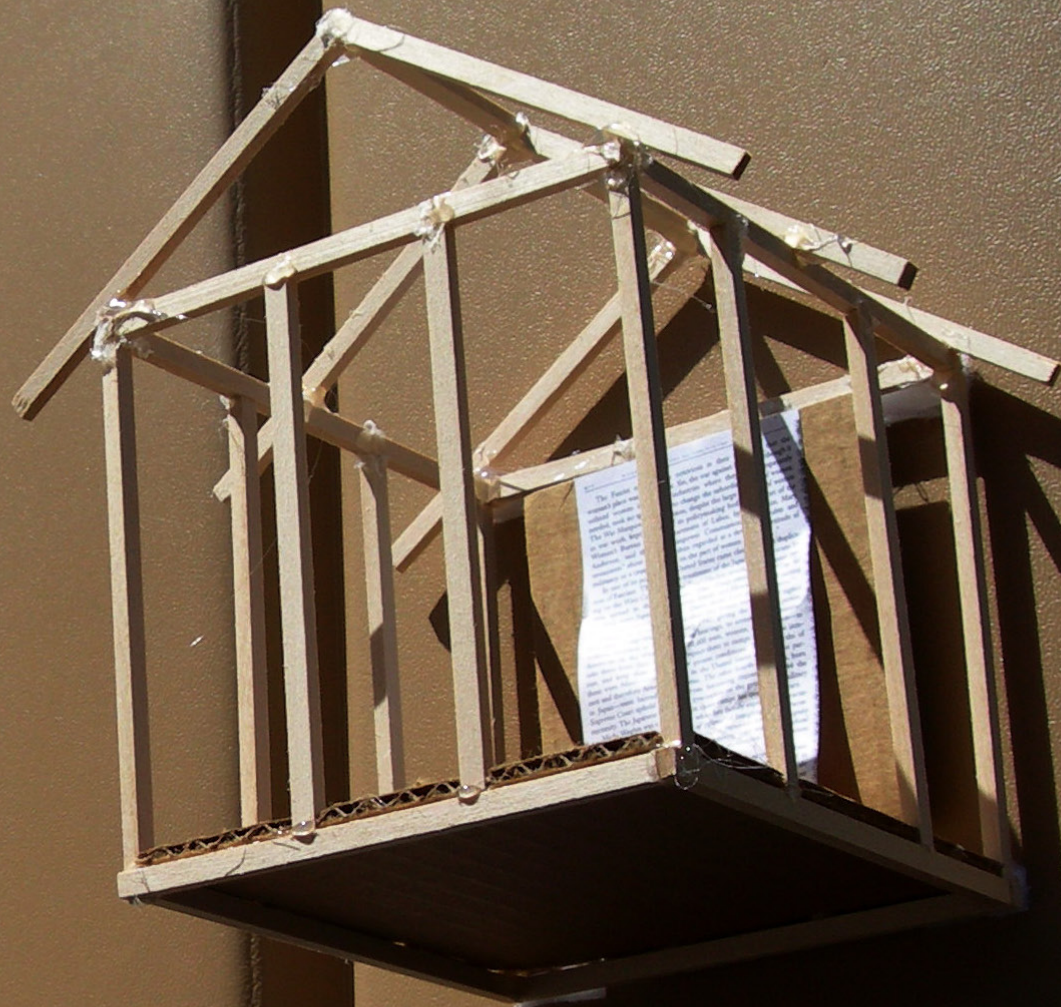


1773

**TEXAS
OUTHOUSE**



CHURCHBOROUGH



Public Education

2008

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

❁ “OF COURSE THE REAL MAN they called Geronimo, they never did catch. The real Geronimo got away,” old Mahawala said late one night when Calabazas was half-asleep. Although the small cook fire at their feet had died down to a few coals and there was no moon, he could still see the faces of these old-timers well enough in the light of the stars and the wide luminous belt of the Milky Way. High in the mountains, the old ones claimed they were that much closer to the clouds and the winds. They claimed people of the mountain peaks got special attention from the planets and moon. Calabazas had looked at each face trying to determine in an instant if this was a joke or not. Because if it was a joke and he appeared to take it seriously, they would have him. And if it wasn’t a joke, and he laughed, they would have him too. But when Calabazas realized the old ones were serious about this Geronimo story, he had given in.

Old Mahawala started out, and then the others, one by one, had contributed some detail or opinion or alternative version. The story they told did not run in a line for the horizon but circled and spiraled instead like the red-tailed hawk. “Geronimo” of course was the war cry Mexican soldiers made as they rode into battle, counting on help from St. Jerome. The U.S. soldiers had misunderstood just as they had misunderstood just about everything else they had found in this land. In time there came to be at least four Apache raiders who were called by the name Geronimo, either by the Mexican soldiers or the gringos. The tribal people here were all very aware that the whites put great store in names. But once the whites had a name for a thing, they seemed unable ever again to recognize the thing itself.

The elders used to argue that this was one of the most dangerous qualities of the Europeans: Europeans suffered a sort of blindness to the world. To them, a “rock” was just a “rock” wherever they found it, despite obvious differences in shape, density, color, or the position of the rock relative to all things around it. The Europeans, whether they spoke Spanish or English, could often be heard complaining in frightened



(11)

Images of the Past, Pure and Impure

As the twentieth century moves to a close, there has been a gathering awareness nearly everywhere of the lines *between* cultures, the divisions and differences that not only allow us to discriminate one culture from another, but also enable us to see the extent to which cultures are humanly made structures of both authority and participation, benevolent in what they include, incorporate, and validate, less benevolent in what they exclude and demote.

There is in all nationally defined cultures, I believe, an aspiration to sovereignty, to sway, and to dominance. In this, French and British, Indian and Japanese cultures concur. At the same time, paradoxically, we have never been as aware as we now are of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the *police* action of simple dogma and loud patriotism. Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more "foreign" elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude. Who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from present actualities, and who in Britain or France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities?

These are not nostalgically academic or theoretical questions, for as a brief excursion or two will ascertain, they have important social and political consequences. Both London and Paris have large immigrant populations from the former colonies, which themselves have a large residue of British and French culture in their daily life. But that is obvious. Consider, for a more complex example, the well-known issues of the image of classical Greek antiquity or of tradition as a determinant of national identity. Studies such as Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* have accentuated the extraordinary influence of today's anxieties and agendas on the pure (even purged) images we construct of a privileged, genealogically useful past, a past in which we exclude unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives. Thus, according to Bernal, whereas Greek civilization was known originally to have roots in Egyptian, Semitic, and various other southern and eastern cultures, it was redesigned



The Wall and the Books

He, whose long wall the wand'ring Tartar bounds . . .

Dunciad, II, 76

I read, some days past, that the man who ordered the erection of the almost infinite wall of China was that first Emperor, Shih Huang Ti, who also decreed that all books prior to him be burned. That these two vast operations—the five to six hundred leagues of stone opposing the barbarians, the rigorous abolition of history, that is, of the past—should originate in one person and be in some way his attributes inexplicably satisfied and, at the same time, disturbed me. To investigate the reasons for that emotion is the purpose of this note.

Historically speaking, there is no mystery in the two measures. A contemporary of the wars of Hannibal, Shih Huang Ti, king of Tsin, brought the Six Kingdoms under his rule and abolished the feudal system; he erected the wall, because walls were defenses; he burned the books, because his opposition invoked them to praise the emperors of olden times. Burning books and erecting fortifications is a common task of princes; the only thing singular in Shih Huang Ti was the scale on which he operated. Such is suggested by certain Sinologists, but I feel that the facts I have related are something more than an exaggeration or hyperbole of trivial dispositions. Walling in an orchard or a garden is ordinary, but not walling in an empire. Nor is it banal to pretend that the most traditional of races renounce the memory of its past, mythical or real. The Chinese had three thousand years



It is the public school that is the required schooling for everyone, that has the task of teaching students to read and write and hopefully to engage in some form of critical thinking. Everyone then who knows how to read and write has the tools needed to access higher learning even if that learning cannot and does not take place in a university setting. Our government mandates attendance at public school, thereby upholding public policy supporting democratic education. But the politics of class elitism ensure that biases in the way knowledge is taught often teach students in these settings that they are not deemed sophisticated learners if they do not attend college. This means that many students stop the practice of learning because they feel learning is no longer relevant to their lives once they graduate from high school unless they plan to attend college. They have often learned in public school both that college is not the “real” world and that the book learning offered there has no relevance in the world outside university walls. Even though all the knowledge coming from books in colleges is accessible to any reader/thinker whether they attend classes or not, tightly constructed class boundaries keep most high school graduates who are not enrolled in colleges from continued study. Even college students who receive undergraduate degrees leave college settings to enter the world of everyday work and tend to cease studying, basing their actions on the false assumption that book-based learning has little relevance in their new lives as workers. It is amazing how many college graduates never read a book again once they graduate. And if they read, they no longer study.

To bring a spirit of study to learning that takes place both in and beyond classroom settings, learning must be understood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety. Quoting from T. H. White’s *The Once and Future King*, Parker Palmer celebrates the wisdom Merlin the magician offers when he declares: “The best thing for being sad is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails . . . Learn why the world



La Strada

WEST THE
HAR
VARD
STRADA

METRO

50

When you walk between the stone gaps of *Siamanis*¹⁶, every few moments you hear a shout: “mark!” And again the same shout: “mark!” You hear it everywhere. In *Francia*—“franc”; in *Peletania*—“shilling”; in *Italia*—“lire.” Mark, franc, shilling, lire—it’s all the same¹⁷. All of these words mean money, money, money. Money alone is the true God of the *Papalagi*, just as it is the Great Spirit whom we worship the most.

However, it is not possible in these countries of the white man to be without money only once, from sunrise to sunset. Without any money you could not satisfy your hunger or still your thirst, nor could you find a sleeping mat at night. You would be put into the *fale pui pui*¹⁸ and denounced in the *many papers*¹⁹, because you were found without money. You have to pay—that means give money—for the ground on which you walk, for the soil on which stands your hut, for

¹⁶ Germany

¹⁷ France, England, Italy

¹⁸ Jail

¹⁹ Newspaper



Marcos and the Intelligentsia

Academics, especially economists, political-scientists, and international relations scholars have all devoted much attention to events in Chiapas over the last seven years. Admittedly, botanists, archaeologists, and social-anthropologists had all been researching Chiapas for decades, while economists had been becoming increasingly interested in Mexico in general ever since talks had been initiated concerning Mexican participation in NAFTA. The economists, however, had tended to concentrate on Northern Mexico, on places like Tijuana, and on issues such as illegal immigration into America and wages/conditions in the *maquiladores* which line the border. The spotlight then, was already falling on Mexico from the early 1990s onwards, the Zapatista uprising merely caused the beam to settle, and then intensify squarely on Chiapas. After 1st January 1994, academic interest in Mexico widened, encompassing the little-known state of Chiapas; books and articles covering such diverse topics as contemporary Mexican society,²⁸ the NAFTA agreement and Neo-Liberal economics,²⁹ human rights,³⁰ guerrilla movements and military tactics,³¹ gender and ethnicity issues in Latin America, and globalisation,³² all began to devote space to discussion of Chiapas, the Zapatistas and Subcommander Marcos.

Marcos, however, was not content with merely being the passive subject of academic discussion. Instead, he elected to enter into dialogue with various Left wing and liberal scholars. We have already noted Marcos' meeting with the French intellectual, Régis Debray, who had visited Che Guevara while the latter was on his Bolivian campaign and who therefore was himself no stranger to accompanying charismatic revolutionaries into the jungle. Similarly, while Che met and openly discussed politics with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone De Beauvoir, Marcos courted the leading intellectual social-commentators of the day. He sent communiqués to John Berger, Eduardo Galeano, and the historian and anthropologist Eric Jaffret. Thus, Octavio Paz, Mexico's Nobel laureate and a highly conservative statesman, recognised Marcos's 'imaginative and lively prose' which had 'easily won the war of opinions'; Carlos Fuentes corresponded with him and even went so far as to say of Marcos, 'to you... is owed the reactivation of the tradition of sending letters'³³; Nobel literature prize-winner, José Saramago, expressed his admiration for Marcos; and Adolfo Gilly included an interview with Marcos in his *Discusion sobre la Historia* (Mexico City, 1995).



The Fascist nations were notorious in their insistence that the woman's place was in the home. Yet, the war against Fascism, although it utilized women in defense industries where they were desperately needed, took no special steps to change the subordinate role of women. The War Manpower Commission, despite the large numbers of women in war work, kept women off its policymaking bodies. A report of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, by its director, Mary Anderson, said the War Manpower Commission had "doubts and uneasiness" about "what was then regarded as a developing attitude of militancy or a crusading spirit on the part of women leaders. . . ."

In one of its policies, the United States came close to direct duplication of Fascism. This was in its treatment of the Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast. After the Pearl Harbor attack, anti-Japanese hysteria spread in the government. One Congressman said: "I'm for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps. . . . Damn them! Let's get rid of them!"

Franklin D. Roosevelt did not share this frenzy, but he calmly signed Executive Order 9066, in February 1942, giving the army the power, without warrants or indictments or hearings, to arrest every Japanese-American on the West Coast—110,000 men, women, and children—to take them from their homes, transport them to camps far into the interior, and keep them there under prison conditions. Three-fourths of these were Nisei—children born in the United States of Japanese parents and therefore American citizens. The other fourth—the Issei, born in Japan—were barred by law from becoming citizens. In 1944 the Supreme Court upheld the forced evacuation on the grounds of military necessity. The Japanese remained in those camps for over three years.

Michi Weglyn was a young girl when her family experienced evacuation and detention. She tells (*Years of Infamy*) of bungling in the evacuation, of misery, confusion, anger, but also of Japanese-American dignity and fighting back. There were strikes, petitions, mass meetings, refusal to sign loyalty oaths, riots against the camp authorities. The Japanese resisted to the end.

Not until after the war did the story of the Japanese-Americans begin to be known to the general public. The month the war ended in Asia, September 1945, an article appeared in *Harper's Magazine* by Yale Law Professor Eugene V. Rostow, calling the Japanese evacuation "our worst wartime mistake." Was it a "mistake"—or was it an action to be expected from a nation with a long history of racism and which was fighting a war, not to end racism, but to retain the fundamental elements of the American system?

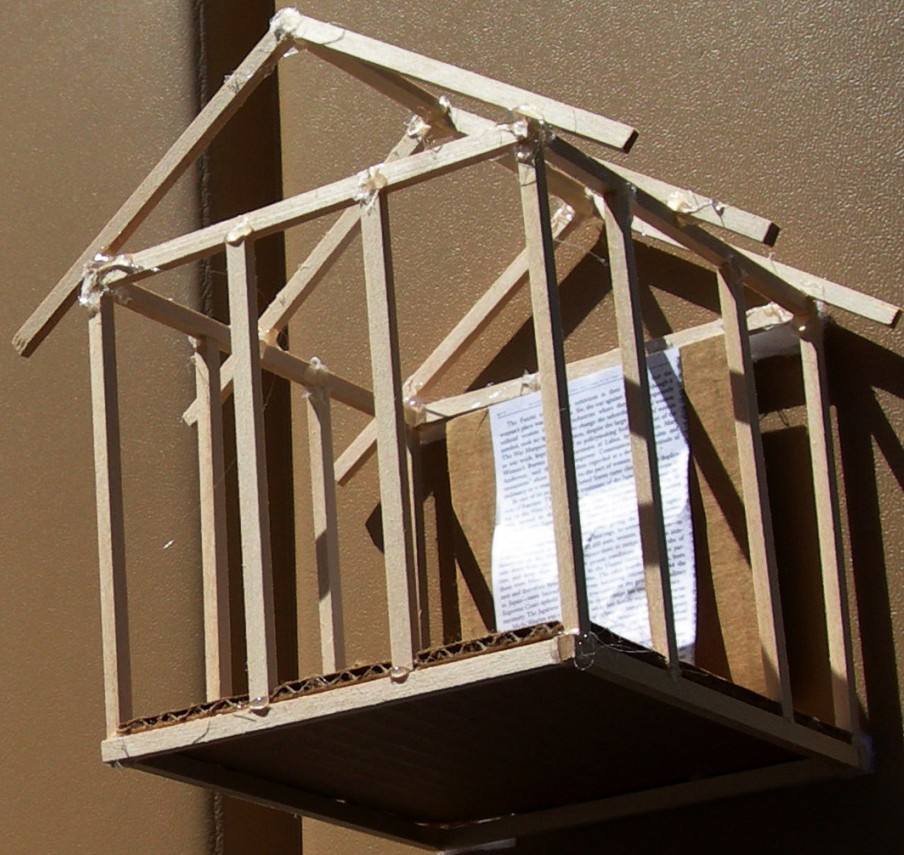
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New Orleans before the Civil War, the African-American, the black servant, was not perceived as a person, so that, for example, the white couple – the prostitute and her client – were not at all disturbed when the servant entered the room to deliver drinks. They simply went on doing their job, with copulation and so on, since the servant's gaze did not count as the gaze of another person. And in a sense, I think, it is the same with that black servant as with the analyst.

We rid ourselves of all our shame when we talk to the analyst. We are able to confide the innermost secrets of our loves, our hatreds, etc., although our relationship to them is entirely impersonal, lacking the intimacy of true friendship. This is absolutely crucial, I think. The relationship with the analyst, as you probably know, is not an intersubjective relationship precisely because the analyst in the analytic disposition is not another subject. In this sense, the analyst occupies the role of an object. We can confide ourselves in them without any intimate relationship of friendship.

Another aspect of this subjective destitution can be grasped via a reference to the recently published autobiography, already translated into English, of Louis Althusser.¹ Althusser writes that he was beset all his adult life with the notion that he did not exist: by the fear that others would become aware of his non-existence, that others, for example, readers of his books, would become aware of the fact that he is an impostor who only feigns to exist. For example, his great anxiety after the publication of *Lire Capital* [*Reading Capital*] was that some critic would reveal the scandalous fact that the main author of this book doesn't exist.² I think, in a sense, that this is what psychoanalysis is about. The psychoanalytic cure is effectively over when the subject loses this anxiety, as it were, and freely assumes their own non-existence.

And I think that here, if you want to put it in a slightly funny, cynical way, resides the difference between psychoanalysis and, let's say, the standard English empiricist-subjectivist solipsism. The standard empiricist-solipsist notion is that we can only be absolutely certain of ideas in our mind, whereas the existence of reality outside is already an inconclusive inference. I think that psychoanalysis claims that reality outside myself definitely exists. The problem is that I myself do not exist.

Now, my next point, of course, is that Lacan arrived at this paradoxical position only towards the end of his teaching. Before this last phase, in the 1950s and 1960s, the end of the psychoanalytic process for Lacan involved almost exactly the opposite movement – the subjectivization,

/ Public Education / 2008 /

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