in contemporary diplomatic terms as the *Track III diplomat*.

Track III diplomacy is a strangely unarticulated and undefined mode of collective, diplomatic action written into the current conducts of diplomacy. Track III diplomats are, according to more recent diplomatic manuals, composed of activists, unofficial agents and those who are not sanctioned to conduct diplomatic business. They work towards the 'elimination of socio-economic inequalities, engage in social justice and build capacities at the grassroots level'.<sup>13</sup> Running exactly contrary to the aims for which diplomacy is em-

ployed, Track III diplomats then occupy a strange loophole in official definitions, an invisible and yet imagined cadre of the undefined in the field of the diplomatic. It is in this official gap reserved for the unofficial that we might attempt to activate the mode of diplomacy longed for by Walter Benjamin in his *Critique of Violence*, a diplomacy that moves beyond 'mere forms', activating the potential of 'relational webs' of counter-conduct.<sup>14</sup> Such a Track III or radical diplomacy might then make use of diplomacy's intelligence and attention to the complex relationship between micropolitical affect and macropolitical effect, to the art of negotiating complexity, and multi-faceted interests, to the institutions and conventions offered, while simultaneously articulating modes of ethical action while 'living in another's land'.

Emerging from such a complex sites of inhabitation, how do we then navigate the competing interests in whose service current modes of practice operate? If not in the service of flexible economies, inclusion agendas, what modes of responsibility and 'honourable spying' might we imagine for this new terrain? If we understand the diplomatic as a condition of convening and inhabiting relationships and affects, what inventory of counter-conducts, secret societies, or forms of desertion might we plot for ourselves?

The radical diplomat is a figure that emerges within the shadows of our current conditions. She is a figure, a gestural contour of a passing moment, a gymnast, an acrobat, a synchronised swimmer in motion. She is a figure in which a condition becomes recognizable, that which 'makes visible the impossible, (while) it also invites the imagination to transform the impossible into an experience'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rolnik, S. (2006) 'The Geopolitics of Pimping', in *Transversal*, online journal, \ <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.

<sup>2</sup> Guattari, F. & Rolnik, S. (2007). *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Cambridge, MA: Semiotexte, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> De Callieres, F. (1716) *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*. London: Geo. Strahan, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Freeman, C.W. (2005) *The Diplomat's Dictionary*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

<sup>5</sup> Wicquefort, A. (1682). *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, La Haye: Veneur, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Press, p.103.

<sup>7</sup> Pekar Lempereur, A. (2003). *A Rhetorical Foundation of International Negotiations*. Versailles: Group ESSEC Centre de Recherche, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Suely, R. (2006). 'The Geopolitics of Pimping', in *Transform*, online journal. <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Graeber, D. (2007). *Manners, Deference and Private Property, or Elements for a General Theory of Hierarchy*, in *Possibilities*. AK Press.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, M. (2007). *Op. cit.*, p.202.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> Track III diplomacy sits against a series of other 'tracks' in the growing field of multi-track negotiation, including Track I, the terrain of official diplomats; Track II, those engaged in public or what Kofi Anan described as 'people-to-people diplomacy', those 'on the ground negotiators' in the service of the aims of official diplomacy; Track IV, which

involves corporation to corporation diplomacy, each of which mobilising relational, creative and gestural conducts, perpetuating globalised operations of security. The language around multi-track diplomacy is emergent and thus relatively inconsistent. This definition emerges from articles by the United Nation, specifically, David Bloomfield and Norbert Ropers (2005) *Dialogue and Social Integration: Experience from Ethno-political Conflict Work*. Background paper for the Expert Group Meeting on *Dialogue in the Social Integration Process: Building Peaceful Social Relations by, for and with People*. New York, 21-23 November 2005. Other articles on the topic include Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1993) *Multilayered Diplomacy*, London: Macmillan (1996) and *Multitrack Diplomacy*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press; Andrew F. Cooper (1997), *Niche Diplomacy*, New York: St. Martin's Press; Michael S. Lund (1996) *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin, Walter. (1927), 'Critique of Violence'. Trans. E. Jephcott, in *Selected Writings. Vol. 1: 1913-1926*, Belknap/Harvard Press 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Spivak, Gayatri. (1988). 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Spivak, Nelson & Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.