



# HEGEMON

Mayra A.  
Rodríguez  
Castro





I slept under the Naidí palm. In rainforests, the leaves feed on sunlight and humid sand. The seeds are soaked in sugar-water, then boiled into honey. The sweet, said to lubricate conversation, is passed from hand to hand at nightfall.

Plants fascinated Antonio Gramsci throughout his incarceration in Apulia. He recorded a rose and even planned for a small garden. From his sister, he gathered herbs and pastinaca roots. The seeds arrived from La Piazza del Duomo, each wrapped in a calendar of flourishing months.

He gardened a flower toward the sun. In a letter, the philosopher described his touch as faltering between Rousseauian and authoritative will. Life could progress without him or else, be interrupted by imposition. The interchangeable use of *egemonia* and *direzione* in his notebooks already marked all influence as forceful. Hegemony could be as brute as the severance of a mahogany tree. Or delicate, as air blowing over grass.


He noted how milk, in the veins of a plant, travelled against gravity. The style and ovaries followed

circadian rhythms. The roots curled inward for shade. It must have been the stem that brought him visions for a theory of subordination. If the sun were a hegemon, it would arch every plant toward its centre. He speculated on femininity and masculinity, yet the formula remained incomplete. His pencil spared the hermaphroditic flower, guarding it from reason. Before Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg had tended to her own garden. She wrote from Breslau the Summer before her death; *my interest in organic nature is almost morbid in its intensity*.

Nature swamped the prison notebooks. Seeds were an idiom for rise and transformation particularly during war, military action, and class metasis. He cautioned; there would be organic movements perceived as tectonic and relatively permanent. Their occurrence is inseparable from conjectural motions. Occasional, immediate, and almost accidental. The tactics of hegemony do flourish daily.

As with the seed, orders soak before sprouting. There is no pure instant of birth, although our history of sexual instincts has envisioned nature, growth, and progress as bursting forces. To dissect the error,





one may inspect the myth of the savage. If there was ever a rigorous invention, it was her presence and murder. Her blood spilled as synecdoche for all that must be surpassed and overwritten for a new, immaculate world to emerge.

Édouard Glissant wrote that Utopia, by tradition, strives for perfection. Severe by vocation and selective by exercise, it longs for symmetry with its stipulated functions and elements. Its people would rise on the very ruins they intended to repair. Herbert Marcuse had already argued that Utopia has not escaped history. On his grave, I touch the Callicarpa berries. I hear the unimaginable may only arrive when the dead cease to feed us. When they sit, altogether outside time. Utterly evaporated.

A distinction must be made between false utopian thoughts and Utopia. If our models require homogeneity, utopian aspiration may be nothing but systematic thought. It is totalitarian ambition, disguised as Utopia, that carries massacres for the sake of a future humanity. *Utopia is not a dream, it's what is missing in the world*, pleads Glissant from Matinik. An island drowned by metaphor at hands that may

never endure the trembling of volcanic fault-lines. In *Ormerod*, his second novel, the poet immortalises the Batoutos. A people who have chosen to be invisible. Their crystalline flesh intervenes in the material world. With them, he invents what cannot be seen, or that which does not exist. A living, missing people.

My eyes turn humid at the slightest wound. There is no outright topography, if difference is to survive. The fronds and valleys will plunge in gradients. I invoke the sleeping fern for balance. The opaled Martiniquais sits at his garden of a thousand fruits. The fruit à pain, gwozey-péi, roucou, yanm, and canne à sucre, each brought from a corner of the earth. He replies lovingly to my exhalation, *mwen pitit fi renmen anpil, there is no balance*. I hear him from my ledge at nighttime. Leaves soften at the horizon without ever reaching its end. For this terrain does not exist. We sweat from the invisible chest, and skin, that is ourselves.

