

## **“What is it to read fiction but to willingly suspend disbelief?”**

Suspension can be defined as a temporal removal.

Disbelief is the inability or refusal to accept something that is not true, or not real.

To read fiction is to willingly and temporarily remove the limiting filter of what is true and what is not, what is real and what is not. Suspension can also refer to the state in which the particles of a substance are mixed with a fluid, but stay undissolved.

To read fiction then is to distribute the mattering inability to accept what is true or real in the medium of the world.

What disperses disbelief and keeps it in a state of suspension?

Dreams enmeshed in the ether of the world.

News flashing on screens. Over and over again. Burning bodies—then and now. Belief it or don't, that which matters is not either/or. Disbelief in this case is not the absence of belief, but the suspension thereof—a substance disseminated.

When does it precipitate? And how?

Imaginations, fiction, magic.

Suspension has to do with time. To be suspended in time is to be without time, to be so deeply immersed that linearity is no longer perceived. It is an act of surrender, to let your world be turned upside down, hanging from your feet, swaying from side to side instead of moving steeply forwards.

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| whichever way     | the wind blows         |
| you sail          | the opposite direction |
| a resistance      | deep as water          |
| against the waves | a non-wave             |
| a flat            | still surface          |
| stillness         | oscillates             |

Time is a substance and to willingly suspend disbelief is to accept the mattering realities of all temporalities. If reading fiction is the willing and temporal removal of disbelief, what is it to write fiction? To willingly create the suspension of disbelief?

James Baldwin wrote:

“Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety... ...for higher dreams, for greater privileges.” (James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*)

Freedom is not that which you hold tight—squeezing out every single remaining drop of milk until you are burned out and longing for nothing but a death drive. To make a move outside the comfort of the given, is to dismantle the known. And it is precisely the unknown that a society organized around security has suspended;

dissolved,  
delayed,  
act as if,  
pretend,  
ignore

routines, consumption, comfort, borders, surveillance under the guise of “safety”, all to isolate one from outside danger: the unknown. The other side is excluded out of fear, forgetting that the enemy is one’s own. The Other is mythicized to protect a (linear) narrative rooted in expulsion. This narrative functions as a means of domination, both as the deception thereof and its manifestation. What happens to myths when control is sacrificed?

A confluence. The junction of two rivers, the river of speech and writing, fiction and truth, the known and the unknown, here and elsewhere, “a totality without renouncing the particular.” Our truths multiplied, creating an entirety. Keep on, touching upon, to understand more, and again.

Is exile the ghost of the root?

Fiction is not the absence of truth.

In 1776 French colonists built coconut plantations on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago. Enslaved people from Madagascar, Mozambique and Senegal were brought to the islands. In 1814, France gave up the island to Britain. For administrative reasons, the islands were managed from Mauritius. After the Napoleonic Wars in 1835, a British colonist “discovered” that the island already had a settled population and the Chagossians were freed to manage the plantations and develop their economy themselves. In 1848, after emancipation, Indian labourers arrived to the islands. “A new, unique society and inter-island culture developed called Ilois.”

According to the website of the British Indian Ocean Territory the people of Chagos always resided and worked under licenses and contracts and never owned land or houses, moving from island to island as work required. According to the website of Chagos Refugee Group, for 117 years, from 1848 until 1965 the people of the Chagos Archipelago lived in harmony until the British Indian Ocean Territory was created. In 1966 the American and British Foreign Affairs made a secret deal concealed from the Chagossians: the U.K. agreed to remove their community of thousands, for 14 million dollars. This was hidden from Congress and Parliament. It granted the U.S a 50 year lease for the islands. In 1969 an eviction campaign lasting 3 years begins. The Chagossians were forcibly expelled by the British Government, first to Peros Banhos, and then to Mauritius and Seychelles. In 1973 the last Chagossians were deported and the U.S Navy established a military base on the islands.

In *Diego Garcia* (the title of Natasha Sobraamanien and Luke Williams novel and the British name of the aforementioned island in the Chagos Archipelago) fiction meets truth to reveal the untruths of the fictions of the British and American Foreign Affairs.

I ask myself again. What is it to read fiction but to willingly suspend disbelief?

Solid, liquid, gaseous,  
the distinct forms matter can exist in,  
to occupy space, to have volume, to have weight.

And what is it to write fiction, to fictionalize something?

In the film “Il était une île, Diego Garcia” the Chagossians’ lawyer Robin Mardemootoo says:

“Amongst the archives in London we found many things we didn't know existed. Because around 1997-98, certain documents were declassified, came into the public domain and became available to anyone. Hence the wonderful exchange—today I can say ‘wonderful’—between the British Minister of Foreign Affairs and the American Minister of Foreign Affairs where the American writes: ‘Nowadays, with all the independence debates taking place in the United Nations, it must remain secret. We must create a fiction that lets it be known that these islands were always uninhabited.’ “ (DG)

Create a fiction  
That let it be known that these islands  
Were always uninhabited.

A fiction scattering the existence  
of a whole population.

“Three weeks later, the British replies: ‘I would go further, not only must we create a fiction, but we must maintain that fiction. We must engage in a political plan to this end.’ (DG)

Maintaining a fiction.  
Maintaining  
a fiction.

Heretics, witches, terrorists...

Rooting out the roots forcing to uproot elsewhere.  
Expelling the possibility to land, ground and entangle beneath the soil.

In *Poetics of Relations*, Edouard Glissant references Deleuze and Guattari’s notion on rhizomatic networks, arguing for a difference between Rootedness and the Totalitarian Root. Since the root is a unique stock “taking all upon itself and

killing all around it” whereas rootedness works as “an enmeshed root system, a network spreading” creating multiple points of relation all across, forming a totality. A whole against the oppressive One without reducing All to Nothing: a whole including all its particulars in relation.

When I read the quote “when you awaken an observation, a certainty, a hope, they are already struggling somewhere, elsewhere, in another form” it made me think of what a friend shared sometime ago. They vividly remembered the first time they had the realization of time outside of their own perception. They were traveling abroad and realized the place already existed before arriving, before they set foot on that land, and how their friends were existing elsewhere, simultaneously, but in different temporalities.

Neuroscience calls this temporal-spatial awareness. The ability to understand where things—or people, are located in relation to yourself and other objects- or people (spatial) and when events occur and how they relate to each other in time (temporal).

What is temporal-fictional awareness? The ability to attribute thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and intentions to others, to imaginary characters and invented worlds?

Maybe.

“Obsession with a possible duration clouds the explosive dazzle of the present.”

I wonder about the importance of time and how this relates to Historization. Western History is made up of legitimized myths with an inseparable relation to linearity. To make sense of things, to unify, to “grasp”, to dominate the story(line). Red threads drowning in dark waves.

Legitimized  
Willing suspension of disbelief  
Dissolution of truths

|   |                 |     |              |
|---|-----------------|-----|--------------|
| The past has past, is not here anymore, |                 |     |              |
| does not affect                         | me              | any | longer,      |
|   | does not extend | to  | the present, |

does not touch me.

It is gone.

It has become something else. This Other, this past now is a container, a trash bag of what I could not face, still can not face in front of me. Past is other, and other is not self. History is a fabricated fiction in the sense that the separation of self and other is too.

|       |       |         |       |               |
|-------|-------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Past  | Other | Present | Self. | Nothing else. |
| Other | Past  | Trash   | Shit. | Disposable.   |

In order for History to be consistent it needs to be standardized—a system operating on the violent exclusion of those who do not fit: lepers. If a story does not fit within History's chain of filiation, its core logic, that of linearity, is put into question. This is a threat to those who write it, a threat to their power as it is a potential for the delegitimization of said power. So let's put these colonial myths into question. Let the rivers of truth confluence and witness all these whitewashed fires.

Breaking linearity  
Breaking suspension  
Precipitation, sedimentation.  
From below the surface of the water  
From the bottom of the ocean...

We have the tools for that and fiction is one of them. A powerful one as the British and American Foreign Affairs knew in the case of Diego Garcia. As the Zionist Israeli government knows, as allied news and propaganda outlets such as the BBC, the New York Times or Bild know. To create a fiction is one thing, but for a fiction to be maintained one needs real dedication, power and control. For a fiction to be maintained one needs control to keep disbelief in suspension.

Another tool at our disposal is Magic.

Magic is more subversive binding and bringing into existence. A force that suspends and precipitates. Sticky and persistent.

It sits at the root of Evil: the pseudo-Christian and Western fantasies of purity. That unnerving urge for a pure Christian pre-time, so obsessively fantasized about in the Renaissance, the time of sailing, the time of conquest, the time of discovery. Expansion and the colonizing of time and territory. No other pasts, just golden glowing Saints. Blinded by the illusion, the fiction, the wish for...

...the choice to ignore. The European obsession with killing and destroying has been there all along, heretics they called them, then witches, then terrorists. Purity is a fiction opposing another one. That of contamination. A golden age, reborn. Inert and silent, sipping on the poison potion brewed in the catacombs of fortress Europe a long time ago. Screaming silence.

“Dina asked who you were. I said I didn't know. She comes up here to read with me sometimes. It's made me think back to the books I loved as a kid. I don't care how much fuckin 'magic' is in a book, if it doesn't attempt to reimagine the structures of our world but with every word enforces them, it's about as magic as a breezeblock.” (Excerpt from Diego Garcia)

Magic reimagines.

Magic is the knowledge of the secret virtues of plants and stones. It is a material practice. It is the reality of touch—of being able to touch the world, and be touched by it. That is why the battle against magic has always accompanied the development of capitalism, because the eye of this system too recognizes the revolutionary potential.

From the bottom of the ocean,  
through the flames the screams.

Memory.

Remembrance.

What the fire witnessed.

Both hands in front, right pinky touching left pinky, all ten fingers and two palms forming into a dripping bowl that will never fill but can hold enough water to splash onto my face then pull my sleeve until it rips because we have to hurry

and my heart's been shaking, too nervous and too much and I doubt anyone can hear or see that it's in the wrong place.

Carry me.

Stifled outcries still reverberate today.  
“You share with others,  
whom you have yet to know.”

I have nothing to give you but the promise to close my eyes whenever I smell the sweet, sweaty scent of yours. I promise I will carry you as the mirror carries me and as long as I stay porous, I am a part of that which surrounds me, lives within and through me, my dear, you do not have to worry.

Carry on without me.

One foot in front of the other, endlessly, infinitely, repetitively walking through the pasts, the worlds that once seemed possible—as islands, as gravestone, as memories dotted with lichen eroding away—and in the distance, us, two shadow-figures against the bright sky, walking.

Carry on.

Through the flames the screams.  
From the Bottom of the Ocean.  
Memory.  
Remember  
what we all have seen.