ESSAYS

The Global South

Conflicting Narratives and the Invention of Geographies

Fernando Resende

Fernando Resende, *Across the Wall*, 2014.
Copyright and courtesy Fernando Resende.

'Geography is we make our own map from the river to the sea.'

– *Jehan Bseiso*

This essay is a reflection on the term 'Global South', and, at the same time, a discussion of the challenges we facewhile thinking about the cultural and political practices inscribed in the geography to which the term refers. Its central argument is that in order to have a Global South as a space from where one discusses the world we now live (and, of course, the objects/subjects/knowledge immersed in this world), holding an epistemic position is of fundamental importance. Such a position, as we shall see, requires that we raise certain questions and carefully consider specific approaches, which might help us achieve a more complex idea of what the Global South is.

To discuss such an issue, we should take for granted that what we understand – and experience – as 'the world' is, after all, a web of intermingled subjectivities within which powers and knowledge, from a Foucaultian perspective,[1] are part of one system. From this point of view, the Global South as a concept must also be thought beyond physical geographical locations. For Michel de Certeau, [2] although the border seems to be nothing but a line division, it has no end. More than a physical barrier, it is a space of encountering, where proximities and distances are to be found and counterpointed rather than erased.

This is the paradox of the border, as De Certeau says, a place where great divides and strong links are altogether part of a whole. This text starts from the premise that to think of a Global South without facing such a paradox might lead us to sustain what the geographies of power have always done: inventing the space of the other as reminiscence; an existence that befalls the interests of those who are in power.

Moreover, the existence of a Global South brings back issues related to the production of a Eurocentric imaginary and the issue of subalternities.[3] These problems are of great importance if we are to conceive this naming, so to speak,

as an opposition to the existence of a 'North'. If we take this opposition as a non-criticized fact, the 'South' would be nothing but reminiscences coming out of a once opaque invented space.

These topics have been very much the concern of the so-called postcolonial thinkers, and with them we already know this view is a narrow-minded perspective from which to think.[4] But one cannot neglect the fact that there can only be a Global South if a 'North' is assumed to exist. Therefore, part of the argument of this essay is that it would certainly be naïve to disregard the process of building this binary opposition as fundamental to the consideration of the term. Our effort is then to understand the Global South as an issue that is both discursive and pragmatic.

This essay suggests one cannot face the apparition of this 'entity', as if it were out of the context of the postcolonial societies we now know. This is to say that the Global South is a term that portrays various senses, not necessarily contradictory but certainly paradoxical. For instance, it is impregnated within the epistemic project that has pervaded centuries – of mapping the world based on dichotomies, and it is, at the same time, marked by the process of intermingling subjectivities, which is inscribed in a complex system of power relations.

From this point of view, the space such a label evokes was opaque, if at all, only with respect to a certain thought built on the basis of the 'North/South' division. As some in postcolonial studies have been able to clarify, dominant epistemic conditions have prevailed in the production of knowledge about the world as a bipartite system. However, when it comes to the struggle for existing, and to the gestures and practices of everyday life, it is the very point of never being opaque that now makes us think of the south as a space of interest.

This discussion of the 'Global South' as a discursive construction is triggered by a reflection that stems from long-term research on narratives of conflict, within which disputes involving Palestine and Africa have been the central focus. By thinking of Brazil and England as agents involved in the representations of these conflicts, the research proposes a map that crosses space and time. Firstly because it deals with locations geographically situated in the northern/southern (and eastern/western) hemispheres; secondly because the conflicts it deals with are situated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through comparative analysis in both Brazilian and British media and films, the research examines the spatiality inscribed in the narratives so as to think about representation, power and identities.[5]

Matar and Harb, by discussing conflict and narration, call attention to the fact that 'nowhere is the competition over the imagination, construction and narration of conflict…more compelling' than in the Middle East, where, above all, 'conflicts over space, identity, discourse, image and narrative' are disputed.[6] This essay takes into consideration these disputed issues, and by seeing narrative as constitutive of a political/esthetical process of producing and reframing identities, it proposes to decentralize the conflict within the Middle East.

It is suggested to extend the idea of conflict to the perspective of a world that has long been mapped from a constructed 'North/South' division: a discursive space where dominant powers are always in charge of promoting simplifications and reductionisms. From this point of view, this reflection proposes to think about what is within and what exceeds those limits. 'North/South', in this case, are enlarged categories that, in spite of representing specific geographical locations, go beyond the limits of the borders they create. This study is expected to provide a broader look on issues within which the Global South is inscribed.

The Global South is part of a dynamic and complex cultural and political spatiality

weaved within significant intercultural relations and signifying practices. By following this route, this essay is intended to help unveil discursive geopolitics that inscribes complexities within the geophysics of which the Global South is constituted. This essay suggests that the Global South – as a location/space from where practices are seen, interpreted and recognized – also demands a look from outside the borders within which it has been discursively inscribed.

Therefore, in order to minimally escape from the risk of falling in the old binary perspective, by reframing and sustaining the invented 'North/South' opposition, one must always be suspicious and critical towards any kind of thought, or gesture, that disregards the complexities and paradoxes involved in this process of 'reinventing' the world. It is in the same act of suspecting and criticizing that one ought to realize the need to find ways to consider the existence of a space – named as the Global South – that is not only far from being opaque, but also, and most of all, as one that has always existed in its differences.

Fernando Resende, *Across the Wall*, 2014
Copyright and courtesy Fernando Resende.

Within the Structures of Modern/Colonial Discursive Projects

http://www.ibraaz.org/essays/111   October 2014

The most general premise that follows this essay is that narratives invent geographies. The importance of such an approach is that it leads us, firstly, to the idea of the 'North/South', and we can also think of it in terms of 'West/East', as part of discursive projects. Besides being materialities – geographical locations inscribed in world maps, sustained by nationalisms and state regulations – they are fabricated categories, names that portray various senses and interests, along with imaginaries and power relations. In this aspect, they support the discursive project that invents narratives sustained by its constructed opposition, conveying meanings, in this specific case, closely attached to modern and colonial imaginaries.

Delving into imaginaries and power relations within which this discourse is inscribed demands a look back in time. De Certeau outlines a very precise image by identifying the turn of modernity. For this author, in order to understand the shift noticed in the way the world is represented, it is fundamental to look at the art of cartography at the turn of the fifteenth century. De Certeau is concerned about discussing narrative structures and differences in reports, using space and place as narrative figures. What he also does, by identifying the changes in map representations, is to help make us aware of the emergence of a certain imaginary that, from then on, became part of the way modern man would see himself and the world.

From maps that used to indicate pathways by showing narrative figures – all kinds of human characters, animals, ships – denoting the complex spatiality in which the world has always been immersed, to those in which the setting (and drawing) of fixed lines and borders became constitutive, a shift of imaginaries is then noticed. In other words, one goes from a perspective in which man is inscribed in the space to which he belongs, to another one – which opens modernity, in De Certeau's words – that signifies/represents man in relation to places.

A shift from space to place, therefore, is what guides this man's way of conceiving and interpreting the world of which he was to become part. For De Certeau, this explains how everyday practices – built and experimented within the realm of a complex spatiality – seem to disappear from reports, once what happens is the fading of itinerary descriptions. These practices are obviously not absent from everyday lives, remarks De Certeau, but what is there to be seen, in the reports, is a 'system of geographical locations,'[7] a process of naming and defining places within their own borders.

What interests us, in this aspect, is to notice how this can be added to what Mignolo calls a 'modern/colonial world system', a way of seeing/conceiving the world, an imaginary that is also produced in the same period to which De Certeau refers. For Mignolo, the emergence of the Atlantic circuit (sixteenth century) – which includes the increment of the 'discoveries' led by Portugal and Spain, and of course along with other important changes that were taking place at the time – made coloniality constitutive of modernity.[8]

Discourses centred on modernity, and western civilization, argues Mignolo, have long contributed to separating it from colonialism by silencing the more complex planetary dimension of human history.[9] In other words, the hegemonic discourse on modernity, which is part of a complex articulation of powers – structured, for instance, around the idea of civilization versus barbarianism – has covered the problem of colonialism, eliciting what Mignolo identifies as subalternization of knowledge[10]. From this point of view, the imaginary of which the modern/colonial world system consists, acquires a relevant component, though still not structured: the idea that knowledge lies at some point where power is. In other words, wherever there is power, you find knowledge: a sense that became true within the basic structure of the discourse that invented the opposition 'North'/'South'. The act of naming things, never isolated from the imaginaries and

the historical processes within which these names are constitutive, elicits the pair power/knowledge.

Foucault was mostly concerned about understanding the interrelations produced within this pair, when referring to the very nature of modern thought. From the perspective of knowledge production, according to Foucault, power is what connects names to things. The imaginary built within the so-called 'modern/colonial world system' anchors itself, around two centuries after the period Mignolo and De Certeau are speaking of, to what is said to be the time modern thought is being consolidated. Foucault identifies the formation of this thought by discussing the way power is structured. It is then the concept of disciplinary power – one that works within the formation and the epistemic structures of the disciplines – that becomes relevant when considering modern thought functioning as a legitimized way of being in and thinking about the world. Also referred to as 'Western thought' (a fact that denotes how closely the idea of modernity is to the dominant geographies of the western world), so-called 'modern thought' is impregnated with the effort of ordering things from the perspective of hegemonic forces situated in the North.

This is what is meant by the idea of a Eurocentric perspective within the formation of a legitimized knowledge in and upon the world. The eighteenth century is then seen, from a Foucaultian perspective, as the time within which this episteme is consolidated. With the support of Social Sciences, on what concerns the attempt of adjusting life to production apparatuses (schools, law, hospitals, and so on), and the legitimisation of concepts of a modern History and Geography, just to mention a few of these disciplines within which this type of power is exercised, an epistemology of the world, built within the European borders, produces what is supposed to be universally true.[11]

Thus, the colonial imaginary becomes modern, which is what Mignolo means by

saying that one is the structural counterpart of the other. The former finds sustenance in the latter, whereas this one legitimizes the other. The process of producing knowledge, stratified as Foucault describes, is the missing part man needed in order to carry on with the most utopian aspect of the modernity project: to organize the world. Supported by disciplines, this effort does not only countersign the colonial imaginary, built and materialized in the colonial ventures (fourteenth/fifteenth centuries), but also, and mainly, founds a way of mapping the world.

The recognition of subalternization is very significant, once we consider that what was actually being produced, within the process described by Mignolo, was an imaginary ruled by the idea of a legitimized subalternity. In this case, still in line with Mignolo's argument, I am speaking of the suppression of senses and the geo-historical located body, considering that no knowledge subalternization occurs without subalternizing the way one sees/locates oneself in the world. [12] To better understand the process of legitimizing subalternities and its potential aftermaths, it is necessary to think of geographical locations. Giving names and drawing up borders – which, in this process, is what the complex spatial dimension is reduced to – are often and easily attached to the strings of power. In this case, one of these names – 'North' – holds control of the whole process described by Mignolo (and complexified by De Certeau), whereas the other – 'South' – is the one being subalternized.

Therefore, if we understand that conceiving the world in terms of places means losing itinerary references from the perspective of dominant discourses, we also realize how strong the other discourse being produced on the other side of the same coin becomes. This submissive discourse, which sustains the power of those who give names and make the world 'readable', is also rooted in the modern/colonial world system, and, most importantly, it founds an imaginary of submission, which supports modes of being in – and of referring to – the 'South'.

We are speaking of an imaginary that maps out and, therefore, narrates the world from the perspective of the maintained power. This is meant to emphasize, first of all, that there is a 'way of being South' still sustained by the knowledge and the imaginary built in favour of a 'way of being North'. One also works as the counterpart of the other in the sense that maintaining the idea of South implies sustaining the idea of 'North', and vice-versa. In this specific case, this process corroborates the colonial/modern world system and the whole subalternization issue of which we have been speaking; a process that results in the production of narratives that often bear the same mapping and geographical division that reiterate the power about which we are concerned.

Tracking this process is a way of accessing locations and forms of inscribing the type of power from which the modern/colonial world system imaginary comes to existence. Nonetheless, and mostly important for our reflection, it is also a form of pointing out how much there is of this structure in the discursive project that invented the opposition 'North' and 'South'. Narrative and space, in this case, are two important concepts and analytical categories to which we should refer.

Narratives Inventing Geographies

Narratives elicit spatialities, whereas the latter evokes the former. In the case of narratives, it all depends on strategies, interests and interpretations rather than on giving names and/or determining physical geographies. According to Paul Ricoeur,[13] to narrate is to be in the world. For this author, narrative is the articulation of a temporal existence, a site from where human time becomes true once it is articulated in a narrative mode. Experience and time, above all, are inscribed in the space narratives evoke.

Moreover, a look through narratives means an effort of accomplishing the task of reading worlds, as narrative is the result of the interrelations that occur within three domains: one of the author, the other of the work itself and the third of the reader (Ricoeur). It is from this perspective that narratives are thought as sites where subjectivities and differences are emplotted, being, in this aspect, the result of social-cultural relations. It is thus a site for the production of meanings and knowledge, and, most of all, a site from where experience is produced.

Fernando Resende, *Across the Wall*, 2014
Copyright and courtesy Fernando Resende.

Bhabha refers to the power of narrative as a space within which meanings and differences are noticed. For this author, 'the very nature of narrative' is to raise issues on 'the otherness, power relations and contradictions/paradoxes' from a cultural/political perspective.[14] In this vein, if we understand space as an accumulation of disjunctive times,[15] and as a social phenomenon,[16] we also see it as a result of cultural and political disputes, once it is 'always gendered, always raced, always economical and always sexual,' as Rogoff states.[17] For this author, space also ought to be taken from an epistemic perspective in order to think about geography and visual culture. For Rogoff, 'the textures that bind

[geography and space] together are daily re-written through a word, a gaze, a gesture.'[18]

What this essay thus suggests is that narrative be seen as one of these gestures, an act of re-writing, and therefore eliciting, other geographies and spaces. Still according to Rogoff, we mean to say that '(…) while geography can be viewed as the relation between subjects and places refracted through orders of knowledge, state structures and national cultures, that relation is produced as social-cultural narratives which are geographically emplotted.'[19]

From this point of view, space and narrative, once taken as a matter of time and social relations, though not synonyms are closely connected. Both are concomitantly the result and production of social and cultural relations, which are weaved in them, and are, as well, sites from where other spatialities emerge. Seen in these terms, narratives invent geographies, and our concern is when and how narratives reorganize social space, veiling and unveiling differences.[20] In other words, we are interested in understanding how conflicts, located in the 'North'/'South' division, are geographically emplotted.

Geographies of Power and Narratives of Conflict

The issues related to space, identity, and discourse – interwoven as they are with image and narrative and the signs of power and its relations – exceed the limits of any borders. From this perspective, within the gesture inscribed in the narration – in the textures of narratives – categories such as 'North/South' are built; a gesture that either reiterates dominant powers, maximizing differences interwoven in the conflicts, or inscribes power relations in a more complex narrative mode.

Two particular events, an African-Muslim slave upheaval that happened in

nineteenth-century Brazil, and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (twentieth century), lead to the understanding of how narratives help map the world, drawing lines and (un)setting borders according to the interests of those who are in control of the power. By analysing the representations of these conflicts, two groups of narratives have been found: one that reiterates the power from the perspective of the discursive project we have been criticizing here, and another one, which reinforces the existence of a more complex dimension of human spatiality.

What the first set of narratives reveals is constituted by what we call 'geographies of power': a mode of narrating and representing identities and places, which is impregnated with the imaginary built from within a type of power that is located in the very interests of hegemonic agents involved in the narratives. Under the light of dominant orders, these narratives insist on the politics of representations, those within which the rule is dichotomy rather than complexity.[21]

The term 'geographies of power' also emphasizes the fact that they bear certain types of narratives, conveyed by knowledge institutions, which give room to accounts and portraits that help build ways of mapping, seeing and experimenting the world. In other words, these narratives contribute to the production of other narratives – as in a juxtaposition of stories – that do not only nourish the geographies from which they are derived but also sustain the maintenance of the imaginaries within which they are inscribed. It is a matter of understanding, in this sense, that we are speaking of a world being narrated from the perspective of the episteme of power.

The Malês Uprising was a one-night battle fought in 1835 in the city of Salvador, Bahia. The analysis done in Brazilian and British newspapers identifies the process of building an imaginary that defines and reiterates the rebellious slaves as barbarians.[22] They were the expressions of an oddity, as it is said by the Brazilian anthropologist Manuela da Cunha a strangeness that, 'in the first half of

the nineteenth century, [made them] slaves par excellence, (...) the epitome of the danger (...).'[23]

From the perspective of a dominant historiographical narrative, for instance, the upheaval was explained as having been a purely religious struggle and seen as irrelevant, in spite of having caused a significant impact in the slavery system at the time. The critical Brazilian historian Reis[24] argues that given the conditions of the country at that time and the people who had been trafficked from Africa to Brazil, the uprising had nothing of a supposed religious fanaticism. According to Reis, it was rather 'a revolt of Africans, and, as Africans, they launched themselves at it with the hope of improving their lives.'[25] For this author, only the 'ethnocentric blindness, a characteristic of the early Slavery scholars' could see those men as 'mere religious fanatics.'[26] The press narratives of the time were blunt in reiterating these appropriations.

As in the case of the narratives on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict found in Brazilian newspapers in the twentieth century, we notice the use of key strategies for articulating interests and power in the production of meaning. Some of these strategies are the reiteration of the supposed link between that conflict and religious concerns, along with other stereotyped and dominant senses upon the presence of the State of Israel. At the same time, these narratives veil the inscription of central actors in the scenario of the conflict itself – the Palestinians, for example. In the vast majority of narratives analysed, including films produced by the British Colonial State, Palestine is represented as if it were 'the other side,' the primitive and the unknown.

If within the Brazilian upheaval context the African-Muslims are represented as the unknown, the Arab-Palestinians have their identity built within the sliding of the signifiers 'Muslim' and 'terrorist,' which move in the narratives according to political and economic interests of dominant actors. Whereas the African-Muslims

represented as an absolute otherness, in the Israeli/Palestinian case, the Arabs, from a general perspective, are seen as Muslims and terrorists, a free and simplistic association, which makes them the sign of the other. In the two cases, and in narratives found both in Brazilian and in British newspapers, the references to Palestinians and Africans are always the affirmation of them being the radical otherness.[27] Both the African-Muslims in the 19th Century and the Arab-Palestinians in the twentieth century are nothing but the representation of danger.

What these narratives outline demonstrates efforts to legitimize a self ('the West'/'the North'), to the detriment of the invention of its counterpart ('East' and 'South'). The spatiality we delve into, in the case of these narratives, is raised from within the economic and political relations produced by the most powerful agents, Brazil and England, to the detriment of the subalternized ones, Palestine and Africa. From within this spatiality, the first two are 'North', whereas Palestine and Africa are 'South'.

The geographies of power inscribed in these narratives highlight hegemonies, represented by the slave owners, dominant economic actors, good dealers and the block of 'Western'/'Northern' nations. They reverberate facts widely highlighted by historiography on colonial economic/political relations among Brazil, Portugal, and England (basically related to trade and commerce), and more recent ones, that draw the triangle England/Israel/Brazil (a 'Western/Northern' block of dominant economic interests). It is due to common political and economic interests that Brazil and England become central dominant actors in the representation of both conflicts.

The fact of one being geographically situated in the south (Brazil) and the other in the north (UK) does not prevent them from forming a block portraying a whole western imaginary that, in this case, turns out to be northern. The geographies of power inscribed in these narratives are, after all, the reiteration of the logic that

constitutes the interests of the localities where power is installed. In this sense, geographies of power, within narrative spatiality, mean the act of demarcating hegemonic interests, while borders are blurred.

Through the analysis of distinct spatial and temporal conflicts, one sees how cultural idiosyncrasies and subjects are submitted to physical hegemonic categories, and to a reduction of the complex dimension of spatiality, in favour of the maintenance of the power installed in physical geographical locations. Our concern is to notice the layers of modern/colonial discourses intermingled within the production of meaning upon these political-cultural conflicts. In the analysis of both conflicts, Africa and Palestine are impregnated with colonial imaginaries, as the alliance Brazil/England does the work of weaving our understanding of who the other was supposed to be. It is within these geographies of power that Africa and Palestine are invented.

Fernando Resende, *Across the Wall*, 2014
Copyright and courtesy Fernando Resende.

The Global South: A Discursive Perspective

More than looking at the representations themselves, this analysis is an exercise of unveiling the discursive geopolitics, which also marks the term 'Global South'. Rogoff reminds us that geography is 'a form of positioned spectatorship,' meaning that 'such categories as 'the Middle East' or 'the Far East' or 'the Sub-Saharan' are viewed from positions (in this instance, centres of colonial power) which name and locate and identify places in relation to themselves as the centre of the world'[28]. These acts of giving names, she continues, 'reflect certain desires for power and dominance and certain fantasies of distance and proximity and transgression.'[29] In this sense, this reflection takes the 'Global South' as a term that is closely connected, at the same time, to the act of geographically naming places along with the attribution of contradictory and paradoxical meanings that comes with it. It refers to a spatiality marked by desires, powers and knowledge, which makes it a discursive constructed term.

Thus, this essay attempts to excavate its discursive formation by looking at the plotting of conflicts in distinct spatial/time narratives from also distinct geographical locations. Media – in all its possible forms of expression – is one of those institutions from/within where building discourses and portraying meanings on places and subjects occur. Therefore, looking at this issue through media and filmic narratives turns out to be a way of understanding how geographies of power are discursively constructed and how they possibly (re)invent other geographies.

It is from this perspective that we read the narratives of conflict within which geographies of power are inscribed: as part of the modern/colonial discursive project, they inexorably refer to locations, reverberating – and setting the borders in the limits of – the opposition 'North'/'South'. As a site where disjunctive times, desires and powers are weaved, they produce ways of seeing and being in the world. The fact of being so strongly affected by dominant powers contributes to a representation of stereotyped relations and identities, which means the invention of a space with no complexity.

One should not understand narratives as if producing an absolute and unique way of experiencing the world. By delving into the discursive formation, we also gather that the apparent opposition 'North/South' explodes itself in the ways interests and powers are weaved. This is, somehow, a way of understanding 'North/South' as a history. They are many – never even identical to themselves – and they displace constantly, depending on temporal and spatial disputes, dislocations and entanglements. Nevertheless, and this is exactly the challenge here, the precise moment of blurring borders is also the instant when dominant agents work on the interest of maintaining their power, of setting their borders. This is how discourse functions, this is the way the world goes round.

As the act of naming a place does not mean its uses, in the sense that relations are what build spaces, the 'Global South' must be understood as an ambiguous term as any other name referring to space and geographical determinations. It is a term that refers, altogether, to categories, locations and subjects very much marked by power, identity, narrative and space issues, which is exactly what calls our attention to the need of a constant critical look on its use and comprehension.

Therefore, taking it from a postcolonial perspective seems to be fundamental once it gets to be understood as a discourse formed from within the colonial/modern world system imaginary. Beyond being critical, a prospective attitude and a question on how to work with the 'Global South' as a practiced space[30] are in demand. This is also in the core of postcolonial studies and challenges: from which perspective, with which analytical and methodological instruments should one think about the connections and complexities of societies built within the colonial experiences?

The critique towards subalternization and the colonial/modern world system has led Mignolo to argue for working in the fissures between modernity and coloniality.

It is by looking at 'local histories' – those that have been delegitimized when confronted with others transformed in global projects – that one thinks from the perspective of what this author considers the 'colonial difference': sensitivities and sets of knowledge that did not fit the imaginary built within the colonial/modern world system. Mignolo's task is of an epistemic nature, and it is what he calls the 'border thinking' the perspective which might help unsettle the system.

To think from the perspective of the borders, or from outside the limits that have been invented by the imaginary being criticized, it is not an issue of bringing to life what has not existed. It is much more complex, as it consists of placing oneself at a point where dislocations and uncertainties, for instance, become sites of meaning rather than objects of disdain. It is the issue of going against an epistemic order, the one that has been produced under subalternization and within the colonial/modern world system.

What is being suggested here is that the Global South, as a location/space from where practices are seen, interpreted and recognized also demands a look from outside the borders within which it has been discursively inscribed. This reflection is a critique on a 'Northern' – and 'Western' – legitimized way of seeing and reflecting about the world. An issue that goes beyond Said's Orientalism, in the sense that it is a matter of going against an episteme that has successfully been constructed as the way to apprehend the world.

Mbembe[31] is also in search of references within other epistemic legitimacies. Once you recognize Africa as the representation of 'nothingness', what one needs to do, according to him, is to be able to produce a 'different writing.' Some narratives of conflict trespass the geography of powers by presenting a more complex dimension of the space within which subjects and territorial issues are inscribed. They are much more concerned about representing subjectivities and identities in the game of power relations. By doing so, they produce a narrative

that is much more about the power of geographies.

Palestine, whose territory is in all terms part of this enlarged idea of the Global South, has been cruelly massacred not only by strong warlike forces but also by binary and stereotyped discourses. It is a territory immersed in a conflict of such a complex cultural-political web, intermingling territorial, physical and subjective processes, that disentangling them becomes more difficult every day. In this sense, one may wonder, does looking from outside the borders also help us produce different writings on that specific conflict? If their geography is one built within everyday struggles, is it of any help to look at issues on identities, space and narratives generated from within that specific spatiality?

These same questions also fit what the idea of Global South suggests and evokes. From the perspective of this essay, it is not totally innocuous to think of the territory of Palestine, today, as the centre of what shall be called the Global South. As an arena of great disputes and conflicts, colonialist dominances, economic privations and many other forms of imposed cruelties, the Palestine territory, unfortunately in its worst dimension, signifies much of what the 'South', as a whole, has been submitted to.

Thus, from within this conflict and from an enlarged perspective, the Global South might be seen far beyond its emerging economies – as dominant discourses might stick themselves to – and much more affected by many conflicts of all kinds. It is a space of richness, creative dwellings, productive lands and strong processes of resistance as well as of economic inequalities, hunger, territorial disputes and legitimized subalternities.

In this sense, opening the map of the so-called Global South from the perspective of the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and many other 'Souths' around the

globe might be very productive, once from there, the Global South can be seen as part of a complex spatiality. From this point of view, the gesture of understanding the term should also be the act of mapping existences and differences, which have constantly been disregarded by the games of power. This perspective, as it has been suggested, might be a way of unfolding narratives, and it certainly requires suspicious acts and willingness to produce different writings. Not an easy task, but a fundamental challenge.

---

[1] Foucault's theories address the constitution of the human sciences from the birth of man as an object of study of modernity. Through his studies on discourse and power, Foucault outlines the genealogy of Western thought. According to Foucault, from the nineteenth century, we find an epistemological consciousness of man as a thinking being, a fact that denotes the production of knowledge as closely linked to historical processes, which implies a temporal fluidity of established truths. One of his essential books is *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[2] Michel de Certeau, *A invenção do cotidiano – artes de fazer* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000). All references to De Certeau are free translations taken from the Brazilian edition book in Portuguese.

[3] The issue of subalternity is closely related to Said's Orientalist perspective within which the author argues about the representation of the colonized. Another essential work on subalternity is Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', where the author demonstrates that the production of Western thought has obscured subaltern experiences by invoking an Eurocentric perspective, and producing the subaltern Other of Europe as anonymous. For both references: Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors,' *Critical Inquiry* 15.2 (1989); and Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

[4] By addressing the issues of representation, identity, and cultural difference, for instance, in their seminal works, Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Edward Said, *Orientalismo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (London: University of California Press, 2001); and Gayatri Spivak (*op cit.*) all refer to the so-called 'colonized world' as requiring distinct analytical instruments so as to be understood from a more complex perspective.

[5] This is a reference to my research *Poetics of the Otherness – media narratives and the process of inventing the Other* (CNPq, Brazilian Research Funding Agency, 2013), developed as part of a post-doctoral study at the Department of Media and Film Studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

[6] D. Matar and Z. Harb, eds., *Narrating the Conflict in the Middle East – Discourse, Image and Communications Practices in Lebanon and Palestine* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013), p.4.

[7] De Certeau, *op cit.,* p.207.

[8] Walter D. Mignolo, *Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar* (Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2003). All references to Mignolo are free translations taken from the Brazilian edition in Portuguese.

[9] Mignolo (*op cit.*) is referring to Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality of power, which means the power of transforming the local in global, a system, according to Mignolo, that carries the memories of differences and colonial powers.

[10] For our concern, the issue of subalternity, as it has been taken by Spivak, is fundamental once it locates the subalternized subject in the system of knowledge production. But it is important that one understands Mignolo's approaches as going beyond Spivak's concern. It is the fact of placing the problem from a colonial/modern imaginary that leads to the understanding of a process of knowledge of subalternization. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, also concerned about issues of colonialism and cultural identities, addresses the problem from a

perspective that adds references to the statement of this text. For this author, the end of political colonialism does not mean the end of its cultural aspect. In terms of subjectivities and cultural relations, the power inscribed in the colonial system is still in progress. See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'Entre Próspero e Caliban: colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e inter-identidade' in *Entre ser e estar*: *raízes, percursos e discursos da identidade*, eds. M.I Ramalho and A.S Ribeiro (Porto: Afrontamento, 2002).

[11] For more on this issue see: Santiago Castro-Gomez, 'Ciencias sociales, violencia epistémica y el problema de la 'invención del otro' in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales*. *Perspectivas Latinoamericanas,* ed. E. Lander (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000), p.246: http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/lander/castro.rtf

[12] This reflection is taken from Mignolo's discussion of the subalternization process in 'Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience,' European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP), September 2011, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en. Authors such as Fanon and Spivak are also of great importance for sustaining this way of approaching the problem.

[13] Paul Ricoeur, *Tempo e Narrativa* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010). All references to Ricoeur are free translations taken from the Brazilian edition in Portuguese.

[14] In an interview given by Homi Bhabha to the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* on 14 January 2012.

[15] Milton Santos, *Pensando o espaço do homem* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2007).

[16] Henri Lebfevre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[17] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma – Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.28.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] *Ibid*., p.22.

[20] These observations echo arguments I have been developing since 2009 in a larger research study *Narratives of Conflict: The Representation of the Other in Media Discourse* (CNPq/Faperj). A general view on the research problem can be seen in Fernando Resende and Ana Paes, 'The Arab conflicts and the media discourse – a Brazilian perspective' in *Global Media and Communication* 7.3 (2011): pp.215-219.

[21] Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010).

[22] The 'Malês uprising', as it is historically known, was a short-lived yet significant uprising that took place in 1835 in the state of Bahia, Brazil. More about the social conditions of the time and the impacts of this uprising are discussed in this article. The term Malês is a corrupted form of 'Muslim', and refers to the group of slaves who were involved in the so-called 'rebellion'. For more details on this event and some of its aftermaths as a cultural-political conflict, see Fernando Resende, 'Inventing Muslims as the Other in Nineteenth-Century Brazil' in *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 6.2 (2013): pp.178-193.

[23] Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros – os escravos libertos e sua volta à África* (São Paulo: Cia. Das Letras, 2012), p.12.

[24] José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil – a história do Levante dos Malês em 1835* (São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 2003).

[25] *Ibid*., p.270.

[26] *Ibid*., p.149.

[27] The set of analyses of contemporary documentaries and news in the main Brazilian and British newspapers about conflicts help delineate some of the strategies that are used in narrating these battles, while showing the strength and the impact of religion in the process of meaning production. This has been discussed in the aforementioned research *Poetics of the Otherness* (CNPq,

2013). Some of the sources of this study have been in the main newspapers in Brazil (*Jornal do Brasil*, *Folha da Manhã*, *Folha de São Paulo*) and some media sources in England (BBC, *The Times*), along with film productions from both countries.

[28] Rogoff, *op cit.*, p.11

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] For De Certeau (2000), this means thinking of space as part of an everyday signifying practices construction.

[31] Mbembe, *op cit*.

About the author

Fernando Resende

Dr Fernando Resende is a Senior Lecture and a researcher (CNPq) at the Department of Media and Cultural Studies (M.A. and Ph.D. Program in Communication, at Fluminense Federal University – UFF/Brazil), where he also coordinates [LAN] Media Narratives Experimentation and Research Laboratory (UFF/CNPq). Local Coordinator of Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate in Cultural Studies in Literary Interzones (UFF/Bergamo/Perpignan/Tübingen/New Delhi). Resende is also a visiting Research Scholar in the Centre for Media Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, where he is also an Associate Member of the Centre for Palestine Studies (2013/CNPq). Resende has a PhD in Communication from the Universidade de São Paulo - USP/Brazil. His research is primarily interested in the study of narratives of conflicts and diasporic movements, dealing with issues related to both physical and symbolic zones.