

And what are all the bulldozers in the world against the unfettered imagination?

We salute the exemplary courage of Tyree Guyton, who, in the face of bureaucratic harassment and threats, admirably refuses to cease and desist.

We declare our total solidarity with him in his struggle against the corrupt and venal officialdom of Detroit.

We protest the destruction of his houses as a particularly glaring example of *government censorship* — censorship in its most brutal form, and *absolutely without justification*.

For the Surrealist Movement in the United States,

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## AN INTERNATIONAL SURREALIST DECLARATION ON THE "COLUMBUS QUINCENTENNIAL" 1492 — 1992 "AS LONG AS TOURISTS REPLACE SEERS..."

*"As long as some exploit others, without even getting any pleasure out of it — money stands between them, a shared tyrant; money stands between them, a snake devouring its tail, a bomb fuse; ... as long as, in the long black night, tourists replace seers ..."* — André Breton, *Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism or Not* (1942)

Starting in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus, the discovery/invasion/conquest of the Americas has been engraved into the expansionist historical process of our so-called "Western" civilization, continuing for centuries with the oppression, exploitation, persecution, and destruction of indigenous peoples and cultures, as well as the immense natural world in which these peoples and cultures lived.

The past remains present in the memory of classes and ethnic groups: a tradition of conquerors and of conquered in ineluctable confrontation. As Surrealists and enemies of "civilization," we are neither neutral nor indifferent.

Today we witness pompous official celebrations, veritable consecration rituals that attempt to legitimize not only all past acts, but also their continuation into the present, manifested by the "New World Order": capitalist invasion on a planetary scale. In response, a growing, multiform movement of protest now exists to reinterpret the history of the past five centuries from the point of view of the victims — native peoples, Blacks, peons and their modern descendants — and their struggle. The movement celebrates the memory of individuals such as Cuauhtemoc and Tupac-Amaru, Geronimo and Sitting Bull, Zumbi dos Palmares and Toussaint L'Ouverture — and Gonzalo Guerrero, the Spaniard who sided with the Mayas, fighting with them against the Iberian conquerors of Yucatan. Its goal is to "comb History the wrong way," to use Walter Benjamin's beautiful image.

Nevertheless, for centuries the "official" history of invasion and conquest, that tells of the sixteenth-century conquerors and their descendants, has dominated; indeed, it is practically the only story on the political and cultural stage.

Turn for a moment to the "reasoning" of a nineteenth-century "liberal" ideologue, the Argentinian Domingos F. Sarmiento:

We must be fair towards the Spaniards: by exterminating a primitive people, whose territory they were about to occupy, they simply did what all civilized people do with savages. ... The strong races exterminate the weak ones, civilized peoples take land ownership away from primitive peoples. This practice is providential and useful, sublime and majestic.

The "majestic" project evoked by the liberal Sarmiento, along with many other Latin American, European, and North American liberals, is the very one in which we find ourselves embroiled today: "Western rationality." The conquest that started in the fifteenth century continues today in the Gulf War, the capitalists' rush into Eastern Europe, cultural imperialism and the stereotyped omnipotence of the media, the Third World's subservience to multinational banks, the destruction of the world's forests and wild animals, and the proliferation of ecological disasters.

This narrow, utilitarian rationality not only necessitated the political, economic, and military domination of the American Indian cultures (first in South America and then in the North), but the obliteration from the Earth's surface of other human possibilities. The destruction of these peoples and their natural environment was motivated by the implacable expansion of the "Civilization of Progress" — with the active complicity of the Churches (both Catholic and Protestant), which also furnished the ideological and moral justification for the conquest of this "New World," supposedly tainted by the shadow of "original sin," thus contributing to the destruction of the imaginative sources and the spiritual life of indigenous societies.

In many Latin American nations of the nineteenth century a brief, commonly-used expression inspired fear and revulsion in "decent people" — *tierra adentro*, the "Interior." It referred to the immense, still foreign territory where, beyond imprecise bor-

ders, the Indians moved freely. This was unacceptable to the local oligarchy, linked to the interests of expanding British capitalism, not only because of the physical limits that his fact placed on their own ambitions, but because the uncolonized wilderness was a type of false-bottomed box, both geographical and psychological, where the persecuted and nonconforming, as well as outlaws, might still take refuge.

"History: a pyre perpetually burning," wrote Renaud. "But for tribal peoples ... there burns — with a final cry preceding silence — possibility, another life." ("He Whose Voice is Unheard," in *La Civilisation surrealiste*, 1976.)

How can we not see that we too are burning here? Each of us as a *self*, not as a mere cog in a machine, but as a sensitive, desiring being — able to dream, to love, and to disobey.

The "Interior" was, and still is today, that immense inner region where we may live freely; that deep *zone* out of which comes the memory of another life lived (or that might be lived) in loving harmony with nature, the wonder of an endless gallop, and there may arise, with the dizzying savagery of the unconscious, the wild horses of desire inciting us to revolt.

Western rational thought requires the colonization — worse yet, the annihilation — of this inner zone, for the same reasons and with the same methods of extermination that allowed it to fling itself into the conquest of the Americas and obliterate its diverse cultures. It is the same for the individual human being as for the immense new continent: rationalism permits nothing to occur *in the Interior* that cannot be assimilated by civilization's homogenizing mechanism.

"Stained by civilization, cloaked by progress," André Breton wrote in the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), Western rationalism "has managed to banish from the mind all that could be accused, wrongly or rightly, of superstition or chimera."

Thus the gateway leading to the interior, to our immense inner oceans, is closed. Is it not a certain kind of fear, even panic — or rather the frantic *denial* of those regions, of those internal oceanic impulses — that drives men to conquest, to the massacre and enslavement of peoples who hold those very depths in high esteem, and who were of course aware of their vital richness?

True adventure, discovery, the *seer*: These are inscribed on the banner of Surrealism in letters of fire. And in the twentieth century none more than the Surrealists have affirmed their elective affinity with indigenous peoples, among whom mythic thought was the substance of culture.

"Contrary to the opinion of certain bureaucrats," Breton reminded us, "we insist that mythic thought, in its ceaseless becoming, always parallels rational thought. To refuse it its rightful outlet is to render it noxious and invite it to burst into rational thought, disintegrating it (as in the insane worship of leaders, shoddy messianism, etc.)." (*Entretiens*, 1952.)

Having created the void, Western civilization feels hollow when the *cordilleras* of the infinite, and the limitless plains of all that they find *disturbing*, have been reduced to the familiar by agribusiness and urban planning; when "progress" has imposed its railroads and one-way streets; when property has uncoiled its barbed wire to halt free movement. Now, spirit is permanently corralled; thought is driven down ever-narrower, more circumscribed paths; and the human being exists only for the ends of production.

But since desire is untameable, there will always be those who refuse to bray happily. And so *poetry* — an authentic act of total insubordination — continues to explode the foundations of a stifling totalitarianism. The Surrealist is, has always been, the companion and the accomplice of the Indian, the native, the aborigine. It is with authentic passion that we join forces with them, longing to hear in their voices much more than the echo of a glorious past. Because we know that these indigenous voices, despite oppression, are obstinately *alive*. And because no one else but the shaman, who speaks in dreams, will discover the keys to the inversion of the sign: when *seers will replace tourists*.

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