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Illustration

MARY FARAONE

(ARGENTINE CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ARTIST)

Throughout her sequence of paintings of the people in the Rwanda genocide of 1994, Maria Faraone bestows upon us a document whose essence is not purely esthetic, denouncing with her characters' expressions the appalling suffering they endured, last alchemy of resignation and hope. She unearths the ruins of human history which repeatedly submitted black people to the consequences of colonialism, one of man's favorite disguise to subjugate individuals with the ruinous mask of selfless help. With this pretense the conquered territories were emptied from their cultural foundations and looted from their artistic and natural treasures. Poisoned with the "demon" of progress at the behest of giving up their traditions.

The artist dispenses the word to charge through the image. The connotation that emerges from her work not only reflects the pain of mortgaging life in devastated populations, but even the incomprehension of enduring human contemptuous downgrading. Immersed in this drama of the genocide that killed a million persons, the artist also provides that wonderful renaissance conception of nature that men possess even beyond tragedy. With exquisite technique she persuades her subdued, dark-skinned, suffering characters to remain open to the artist's observation and also to surrender radiantly to the return of hope. *Golden the evening grows/with her suns in a haste/funeral of winds and ochres/ at times reels a farewell. /To go back will be the premise/to burn in each tree/dark is this pathway/to love for emptiness.*

Societies that foster privileges and favors to individuals or groups are not part of human morality.

The Rwandan genocide brandishes Maria Faraone's legacy. Her wordless work imprints on the image the pain that moves, accounting for the accurate and frightening evidence of colonialism damage in neglected lands. In Rwanda the colonial expansion of the "civilized" world enhanced a tribal group to the detriment of others, institutionalizing social differences. Ethnic gaps were established to legitimize colonial power with the intention of getting petty interests for the benefit of imperialist nations in the midst of the twentieth century.

The conquest of the territory reached the point of



"Tenderness"

Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm, 1999



"Return"

Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm, 1999

denying human condition in those subjugated. They were withdrawn from the human clan. Their lives became despicable; their children ended fearing life more than death. Existential chaos was established in these people reaching fratricidal tribal violence, brutalization, to ensure a new colonial order with other hierarchies, as power was handed over to intermediaries, feuds, corrupt agents, always with the same despot interests of the old imperial chronicles.

“We only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us” (Jean-Paul Sartre)

Never did the conquest of the white over the “dark-skinned” relent; neither does now that of the powerful over the postponed. The conqueror does not care about carrying a whip. To grab the lands of the dominated and get their real possession they rely on other methods not less effective or harmful. Strategically the utilities of their efforts to seize the wealth have changed. The unfair exchange value of raw materials for finished products has the same result achieved in the past by beating. **Persistent malnutrition and ignorance lead to the creation of more than a human disgrace; it leads to the building of a sub-race, an inferior race.**

For each man bought to meet new-colonial purposes, thousands are ignored. And ignorant. Murder is committed in the name of a dogma that meets the spurious interests of the world powers. So was always man. Accordingly, is his Dantesque chronicle. That of power by force, to serve fraudulent traders who submit their fellows, compatriots, neighbors. Not any more with weapons, now they have the knowledge and the politicking of barricade speech. The bayonet only in the last instance. No one kills squarely in a trench, but through mercenaries and through the inhibiting paralysis targeted at the native, confused between resigning and disintegrating his self or, as Karl Marx said, igniting with shame a libertarian feat. Diagnostic values mentioned by Frantz Fanon in *“The Wretched of the Earth”* are now worthless, because in his essence the conqueror will not cease in his attempt, as long as he is allowed, to live differently at the expense of his vassal’s fear and hunger. Ignorance and disease are of no concern. Colonialism now offers a mask. It no longer holds the conviction or the gun. Only the strategy. It performs from the shadows. Stratifying classes. Needy countries do not even join; they surrender to being abused.

Natives should be relegated to justify dominant civilization as a superior body of knowledge, as well as of moral and ethics, albeit irreconcilable with a fair and caring human order. Culture must be changed to serve other economic dominance interests. Terror is sown. The brother becomes a foe. Sense of nationhood is subdued. But then through the thinkers people rebel. When they fall they are punished for being wild, for opposing the dominant system, for being social misfits. This vision of a few will be prosecuted and annulled, and its martyrs shown as heretics to the Great Conqueror. Fighting off colonialists becomes class division. The ignorant cannot understand the meaning of the word freedom. Fratricidal struggles with no understanding of the real enemy stalking them dictated the Rwandan genocide.

Knowing what is essential is to walk through the fire embers. Describing the fundamentals is to accept the alchemy of truths about the rel-



“Exodus”

Oil on canvas, 50 × 70 cm, 1999

ativity of any observation. We must penetrate the pain that is not owned by reason to get into the real dimension of feeling.

“Barbaroi”, foreigners with other languages, the fracture established by languages empowers hatreds. The symbol of the word grants essential power to the same object named in different languages. People do not want to lose the power of language. We never knew if the gods of those peoples were different, but man baptized them differently and endowed them with similar stories and premonitions. Each with their god in the name of God.

It is paradoxical. We look back to repeat history and its inanity has been the future with which we are seduced. The trick to sink hope in the future daunts us with the grief of memory. History should have been the lesson, but still the gallows work. Delayed civilizations dress up as barbarians. They dance in search of those who hold victories. And the circle is repeated finding in progress new joys for the mitigation of history.

The barbarians, as today’s colonialists, were determined to justify all their actions with a subtle language difference. They were only led by their lust for conquest. They lurked. Thus they forged their existence. When they lost the lust for conquest their power diluted. They joined and mixed with the culture of the conquered, losing the overwhelming momentum, but able to withstand the defeats and humiliations, they always retraced their steps until the hoarded history burdened the decision of risking their achievements. Thus, invaded by apathy they jeopardized their attempts. Perishing in their fears.

Relegated people often take those barbarians’ practices. It is the explanation of the genocide among the Rwandan tribes. The empires that lost their vocation of being an executioner are once again conquered. A dark plan that persists in its reality abandons all restraint bursting into a shout of barbarism. They come out of their slumber and from the alienation they

reconstruct the chronicle they had lost, paralyzed in the fervor of existential joy.

The true boundary is human language. And in those endless struggles for victories language amalgamates in its complement of existence. Language is the force of human awareness. Without it there would have been no imagination. Man would be embedded in a purely still existence. The word is the fundamental topic of humanism.

Colonized people fight in their freedom to defend from oppression and also from the purchased, bourgeois desires, traitors to the people's principles. This work by Maria Faraone interprets the history of man; it is not decorative as Ponciano Cárdenas defines superfluous art. Pain does not force you to be happy. Her

"black" series has technical art but it undertakes another importance: to denounce the dialectic of hypocrisy. It unearths the true intention of the usurpers. The humanism proclaimed by the colonizers is a disguise. Its heartfelt gift is used to deceit the people. Culture, language, pressures, wealth will be taken by force or deception and if they do not tolerate domination they shall fall upon them through their own brothers, utilized as mistaken mercenaries. Generations of malnourished result from being conquered by ignorance, without active participation of the usurpers. Merely by the absence of the proper awareness to defend their land, their culture, their values.

Jorge C. Trainini