

## The Textual Language of Revolution: An Interrogation into Messianic Presence

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### Abstract

The language of revolution has much to do with the idea of social redemption. The word ‘redemption’, though not very representable in terms of materialist ideology, has been significant in studies that look on revolutionary, anti-establishment politics from the prism of theological processes. The idea of theologico-political has been a case of curious importance since the times of the European enlightenment. With the separation of state and religion (at least in legal terms but never enough), the tenets of morality and rationalism, have eyed on the overt detachment of philosophy and religion till the latter’s engagement with materialist dialectics. Materialist studies with their ‘subversion’ of ideational ‘knowledge’ in favour of ‘phronesis’ and ‘praxis’ were bound to face the problem with ‘deconstructionist’ politics and its ethical neutrality or vagueness. In what may be termed as the ethical turn in ‘the post-modern condition’, religion is being revisited albeit in terms of liberation theology with a strident anti-oppressive character.

Redemption, with its theologico-political connotations, has been deeply analysed in the early works of Walter Benjamin. His interest in the elements of Judaic philosophy and his radical conception of ‘messianic politics’ has been significant to understand his later day engagement with Marxist politics. In his early days, Benjamin associated revolutionary politics with the theologico-political possibilities and the understanding of force/violence in terms of historicity. What becomes interesting to study, here, is Benjamin’s parallel between revolutionary thought and its expression in language to that of the language of ‘revelation’. In this paper, I specifically deal with this problem and explore the nuances into the language of revelatory/revolutionary politics. In what can roughly be called as a Marxist-messianic conception, I attempt to study the inherent symbolism in *Kabbalic* language with respect to the mystical belief system. I draw upon the writings of Dr. Michael Laitman and Gershom Scholem to conceptualize how linguistic mysticism works with respect to spirituality. In Judaism, the idea of ‘revelation’ features prominently in the manifestation of ‘messianism’ and our ability to understand it. Similarly, I draw a parallel with political ‘messianism’ by reading through revolutionary speeches and enunciations from three revolutionary movements of the twentieth century that, had in them, great messianic possibilities. I take up the speeches of Charu Mazumder from Naxalbari, Mao Zedong from the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Fidel Castro from the Cuban war of Independence. I study symbolism associated with their speeches regarding the emancipatory values of ‘freedom’ and ‘socialism’, ‘revolution’ and ‘community’ to understand if these ‘abstract’ values having their basis in trans-historical thoughts (despite being immanent in their own historical realities) are ‘manifested’ in mass culture if we locate it from a Marxist-messianic frame of reference. I look at symbolism that was ‘revealed’ to the leadership or the political philosophers and the (im)possibilities in communication of ‘meaning’ between them and mass participation.

I, also, draw from the 'theory of dissensus' proposed by Jacques Ranciere with his distinction between political lyricism that is semantically charged and polemical politics (politics on ground) which with its perpetual repetition in symbolic usage leads to the 'erosion of meaning'. Through this, I attempt to look at the development/degeneration of meaning in word-symbols in the initial and latter stages of revolutionary movement.

**Keywords:** revolution, revelation, messianism, language, symbolism, meaning, speeches, politics

## **The Textual Language of Revolution: An Interrogation into Messianic Presence**

### **On Kabbalah: The Language Of Jewish Mysticism**

To understand language both through its 'instrumentalist' and 'realist' mechanisms would be incomplete attempts to deal with the problem of 'messianism'. The language of 'messianism' as we come across in Kabbalic reading of Judaic texts have their essential foundation in an elusive course where expressions work not to mediate between God and the seeker through a direct communicative basis but to create explanatory semantics through construction of a dichotomy. There is the dichotomy of a God who is purely perceptible as against One who nourishes himself in his essential presence. To exist in essence is to testify through denial: denial of an absolute form of comprehension, of an absolute body of meaning and moreover through a denial of an absolute certainty of being present. A presence in essence is a presence through qualitative function and is subjected to different interpretations based on different spatio-temporal/social contexts. For let us say the essence of poetry in a poetic piece will have different connotations to different people at different times or the essence of nostalgic attachment to self and one's psyche will vary from a particular situation to the other. In this, there is nothing concretely tangible that would bring forth the same set of connotations at most times. This presence of an idea through essence is based on a sort of a particular degree in manifestation that with its different forms of representation will alter and re-define its character (and thus itself). This is dynamic and can be put to context with the continual understanding of its complimentary and contradictory characters to ascertain for a centrally defining form.<sup>1</sup>

In theological or philosophical problems, the other dimension of tension between individual subjective understanding and its constitutive/oppositional relation with a common social standard (through the relations of power) adds on to this problem of essences. This very problem of dynamic, subjective interpretations and re-interpretations with every new revelatory feature jeopardizes a definite presence (or a positive understanding of it) and thus leads on to pose a greater philosophical question: can an idea or a concept that dwells in parts through subjective experiences really vouch for some form of affirmative existence?

However, the problem here is not just of phenomenology alone but appertaining the dimension of linguistics. The idea of language whether in its strict communicative or reflective forms is

contrarian to the mystical idea of essential presence or one could say that language in its functional aspect is a medium to neutralize what Agamben calls ‘Voice’ in the language-speech historical split or Derrida’s ‘the absent metaphor’.<sup>ii</sup>

In the Derridean paradigm, the ‘deconstructionist’ method puts into question both the intended ‘fixedty’ of meaning formations and the stability of authorial genesis. The ideas of Derridean deconstruction and post-modern literary theory have asserted enough on the contexts of relativity and plurality of semantic signification.<sup>iii</sup> However, the interpretation of the mystical texts differ from generic aspects of deconstruction fundamentally in that it does not only seek to understand the “floating signifier” (as in the absences and presences of deconstructionist behaviour) or the deferred symbol-referent equation alone but also on the specialised meaning formation in sentences through a sort of symbolism that ties together notions of a hidden world existing parallel to the material, sensual world. A world where every phenomenon occurring in the sensual dimension has a corresponding origin in the hidden world.<sup>iv</sup>

In extremely elusive texts like those of the Kabbalah, the idea of representation is both on symbolic and semantic planes. Most philosophical and religious ideas in the Judaic texts have a very definite set of associations which on mystical interpretation are represented through symbols that are intriguingly similar or closely different in nature. The Kabbalah scholar, Dr. Michael Laitman asserts, “Torah in its original is recorded as a single word without gaps. Later, this single word was divided into words. They, in turn, are divided into letters and letters into elements. As a result, we come to analyze a letter: a dot line and a line that comes out of it. The black dot on a white background represents source of life, that is, life emanating from it. If the light descends from above downwards, that is, from the creator towards creation, then a vertical line symbolizes this. A horizontal line symbolizes the Upper force relating to the entire existence.”<sup>v</sup> This intriguing idea of encoding through closely related symbols, re-arranging themselves within textual space in accordance to subtle changes in interpretations are, in fact, messages that can be read only through proper skill. With every subtle change in hermeneutics, the symbolic and graphical mode of representation undergoes a change which is minute enough to be misunderstood or misinterpreted owing to the fact that “it is not enough to simply read the text...*The Book Of Zohra* depicts all properties and combinations of light and vessel...tells us what each element of a letter means. Each letter represents a certain state.”<sup>vi</sup> This idea of letter is crucial to understand the universal idea of the Judaic mystic thought.

The letter is a combination of the black and the white. To quote scholar Dr. Michael Laitman, “White background is simple. This is light, which is invariable and thus unperceivable to us. Whatever we are capable of discerning can only be expressed only by restricting the propagation of this white light. Different kinds, or levels of restriction, are called letters....In this way, a letter expresses the measure to which the properties of the Creator differ from the properties of creation in our consciousness. Properties of the Creator are absolutely white and incomprehensible to us. In contrast, we rank and explain our relationship to the Creator as we sense ourselves in relation to him. This relation determines our symbol, letters and our comprehension as well.”<sup>vii</sup>

Gershom Scholem, whose references will be instrumental in understanding the tenets of the Kabbalah language, throws more light on the linguistic patterns of Jewish mystic thought. Scholem develops the “science of Kabbalah language” with a confrontation and a confluence between the linguistic symbolism that has been integral to the ethos of Jewish religious

experience (often with a historicist method that takes into account all the major developments of Jewish cultural existence). This is against “the critique of metaphysics” that was formulated by Nietzsche to refer to the post-modern world.<sup>viii</sup> In his essay, “The Name Of God and the Linguistic Theory Of The Kabbalah”, Scholem proposes three broader principles to dwell on the theory of Kabbalah language: that concerning the ontology of the Kabbalah language, a plural politics of hermeneutic interpretation and a theory of representation. The ontology of language strikes a parallel against the ontology of the world-in-existence; the world as in manifested forms bear a symbolic relationship to the 22 letters that form the core of the Hebrew alphabet system.<sup>ix</sup> Again in his other essay called “On the Meaning Of the Torah”, he explains, “The process which the Kabbalists described as the emanation of the divine energy and divine light was also characterised as divine language...they speak of attributes and spheres of lights but in the same context they speak also of divine names and letters of which they are composed...The secret word of the Godhead is a world of language.”<sup>x</sup> The idea here is clear: language is depicted to be the “medium through which the spirituality life of man is accomplished...as a medium through which mystery is revealed.”

This conception is significant to trace back to the idea of symbolism. Symbolism with its two associated components represent two different realities of signification: the external level of meaning formation and the deeper semantic connotations of an abstract idea. Even Benjamin’s ideas of the allegory and symbols can be utilised to understand the difference. Allegory is dynamic and open-ended, a sensuous representation of an abstract, a representation of the particular though the general. But that is through a distinct and discernible ‘mediacy’ of a signifying order. Symbols are rigid and “frozen”, with an arrested moment that baffles distinction between the two planes of signification; the general is represented “not as a dream or shadow, but as a vivid and immediate revelation of the undiscoverable.”<sup>xi</sup> The language of revelation is essentially embedded in the language of symbols. Scholem asserts, “It is in this sense that the awareness of the symbolic character of religious images and knowledge means, for Scholem, the continuous possibility of bringing in new symbols and the continuous attempts to erect bridges between symbols and transcendent realm—again, accompanied by the consciousness of impossibility of making the bridge reach the transcendental pole.” This dual act of referring to the transcendental or to put it in another way the “inexpressible” idea/presence against the confines of the real sensual expressible figurative symbol is both problematic and sustainable.

The manifested world and the Torah are “mutual reflections as well as extensions of each other.”<sup>xii</sup> If the language of the Torah or the language of the God is a symbolic ‘materialization’ (through its phonic sounds) and can be determined as a function of energy, it is the symbolic surface of the sensual that refers to the “inner property” of language. This is done when some form of the understandable, divine meaning falls short of complete revelation. Hence, the “inner quality” of language will always be insufficient to completely reveal the idea that it strives to express.<sup>xiii</sup> Language, then true to its post-modern and mystic connotations will be ‘impure’ in its constant displacement of the “authentic” and the “unknown” and rooted in “nothingness.”<sup>xiv</sup> Here, “nothingness” stands as one that ‘cannot be ever known’ against one that never exists. The former assuring some form of presence and therefore some form of divine sanction and surety of cause (or legitimacy), the latter denying the entire structure that has been built on essences.

Two points will be important to understand the associations that I intend to make through this discussion on letters: invisibility and the narrative of perception. First, the fact that Kabbalic literature was one area of special interest to Gershom Scholem who had majorly influenced the theological conceptions of Walter Benjamin. This has effectively been displayed in the idea of ‘messianism’ that he had built in his project. The God of Judaic mysticism is unknown and non-perceptible, his name is only taken through disguise in chants and hymns. To that extent the certainty of God is either so intense and expansive that can be compared to the white background in letters within Kabbalic symbolism. This is through constructing individual relations with God (the black signs) and God features in a ‘negative mode’ of essential existence. That which I call the ‘negative mode’ of existence is one that would affirm its presence through negating any visible manifestation, the Heideggerian “always already here” without any positive form to count on.<sup>xv</sup> It is negative because of its absence and the vacuum it creates; this vacuum ironically presumes a structure (unknown) that holds what is visible and readable (the orthography of Kabbalic texts). The Kabbalic language with its indulgence in “hidden semantics” is a significant case to study with respect to revolutionary language and the idea of messianism-marxism. Revolutionary language that depends on the idea of a divine event has to search for the locations of mystic interpretations within the Marxist framework just as Kabbalic interpretations re-read Judaic scriptures through symbolic significance. Here, I suppose it will not be too far-fetched to draw an analogy between the idea of Kabbalic mysticism as an alter-narrative to the orthodox rabbinic culture and concomitantly and that of messianic revolutionary discourse against that of pure class-based analysis.

### **Lyricism and Revolutionary Language: Languages of ‘Divine Violence’**

From the language of the Jewish Kabbalah, let us shift our focus to the language of revolution. In association with the previous chapter, my endeavour would be to look into the dynamics of revolutionary discourse against the very ideas of ‘messianism’ that we have discussed in the Jewish tradition of the Kabbalah. Since the theoretical foregrounding of the messianic tradition has been premised upon Judaic thought and by scholars like Benjamin and Scholem, it would be significant to look into the idea of revolutionary language from the perspective of another Jewish thinker and Marxist scholar Jacques Ranciere. Ranciere would be instrumental to look at revolutionary language and to deal with its essential semantics owing to his ideas on politics and aesthetics both within the political paradigm and against lyrical poetics.<sup>xvi</sup> Before understanding Ranciere’s conceptions of language and signification, his ideas on ‘dissensus’ requires a brief mention. Ranciere’s ‘dissensus’ is grounded on similar planes as that of Walter Benjamin. This is notable when it comes to the ideas of ‘contingency’ and free-play of agency within the dimensions of political life and aesthetic practice. He is far from theology and he understands politics not by the distinctions that Benjamin or Agamben had sought to make between the ‘triangularities’ of *bios*, *zoe* and *states of exception* but as hierarchical sets of social arrangements.<sup>xvii</sup> Ranciere treads beyond classical Marxism to propose that ‘disruptions’ (almost in the same breath as Benjamin’s) cannot be merely economic or confounded within the political sphere but would require dissolution of the perceptual and conceptual orders in which the arrangements have been embedded, that which he refers to as the “distribution of the sensible”.<sup>xviii</sup>

The second argument that is crucial to Ranciere is that of the definition of ‘aesthetics’ that he proposes. To him aesthetics would be “a particular regime of artistic practice...the field of

experience, severed from its traditional reference points, is therefore open to new structuring through the free play of aestheticization”.<sup>xi</sup> His idea of “equalities” supposes a particular formation of the sensible independent from an existent sensibility. To him, while the political dimension exists “above all in the framing of ‘we’, a subject of collective demonstration...”, aesthetics is divergent in that “it does not give a collective voice to the anonymous. Instead it re-frames the world of common experiences as the world of shared impersonal experience.”<sup>xx</sup> Hence, Ranciere’s understanding of poetics is through politics, not the political of the socially constructed relations but of the sensory politics in language.

Given the contemporary context of research ideas, it would be superfluous to mention that revolution or any other form of disruptive, and by that I mean both positive (movements towards democratic ends) and negative (oppressive and tyrannical) events has a distinctive cultural foundation that makes it possible. The ideas of Althusser and the politics of ideology is an obvious statement on it.<sup>xxi</sup> My endeavour here is to study that very cultural paradigm that makes revolutionary communication possible; the ‘culturing’ of language to make an event possible *vis-a-vis* its semantics and pragmatics.

Ranciere in a chapter called “From Wordsworth to Mandelstam: The Transports of Liberty” that appears in his *The Flesh of The Words*, deals with the lyrical and the romantic with the revolutionary. Here, again, it would be digressive to deal with romanticism as an important symptom of revolutionary thought.<sup>xxii</sup> However, aligning with his ideas on the autonomous aesthetic “distribution of the sensory”, the greater part of his essay deals with lyricism against the twin conceptions of the “nature of the represented” and “the method of utterances.”<sup>xxiii</sup> To address the issue of representation, one necessarily has to delve into the question of utterance. Revolution being a quest for an ‘utopian’ urge for “many equalities”, is more reflective than analytical to a point where analysis takes on the language of a ‘dream’, a ‘thought’ over emancipatory politics. Lyricism of the romantic expression is through the subjective I and the metaphor of ‘accompaniment’: “the question of lyricism emerges when poetry becomes aware of itself as the act of accompanying itself as the ability of the I to co-exist with its saying...subjectivity of a traveller who passes through a certain territory, makes words coincide with things, utterances with visions and implicates in the travel some relationship and we of the community.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Here, the metaphor of the transport is the conduit of the attachment between words and things, of an idea and its material reality. The other argument that would be significant again is the ‘immediacy’ of the sensory aspect of lyricism that Ranciere, unlike Saussure, thinks of as a sort of a mutual relationship between words and things, that which dissolve their distinct identities till a moment of break where they (the words and the things) undergo the necessity to recover their autonomy for ‘survival’. Now, this moment of break is the moment when the accompaniment of the subjective ‘I’ to the metaphorical object faces the ‘polemical’ and tears upon the polemical threat of ‘transport’ towards a deflected path. The separation of the words and things at that juncture necessitates a ‘return’ journey, a journey that assures the recovery of meaning.<sup>xxv</sup> What Ranciere means by the ‘polemical’ is the distinction between the aesthetic revolution (language and ideology) as opposed to the purely political, the latter which he views as ‘corrupted’ (like Benjamin’s idea of the ‘rotten’ human law) and thus polemical. The polemical, then, becomes a sphere where there is loss of ‘meaning’ from where the ‘sensory writing of the aesthetic’ has to differ from ‘the sensory march of the political’.

One way to understand why Ranciere had viewed the realm of pure politics as ‘polemical’ and corrupt can be understood if we refer to his texts like *Althusser, Its Politics and Poor* and *Disagreement*. Ranciere never believed in the intellectual philosophical tradition and conceived it to have allied with the state even when it pontificated to have stood for the oppressed. In these books he speaks broadly about the Western philosophical system from Plato to Althusser and even chided Marxist theorists. In the former text, he discusses Althusser and is extremely critical of his belief in the overwhelming effect of ideology reducing the populace to non-thinkers. He believes that ideology is restricted in its attempts to influence minds and human nature, by default, is inclined towards egalitarian thinking despite the ideological state apparatus. He elucidates on the democratic faculty of human mind in *The Liberated Spectator* and insinuates that it is the political order and institutions that force structures of hierarchy upon societies. These societies however retain their original bent towards democracy and thus never completely succumb to ideological forces of the state. Hence, Ranciere harbours deep disbelief for the ‘messiahs’ and the ‘mythic’ both, he believes in the people and propounds for changes in the cultural domain to bring true democracy in politics.

Ranciere’s theory on revolutionary aesthetics would insinuate a strong philosophical analysis. To Ranciere, the failure of most revolutions stares not at the activity of the participants in the movement (through the lens of primary analysis) but through the ‘betrayal’ of meaning or which I may call as the ‘sacrifice’ of references, the dissociation of metonymy and metaphors, the ambivalence of the political subject towards the polemical. The return of meaning occurs into the hermeneutical circle where words are independent as words, have identities in ‘positive meanings’, where signification is eradicated between words /meaning and the referent objects of signification. To understand the problem, the idea that the word-signifiers would derive meaning only by referring to the referent-objects will appear to be problematic given that the production of meaning never occurs between any direct interaction of words/images and the objects. These occur by the phenomenological impressions/reflections derived from it; of course the direct politics of identification of object-realities would not be in terms of what we catch sight of or experience within the sensory world but by their qualitative differentiation.<sup>xxvi</sup> The idea of the ‘qualitative’ has always belonged to the domain of psychological conceptions and thus built on dynamic, transient and relative reception of realities. It is in these porous receptive spaces where meaning is constructed and is prone to change with the change in perspectives of reception (that which Wittgenstein superficially calls ‘use’). In these spaces of qualitative comparison, meaning *vis-a-vis* the entire process of referencing takes on different and layered dimensions and thus we reach the birth of the rhetoric.

Rhetoric is one of the precise devices of persuasion; in aesthetics rhetoric takes on figurative forms of relation between words and things, ideas and realities. In the section called “Captive Swallows” of Ranciere’s *The Politics of the Poem*, Ranciere uses Osip Mandelstam’s poem “The Twilight Of Liberty” as an instance to understand the relations of semantics and signification, and he analyses instances of discourse (here poetic) where lyrical ‘accompaniment’ has to dissociate their respective spheres of aesthetics and polemics to realize back meaning.

Ranciere uses Mandelstrom to depict his problem with the ideas of ‘symbolism’. Now symbols form those parts of rhetoric that cut through similes and metaphors. An image of a thing when used to focus on the qualitative aspect of another thing becomes a symbol through the virtue of its repetition. Symbol, then, becomes a function of rigidity; the close association between two

things which once bonded over a quality, loses its meaning with continuous repetition to an extent that the entire signifying process is reduced into infinite representations of the arbitrary. This is what Ranciere calls as “a forest of symbols”.<sup>xxvii</sup> Mandelstam in his essay “On the Nature Of the Word” asserts, “The symbolists have neither words nor things, only the ghosts of words and ghosts of things, only images that resemble other images....the rose is the image of a sun and the sun the image of the rose; the turtledove is the image of the young woman and the young woman the image of turtle-dove. Like animals to be stuffed, images are emptied of their substance and filled with foreign substance...a workshop full of stuffed animals...nothing wants to be itself.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

### **Symbolism and Revolutionary Language**

When meanings are ‘emptied’ for references i.e. where each image yoke an attachment to the other without any/little ‘truth’ to ‘meaning’ (‘meaning’ that has eroded by the ‘state capture of the revolution’ as the symbols capture poetic expressions), symbols become half-truths. It does not appear plausible to go as far as to proclaim that the qualitative meaning between two images disappear completely but it is eroded to an extent where the post-revolutionary state can capture words into casual usage and through a rhetoric of positive outreach betray the process of consummation through which meaning is formed. For in a revolutionary discourse, meaning is perhaps less created in between the lines of polemical language, manifestos or agenda than through effective praxis. My first argument then would border upon Ranciere’s thought but would stretch further to propose that the meaning in revolutionary events is formed in between references, tropes and actions. Now, in symbolic representations of ‘half-truths’, while meaning eludes its real form, symbolic usage in its overwhelming presence is located within the order of the mythic---the cyclical order of causality and ‘casualty.’ Symbols are causal in their fixedty, in their obvious references, ‘the red sun’ for ‘a new political order’, ‘blood’ for independence, revolutionary flag for liberty. The fact that historical dialectics is a movement towards progression would mean that the conditions of materiality would drastically differ from a previous historical point of time and hence demand an invention in language. To say that language will differ on contexts or on situational politics is an obvious understanding. But what concerns us here is the politics of representation. If the ‘red sun’ would be of same significance to a new order when state brutalities, especially of authoritarian regimes, (many of them that has been historically communist as well) such states utilise a vanguard discourse in killing dissent. There meaning is eroded and radically altered. That takes us again to the politics of legitimization of actions through words: meaning is charged/eroded with the use of language to veneer actions. For language is perhaps the ultimate ground of politicising aesthetics without making aesthetics predominantly polemical (or that which we call ‘the march’ of politics). This also would mean that actions that belong to the political (or polemical) space is the juncture from where words have to embark on their return journey to renew their ‘truth content’. The questions that would arise here is what happens when actions compliment their symbolic representations in revolutionary usage? Here, it would be important to understand that the idea of the symbolic arises only with repetition. When actions compliment representations, the language is ‘free’ and at most allegorical but when symbolism takes over language, actions are already known through their execution at some previous point of history and at a similar instance. If a similar instance had existed, then the mythic order has been perpetuated despite ‘messianic intervention’ ; the

‘messianic bodies’ had failed to transport the ‘messianic idea’ into ‘messianic action’ and the condemnation of mythic action recurs in each crisis through the language of the symbols. Now, we have to remember that Ranciere’s order of the aesthetic has been distinctive from that of the political-polemical. If revolutionary language is overtly political, how do we refer to the aesthetics of it given that every linguistic use is primarily aesthetic even in its political obviousness. The aesthetic dimension of “distributed sensibilities” revolves around the conception of impersonal experience and in that way it parallels the political ‘collective’: ‘we’. But here what appears to be a problem lies in Ranciere’s idea of lyricism and metaphorical transport against the argument for ‘impersonal experience.’ Both the idea of a subjective enunciation and an alignment of lyrical words to objectified representations would not create the same dimension of semantics among masses. Revolutionary discourse aims at collective catharsis but for a collective experience of cathartic release, the ‘meaning’ must necessarily be the same. But does subjective lyricism that is purely personal; that which might render only different extent of material understanding to different people prove effective in facilitating a cathartic meaning? For ‘fixedty’ in semantic significance, the lyrical meaning has to be ‘sacrificed’ and through its death mummified to create a moment of collective experience. The lyrical, subjective enunciation that contains ‘truth’ for the ‘messianic body’ requires to be uttered and re-uttered to an extent where its transport to the masses occurs with complete erosion of that ‘truth’ (meaning).<sup>xxix</sup> The loss of ‘truth’ and concomitantly ‘meaning’ would mean that the collective catharsis when attained is not through the ‘truth’ (the idea or the meaning) that had referenced word and things in signification but through an ‘emptied’ or disfigured semantic brokenness. The ‘idea’ of the political aesthetics is supplanted for polemical excesses; there remains no dialectics of *telos* but a blindness of action that does not seek meaning but finds an end in execution of judgement. This ‘execution of judgement’ becomes the drive that replaces the sites of meaning construction and forces ‘judgement’ as the arbiter of meaning and hence, justice.<sup>xxx</sup>

As discussed earlier, symbolism in revolutionary language dwells in this idea of ‘judgement’, the unmistakable lyricism that contains ‘truth’ for the enunciator is a language fraught with meaning. But the same language when interiorized by the masses becomes a language of judgement. Here, then, we are constructing two parallel planes from the same language. Ranciere is correct to understand the ‘symbolic’ in terms of loss but that can happen only through repetition. The language of lyricism, when abound in symbols, is not necessarily belonging to the dimension of ‘judgement’. Judgement enters with the loss of lyricism, with the advent of the impersonal, and thus with the democratic distribution of sensibilities, human history also risks judgement and a return to the mythic order.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Ranciere has of course denounced symbolic language in its overarching risk to betray meaning. But lyrical symbolism that resists the polemical contain ‘truth’ in a similar way as the metaphorical journey of accompaniment is truthful till it meets the sensory polemical. In page 10 of this chapter, I have stated that the actions and representations are ‘true’ in ‘free language’; however free language is creatively lesser in lyrical potential with respect to symbolic associations. Lyricism is creative, it demands a creative language and in every ‘creative’ language lies the dichotomy of the ‘manifested’ and the ‘unknown’ where creation lives in a potential presence of expression. Symbols though rigid in word-object associations leave a non-conquered space of association in their initial formulation, a qualitative parallel between two

dimensions that fosters the association which inhabits a space of rapture and rupture---a space that while conjoining two dimensions also threaten to break the ‘accompaniment’.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In fact, in the text *The Future Image*, Ranciere exclusively studies the ideas around symbols to propose a binary between what he calls symbols that represent ‘radical democracy’ against ‘regressive mysticism’. Ranciere believes that the association of qualities and perceptions (meaning) of a referent should be a dialectical equation with the image. That would leave questions for enquiry and analysis and place ‘meaning’ of primary importance in a symbolic relationship. En contraire, mystic symbolism poses the image to be of primary importance and prevents any interrogation to its referents. In a society that is always transient, it is probable that ‘meaning’ to image-symbols will change over time. If any enquiry towards the truth in the image-referent association is not analysed across time periods, a symbol may actually start representing that which it never meant to. And in this course, masses are belied when they fail to denote the change in meaning with changing circumstances. In that everything is done in the image and what it should represent and not it truly has started representing. In this, Ranciere fears betrayal of ‘meaning’ and revolutions. He suggests that such symbolism is abstruse and almost mystic and allowed to continue by a few who betray the movement in the name of intellectual or political legitimacy. This works almost like a sanction in terms of orthodox elitism and thus is regressive and elusive.

### **Symbolic Messiah in Revelatory and Revolutionary Language: Co-ordinates of Mythic Rupture**

Here, our elaborate discussion of Kabbalic language is essential to understand symbolism. The Kabbalic symbolism is not open to all, such symbols are only comprehensible to people who know the art of interpretation and are efficient to construe ‘meaning’ in aesthetic and revelatory junctures.<sup>xxxiii</sup> We remind ourselves that symbols in the Kabbalah indicate not only a mode of representation of God but also a spiritual state of existence for the worshipper and is believed to generate divergent fields of mystical meaning for different worshippers. This corresponds to the different spiritual capabilities of each worshipper. Hence the manifestation of ‘messianic meaning’ is determined by the mystic in those ‘non-conquered spaces of association’ (through revelation or through meditation). Like the ‘messianic bodies’, meaning belongs to the domain of the subjective, of the private and the lyrical. The ‘distribution’ of such semantics is not possible in the language of revelation; in political aesthetics, the ‘distribution of sensory meaning’, as discussed, risks effacement and erosion. Now, both revelatory and revolutionary language is symbolic in its composition: both are lyrical in communication, intensely subjective but often providing with a sense of the communitarian: ‘we’.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Here, the problem revolves around the intention of utterances: both forms of language originates from the subjective ‘I’ that constitutes some form of ‘truth’ that which along with a few other truths from ‘messianic bodies’ constitute the constellation of truths that Benjamin finds in fragmentariness.<sup>xxxv</sup> As discussed, the drives between symbolic associations, those of rapture and rupture, that create the possibility of transport also channels the probabilities of messianic advent. Symbolic language in its ‘non-acquired space’ and through its ‘absent’ logic of meaning formation constitutes the bridge between the historical event of the revolution and the messianic hidden world.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It is only the symbolic language that is symptomatic of a historical world creation, it is only symbolic language that allows messianic presence through the absent logic of association, it allows the

‘absence’ to affirm ‘truth’. Free verse without any space for absence would not bear the seeds of messianic intervention for the messiah, like the language of the Kabbalah, makes his present felt through symbols, through the absent logic of association. However, the paradox of revolutionary hope and post-revolutionary despair, the tension between human history and mythic history, the probability of one coinciding with the other is a product of the ambivalence in the symbolic language itself: of symbolic truth and messianic manifestation against loss of meaning and collapse into the mythic dimension. ‘Messianism’, then, develops as a concept that promises manifestation with an equal promise of self-abnegation.

Now, within this fold of symbolic hermeneutics, I shall try to analyse language, politics and semantics of three revolutionary movements which I take up in detail in the next chapter. All the three movements brink upon revolutionary optimism and post-revolutionary despair. The first revolution is from sixties Bengal where the Naxalbari movement had gained huge support and garnered hope from national and international spheres. However, continuous state oppression coupled with revolutionary excesses had imploded the movement by 1972. The movement could not dislodge the ruling Congress government from power or overthrow representative democratic structures for a more direct, communist programme. In the testimonies that I shall broadly take up in the next chapter, we shall try to experience the messianic and mythic experiences of bodies that had been a part of the movement. In this chapter, I shall try to look into the language of the Naxalbari movement, the messianic idea in its linguistic lexicon against the mythic loss of meaning.

### **The Language Of The Naxalbari Movement: Shattered Messianic Possibilities**

From the Naxalbari movement, I shall try to focus on some speeches by the revolutionary stalwart Charu Majumder. Charu Majumder’s language is usually ‘free’, however there are more than a few arresting moments of messianic interpretation, those that have been used closely on a strong Marxist-Leninist association. In his speech entitled “What Possibility The Year 1965 Is Indicating?” (1965), Majumder uses spontaneous language in his oratory with lesser bearing on symbolic references.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

*“There are some comrades who get scared at the mentioning of armed struggles, and go on seeing the specter of adventurism. They think that the work of building a revolutionary party has ended with the very adoption of the programme in other words with the adoption of the programme that is the strategic documents at the Seventh Congress of the Party. Merely from some resolutions on movements adopted at the Party Congress, they arrived at the decision as if besides the present stage of revolution and the class composition, the tactics of the present era had also been decided at the Seventh Congress. From their words, it appears as if peaceful mass movement itself is the main tactics of struggle of the present era. Although they do not openly state Krushchov's tactics of peaceful transition to socialism, what they want to say almost amounts to the same thing. They want to say that there is no possibility of revolution in India in the near future. So at present, we shall have to move along the peaceful path. In the era of world-wide struggle against revisionism, they cannot openly state the revisionist decisions. But they are abusing as adventurist and police spies anyone who is speaking of armed struggle.*

*Yet, even if we leave out the mass movement of Kashmir, the government has killed at least 300 people during the last eight months, the number of prisoners have risen to several thousands and one after another, the States have been shaken by mass movements. What programmes are we placing before these agitators? Nothing! On the other hand we are dreaming — under our leadership organized peaceful mass movements will grow up. This itself is a shameless instance of revisionism. We are still unable to realize that in the present era we cannot build up peaceful mass movements. For, the ruling class will not give us and is not giving us either, such an opportunity. We should have drawn this very lesson from the tram fare resistance movement. But we are not taking that lesson. We have become anxious to organize satyagraha movements, we are not realizing that in the present era this satyagraha movement is bound to fail. It does not mean that satyagraha movements are altogether outmoded today. All types of movements have to be carried on at all ages; but the form of the main movement depends on the ruling class. The present feature of our age is that the government is fighting every movement by violent attacks. So for the people, the armed resistance movement has appeared as the most important necessity. So in the interest of mass movements, the call should be given to the working class, the fighting peasantry and every fighting people: (1) Take to arms; (2) Form armed units for confrontation; (3) Politically educate every armed unit. Not to give this call means pushing without any consideration the unarmed masses to death. The ruling class wants that, for in this way they can break the strength of mind of the fighting masses. The agitated masses today attack railway stations, police stations, etc. Innumerable agitations are bursting forth upon government buildings, or on buses, trams and trains.*

*This is like that Luddites' agitation against machines. The revolutionaries will have to give conscious leadership; strike against the hated bureaucrats, against police employees, against military officers; the people should be taught — repression is not done by police stations, but by the officers in charge of police stations; attacks are not directed by government buildings or transport, but by the men of the government's repressive machinery, and against these men that our attacks are directed.*

*The working class and the revolutionary masses should be taught that they should not attack merely for the sake of attacking, but should finish the person whom they attack. For, if they attack only, the reactionary machinery will take revenge. But if they annihilate, everyone of the government's repressive machinery will be panic-stricken. We should remember that the teaching of Comrade Mao. Mao Tsetung's: "The enemy's armoury is our armoury." To build up that armoury the working class should take the lead. It should give leadership to the peasantry in*

*the villages, and those very armed units will be transformed into guerilla forces in the future. If these armed units also are trained in political education, they themselves can build base areas for struggles in the countryside. Only through this method we can make successful the People's Democratic Revolution. By forming these fighting units among the working class and the revolutionary classes, we will be able to build up that revolutionary Party, the Party which can stand firmly on revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and can carry out the responsibility of the coming age. The government is failing to supply food to the people, so the people have become agitated. So it is in the interest of the reactionary bourgeoisie of India that India has attacked Pakistan. The US imperialist plan of the world war is also operating behind this war. By attacking Pakistan, the ruling class again wants to create a tide of bourgeois nationalism. But this time it is clear like daylight that India alone is the aggressor. So, as a result of the defeat of the Indian army, the anti-government struggle will fast crystallize among the masses. So Marxists want today that the aggressive Indian army should be defeated. This defeat will create new mass agitations. Not merely wishing that they should be defeated; Marxists at the same time should make efforts so that this defeat becomes imminent. In every province of India agitations should be created on the lines the mass agitation in Kashmir is progressing. The ruling class of India is trying to solve its crisis by imperialist tactics. To resolve the imperialist war we should advance along the path determined by Lenin. "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" — we should understand the significance of this slogan. If we can realize the truth that the Indian revolution will invariably take the form of civil war, the tactic of area-wise seizure of power can be the only tactic. The tactic of seizure of power of China is the only tactics. The tactic which was adopted by China's Great Leader Comrade Mao Tsetung — the same tactic should be adopted by the Indian Marxists.*

*From this year's experience the peasants have seen that the government did not take any responsibility of providing food to the poor peasant, but on the contrary the repressive machinery of the government was unleashed the moment the peasant masses took to the path of any movement. Over and above this, by attacking Pakistan, more burdens were imposed upon the peasants. So the poor peasants should get prepared for next year. If they are deprived of the crops in the field, they will have to die of starvation next year. So prepare yourselves now. How can the struggle to preserve the crops be conducted ? (1) Organize armed forces in every village. (2) Make arrangements so that these forces can collect as much arms as they can and fix secret places to keep the arms. (3) Fix places for hiding the crops. In our past days we did not make any permanent arrangement for hiding the crops. So most of the crops were either destroyed or fell in the hands of the enemy. So*

*permanent arrangements should be made to keep the crops hidden. Where can they be hidden? In every country of the world, wherever the peasant fights, crops have to be hidden. For the peasant, the only place to hide the crops can be under the earth itself. In every area, every peasant will have to make a place to hide the crops under the earth. Otherwise by no means the crops can be saved from the enemy. (4) Besides armed units, small bands of peasants should be formed to keep guard, and maintain communications and other work. (5) Every unit will have to be given political education and political propaganda should certainly be carried on. It should be remembered that it is only the political propaganda campaign that can make this struggle more wide-spread and strengthen the fighting spirit of the peasant. Two to three months are now left for harvesting. Within this period the Party units in the peasants areas should carry on political and organizational preparations to continue this work, and should attain good grasp of the tactics of secret work.”*

However, the idea of symbols that could be derived from his enunciations is primarily through the repetitive device, repeated associations of words and things to a point that they become more reductive and eroded after a certain point. However, there is very little presence of what we understand as purely metaphoric-symbolic references. The speech that I have referred to in the previous couple of sentences broadly talks about ‘adventurism’, ‘revisionism’, ‘secret work’ and ‘repressive machinery’. Given the Marxist use of parables, and here those more specialized upon by Lenin and Mao, none of the word-symbols are difficult in comprehension. Of course, the historical context had been different here referring to a particular idea of revolutionary ethos (the Naxalbari Movement) within the generic ideological frame of references.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The four symbols that I have picked up here have distinct sets of echoes within the language itself, ‘adventurism’ is ‘armed rebellion’, ‘revisionism’ is ‘non-armed movement’, ‘secret work’ is organization on ground and ‘repressive machinery’ is the state apparatus. ‘Armed rebellion’ an integral point in Marxist discourse would be for Benjamin “the divine judgement that strikes”, however ‘armed rebellion’ entails bloodshed and hence here, the ‘messianic body’ endorses bloodshed as the primary way for divine retribution. The meaning is created through associations of ‘arms’ and the non-mentioned component of ‘blood spilled’. Hence, armed rebellion creates an association with bloodshed and divine violence. There can be little argument to contradict Agamben on revolution as a form of violence against the every-day exercise of legality (the ubiquitous violence present in political life) and the ‘state of exception’ as the condition to negate legal violence. But the image of blood, again, becomes central if we equate the state of exception to the state of divinity.

Messianic probability, in Majumder’s language, will lie in that which is not referred to: the idea of bloodshed and in the mythic order. Now, I had proposed that bloodshed can never be a function of the ‘historical order’ but then we would notice that the question of political stagnancy might be a concern. If there is no radical movement, how is divine violence possible? The idea of annihilation is echoed in Majumder’s own words as well. Majumder says, “The working class and the revolutionary masses should be taught that they should not attack merely for the sake of

attacking, but finish the person whom they attack. For if they attack only the reactionary machinery will take revenge.”<sup>xxxix</sup> The motor verb of ‘finishing’ someone is metonymic, referring to finish the oppressive machinery through the people who belong to it. If divine violence is executed through messianic bodies, it has to combat the mythic order in a way that messianic bodies or the beings who bear with them the potential to initiate the historic order is left to survive. Divine annihilation destroys the older order, not its own chosen.

The ‘secret work’, the one that defies state surveillance is the one that is partially manifested in the divine language of the revolution, it explicitly speaks of collecting ‘arms’, arms that is essentially mythic in nature and can be read as a reference for undeterred violence. Arms stand as the messianic symbol that like messianic bodies originate from the mythic order but contain possibilities of constructing human history; symbols that, like divine violence, are exterminated after itself. However, as the Naxalite movement progressed, there arose cases that show extermination of those who bore allegiance to the messianic conception of the revolutionary event. These bodies that worked against a ‘deviant’ meaning of the revolutionary language were sacrificed as brutally as every other species of ideological dissent or suspicion.<sup>xl</sup>

This loss of meaning from destroying the mythic to the messianic itself is through repetition of the symbols in a way that meaning changes in course of the movement. Consider in the June of 1969, Majumder had told a researcher, “If today’s guerrillas are not given proper political training with ideological incentive, then there is every chance that very soon they will simply degenerate into mere bandits.”<sup>xli</sup> But no statement of this sort has been enunciated in a persuasive revolutionary discourse. This ‘meaning’ is ‘implied’ and remains in the silence of the non-manifested order, it is enclosed in the non-acquired space of symbolic association which admits the possibility of the messianic.

What is interesting in Majumder’s case, is the fact that semantic erosion in revolution had affected him as well. With the unleashing of brutal repressive force by the state, the revolution turned towards indiscriminate killing. To quote the researcher, “the revolution had lost its normal sense of proportion and balance with the butchering of Majumder’s close comrades by the authorities of law and order.”<sup>xlii</sup> Majumder had started contradicting a lot of his ideals with the intensification of the movement and phrases like ‘red terror’ (the naxalite movement) against white terror (state repression) became infamous; Majumder himself exceeded his ambit in proclaiming in April, 1970 when he said: “I shall be more happy if you even dare to smash the Calcutta university building.”<sup>xliii</sup> Or consider “By adhering to the parliamentary road, the revolutionaries across the world have allowed a formidable blood-debt to accumulate over ages. The time has now come to settle the blood doubt.”<sup>xliv</sup> The mythic symbol of the blood barges into human historical potential so that the advent of the messiah is radically exploded with the radical alteration of symbolic significance.

In another instance, Saroj Dutta, another pioneer leader of the revolution had spoken of the ‘theory of the uncritical submission to one man’ that had displaced the meaning of party organizations, including every Party Congress that had been held at that time. The change in ‘meaning’ from “collective movement from the masses” to “the cult of personality”, the latter being a typical symbol of reactionary mythic forces. The aesthetic domain of ideology that has had received great emphasis in Marxist-Leninist pedagogical doctrines in making a revolutionary probability is completely imploded by the polemical sphere of ruthless butchering.<sup>xlv</sup> The meaning of “the will of the masses” become “unflinching loyalty to the leader”, “principles of

the party committee” erodes to “principle of unquestionable leadership”.<sup>xlvi</sup> The messianic slogan of “peasants should reap the next harvest” fades into “burn harvests of those who will betray the revolution.”<sup>xlvii</sup> Thus, Ranciere’s ‘return of lyricism’ becomes instrumental in understanding the relationship between the mythic order of ‘pure action’ against the messianic ‘pedagogy of language and consciousness.’<sup>xlviii</sup>

What would be interesting is also to note that there have been a few instances where the spoken language and action have never contradicted more. Majumder has been famous for his ‘annihilation theory’ (which I have quoted), his condemnation for nationalist movements made him command his followers to “burn and break” Tagore and Subhas Bose’s memoirs/works, he talked about how the Naxalite movement had the greatest number of the working class. However, Majumder had repeatedly denied the theory as his own conception, and he was found to have stashed Tagore’s works. Again, data suggests that the movement was mostly thronged by educated and semi-educated petty bourgeoisie.<sup>xliv</sup> This would not just be a matter of deception or that of the personal-public divide. The irony is intended: meaning and representation altered, the political descent into polemics and revolutionary significance challenged: here, ‘fidelity to truth’ that invites messianic manifestation is denied. In terms of symbolic interpretations, the outer plane of manifested language (or enunciations) fail to refer to the thing they profess (the inner plane of semantic definition); the ‘hidden’ presence of God contradicts with a different polemics (that substitutes ‘original’ presence) and messianic possibility is deferred and hence everything means that which it does not.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Language Of The Chinese Cultural Revolution: ‘Messianism’ Subverted?**

The next movement that I would focus on would be that of the Cultural Revolution in China. Here, to deal with the problem of language, I shall look into some speeches of Mao Zedong that spans from Mao’s rise to prominence since the First Revolutionary Period in the Chinese Republic and continues with ‘The Great Leap Forward’ extending till the end of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao’s speeches completely toed the Marxist line: historical re-reading, class based analysis, a free, seemingly spontaneous discourse on ‘execution’ and ‘organization’ but nevertheless rich in symbolism.<sup>ii</sup> Obvious recurring symbols of ‘imperialism’, ‘mass resistance and struggle’, ‘guerilla and armed resistance’ have been overwhelmingly constant throughout his speeches. These being word-symbols that have a definite reference point in actions would meet history in its ‘erosion of meaning’. But in Mao’s enunciations, there has been a discrete pattern of word-symbols used which in common rhetoric bore an “emotive and evaluative” relationship. For example there has been a constant juxtaposition and contrast between the expression of light and darkness, associations of forward and backward movement or say, symbols of sanctity and defilement, etc.

For instance, let us take up Mao’s speech concerning the Red Army and the requirement of it.<sup>iii</sup>

### ***THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION***

*The present regime of the new warlords of the Kuomintang remains a regime of the comprador class in the cities and the landlord class in the countryside; it is a regime which has capitulated to imperialism in its foreign relations and which at home has replaced the old warlords with new ones, subjecting the working class and the peasantry to an even more ruthless economic exploitation and political oppression. The bourgeois-democratic revolution which started in Kwangtung Province had gone only halfway when the comprador and landlord classes usurped the leadership and immediately shifted it on to the road of counter-revolution; throughout the country the workers, the peasants, the other sections of the common people, and even the bourgeoisie, have remained under counter-revolutionary rule and obtained not the slightest particle of political or economic emancipation.*

*Before their capture of Peking and Tientsin, the four cliques of the new Kuomintang warlords, Chiang Kai-shek, the Kwangsi warlords, Feng Yu-hsiang and Yen Hsi-shan, formed a temporary alliance against Chang Tso-lin. As soon as these cities were captured, this alliance broke up, giving way to bitter struggle among the four cliques, and now a war is brewing between the Chiang and the Kwangsi cliques. The contradictions and struggles among the cliques of warlords in China reflect the contradictions and struggles among the imperialist powers. Hence, as long as China is divided among the imperialist powers, the various cliques of warlords cannot under any circumstances come to terms, and whatever compromises they may reach will only be temporary. A temporary compromise today engenders a bigger war tomorrow.*

*China is in urgent need of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and this revolution can be completed only under the leadership of the proletariat. Because the proletariat failed to exercise firm leadership in the revolution of 1926-27 which started from Kwangtung and spread towards the Yangtze River, leadership was seized by the comprador and landlord classes and the revolution was replaced by counterrevolution. The bourgeois-democratic revolution thus met with a temporary defeat. This defeat was a heavy blow to the Chinese proletariat and peasantry and also a blow to the Chinese bourgeoisie (but not to the comprador and landlord classes). Yet in the last few months, both in the north and in the south, there has been a growth of organized strikes by the workers in the cities and of insurrections by the peasants in the countryside under the leadership of the Communist Party. Hunger and cold are creating great unrest among the soldiers of the warlord armies. Meanwhile, urged on by the clique headed by Wang Ching-wei and Chen Kung-po, the bourgeoisie is promoting a reform movement of considerable proportions in the coastal areas and along the Yangtze River. This is a new development.*

*According to the directives of the Communist International and the Central Committee of our Party, the content of China's democratic revolution consists in overthrowing the rule of imperialism and its warlord tools in China so as to complete the national revolution, and in carrying out the agrarian revolution so as to eliminate the feudal exploitation of the peasants by the landlord class. Such a revolutionary movement has been growing day by day since the Tsinan Massacre in May 1928*

### **REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE AND SURVIVAL OF RED POLITICAL POWER IN CHINA**

*The long-term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political power completely encircled by a White regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world. There are special reasons for this unusual phenomenon. It can exist and develop only under certain conditions.*

*First, it cannot occur in any imperialist country or in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but can only occur in China which is economically backward, and which is semi-colonial and under indirect imperialist rule. For this unusual phenomenon can occur only in conjunction with another unusual phenomenon, namely, war within the White regime. It is a feature of semicolonial China that, since the first year of the Republic [1912] the various cliques of old and new warlords have waged incessant wars against one another, supported by imperialism from abroad and by the comprador and landlord classes at home. Such a phenomenon is to be found in none of the imperialist countries nor for that matter in any colony under direct imperialist rule, but only in a country like China which is under indirect imperialist rule. Two things account for its occurrence, namely, a localized agricultural economy (not a unified capitalist economy) and the imperialist policy of marking off spheres of influence in order to divide and exploit. The prolonged splits and wars within the White regime provide a condition for the emergence and persistence of one or more small Red areas under the leadership of the Communist Party amidst the encirclement of the White regime. The independent regime carved out on the borders of Hunan and Kiangsi Provinces is one of many such small areas. In difficult or critical times some comrades often have doubts about the survival of Red political power and become pessimistic. The reason is that they have not found the correct explanation for its emergence and survival. If only we realize that splits and wars will never cease within the White regime in China, we shall have no doubts about the emergence, survival and daily growth of Red political power.*

*Second, the regions where China's Red political power has first emerged and is able to last for a long time have not been those unaffected by the democratic revolution, such as Szechuan, Kweichow, Yunnan and*

*the northern provinces, but regions such as the provinces of Hunan, Kwangtung, Hupoh and Kiangsi, where the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers rose in great numbers in the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1926 and 1927. In many parts of these provinces trade unions and peasant associations were formed on a wide scale, and many economic and political struggles were waged by the working class and the peasantry against the landlord class and the bourgeoisie. This is why the people held political power for three days in the city of Canton and why independent regimes of peasants emerged in Haifeng and Lufeng, in eastern and southern Hunan, in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area and in Huanggan, Hupeh Province. As for the present Red Army, it is a split-off from the National Revolutionary Army which underwent democratic political training and came under the influence of the masses of workers and peasants. The elements that make up the Red Army cannot possibly come from armies like those of Yen Hsi-shan and Chang Tso-lin, which have not received any democratic political training or come under the influence of the workers and peasants.*

*Third, whether it is possible for the people's political power in small areas to last depends on whether the nation-wide revolutionary situation continues to develop. If it does, then the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will, moreover, inevitably become one of the many forces for winning nation-wide political power. If the nation-wide revolutionary situation does not continue to develop but stagnates for a fairly long time, then it will be impossible for the small Red areas to last long. Actually, the revolutionary situation in China is continuing to develop with the continuous splits and wars within the ranks of the comprador and landlord classes and of the international bourgeoisie. Therefore the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will also continue to expand and gradually approach the goal of seizing political power throughout the country.*

*Fourth, the existence of a regular Red Army of adequate strength is a necessary condition for the existence of Red political power. If we have local Red Guards only but no regular Red Army, then we cannot cope with the regular White forces, but only with the landlords' levies. Therefore, even when the masses of workers and peasants are active, it is definitely impossible to create an independent regime, let alone an independent regime which is durable and grows daily, unless we have regular forces of adequate strength. It follows that the idea of "establishing independent regimes of the workers and the peasants by armed force" is an important one which must be fully grasped by the Communist Party and by the masses of workers and peasants in areas under the independent regime.*

*Fifth another important condition in addition to the above is required for the prolonged existence and development of Red political power, namely, that the Communist Party organization should be strong and its policy correct.*

### **THE INDEPENDENT REGIME IN THE HUNAN KIANGSI BORDER AREA AND THE AUGUST DEFEAT**

*Splits and wars among the warlords weaken the power of the White regime. Thus opportunities are provided for the rise of Red political power in small areas. But fighting among the warlords does not go on every day. Whenever the White regime in one or more provinces enjoys temporary stability, the ruling classes there inevitably combine and do their utmost to destroy Red political power. In areas where all the necessary conditions for its establishment and persistence are not fulfilled, Red political power is in danger of being overthrown by the enemy. This is the reason why many Red regimes emerging at favourable moments before last April in places like Canton, Haifeng and LuFeng, the Hunan-Kiangsi border area, southern Hunan, Liling and Huangang were crushed one after another by the White regime. From April onward the independent regime in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area was confronted with a temporarily stable ruling power in the south, and Hunan and Kiangsi would usually dispatch eight, nine or more regiments--sometimes as many as eighteen--to "suppress" us. Yet with a force of less than four regiments we fought the enemy for four long months, daily enlarging the territory under our independent regime, deepening the agrarian revolution, extending the organizations of the people's political power, and expanding the Red Army and the Red Guards. This was possible because the policies of the Communist Party organizations (local and army) in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area were correct. The policies of the Border Area Special Committee and the Army Committee of the Party were then as follows:*

*Struggle resolutely against the enemy, set up political power in the middle section of the Lohsiao mountain range, and oppose flightism.*

*Deepen the agrarian revolution in areas under the independent regime.*

*Promote the development of the local Party organization with the help of the army Party organization and promote the development of the local armed forces with the help of the regular army.*

*Concentrate the Red Army units in order to fight the enemy confronting them when the time is opportune, and oppose the division of forces so as to avoid being destroyed one by one.*

*Adopt the policy of advancing in a series of waves to expand the area under the independent regime, and oppose the policy of expansion by adventurist advance.*

*Thanks to these proper tactics, to a terrain favourable to our struggle, and to the inadequate co-ordination between the troops invading from Hunan and those invading from Kiangsi, we were able to win a number of victories in the four months from April to July. Although several times stronger than we, the enemy was unable to prevent the constant expansion of our regime, let alone to destroy it, and our regime tended to exert an ever-growing influence on Hunan and Kiangsi. The sole reason for the August defeat was that, failing to realize that the period was one of temporary stability for the ruling classes, some comrades adopted a strategy suited to a period of political splits within the ruling classes and divided our forces for an adventurous advance, thus causing defeat both in the border area and in southern Hunan. Comrade Tu Hsiu-ching, the representative of the Hunan Provincial Committee, failed to grasp the actual situation and disregarded the resolutions of the joint meeting of the Special Committee, the Army Committee and the Yunghsin County Committee of the Party; he just mechanically enforced the order of the Hunan Provincial Committee and echoed the views of the Red Army's 28th Regiment which wanted to evade struggle and return home, and his mistake was exceedingly grave. The situation arising from this defeat was salvaged as a result of the corrective measures taken by the Special Committee and the Army Committee of the Party after September.*

### **THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT REGIME OF THE HUNAN- KIANGSI BORDER AREA IN HUNAN, HUPEH AND KIANGSI**

*The significance of the armed independent regime of workers and peasants in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area, with Ningkang as its centre, is definitely not confined to the few counties in the border area; this regime will play an immense role in the process of the seizure of political power in Hunan, Hupeh and Kiangsi through the insurrection of the workers and peasants in these three provinces. The following are tasks of great importance for the Party in the border area in connection with the insurrections unfolding in Hunan, Hupeh and Kiangsi: Extend the influence of the agrarian revolution and of the people's political power in the border area to the lower reaches of the rivers in Hunan and Kiangsi and as far as Hupeh; constantly expand the Red Army and enhance its quality through struggle so that it can fulfil its mission in the coming general insurrection of the three provinces; enlarge the local armed forces in the counties, that is, the Red Guards and the workers' and peasants' insurrection detachments, and enhance their quality so that they are able to fight the landlords' levies and small armed units now and safeguard the political power of the border area in the future; gradually reduce the extent to which local work is dependent on the assistance of the Red Army personnel, so that the border area will have its own personnel to take charge of the work and even provide personnel for the Red Army and the expanded territory of the independent regime.*

**ECONOMIC PROBLEMS**

*The shortage of necessities and cash has become a very big problem for the army and the people inside the White encirclement. Because of the tight enemy blockade, necessities such as salt, cloth and medicines have been very scarce and dear all through the past year in the independent border area, which has upset, sometimes to an acute degree, the lives of the masses of the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie, as well as of the soldiers of the Red Army. The Red Army has to fight the enemy and to provision itself at one and the same time. It even lacks funds to pay the daily food allowance of five cents per person, which is provided in addition to grain; the soldiers are undernourished, many are ill, and the wounded in the hospitals are worse off. Such difficulties are of course unavoidable before the nation-wide seizure of political power; yet there is a pressing need to overcome them to some extent, to make life somewhat easier, and especially to secure more adequate supplies for the Red Army. Unless the Party in the border area can kind proper ways to deal with economic problems, the independent regime will have great difficulties during the comparatively long period in which the enemy's rule will remain stable. An adequate solution of these economic problems undoubtedly merits the attention of every Party member.*

**THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY BASES**

*The Party in the border area has another task, namely, the consolidation of the military bases at Five Wells and Chiulung. The Five Wells mountain area at the juncture of Yunghsin, Linghsien, Ningkan and Suichuan Counties, and the Chiulung mountain area at the juncture of Yunghsin, Ningkan, Chaling and Lienhua Counties, both of which have topographical advantages, are important military bases not only for the border area at present, but also for insurrections in Hunan, Hupeh and Kiangsi in the future, and this is particularly true of Five Wells, where we have the support of the people as well as a terrain that is especially difficult and strategically important. The way to consolidate these bases is, first, to construct adequate defences, second, to store sufficient grain and, third, to set up comparatively good Red Army hospitals. The Party in the border area must strive to perform these three tasks effectively.*

The speech while analysing the possible conditions of the requirement and survival of the red army, pits the colour 'white' to the "bourgeois-democratic forces" of the Chiang regime. What is interesting to note is that the same red/white opposition gradually changed to red/black dichotomy where the colour black now was used for referring to bourgeois speeches "black language" or "black books" (reactionary texts) or a group of bourgeois intellectuals referred to as a "black gang".<sup>liii</sup> The colour black (and grey) was stigmatised to an extent where everything that was black was mythic and belonging to the realm of legal violence. Red was for the messianic, red was represented through sun and the daytime where masses chanted "Sun, rain and dew nourishes the pine trees, Mao Tse-tung's thoughts nourishes heroes....his thought is red,

red sun in our hearts”.<sup>liv</sup> Or consider Yao Wen-yuan say, “Light the flames of criticism...mobilize the masses and start a fire to burn ourselves, but also take the initiative to appear and carry out self-revolution.”<sup>lv</sup> These associations that undoubtedly bear messianic imagination become rigid with time and slowly degenerate in their referential significance. The “fire to burn ourselves”, to burn the mythic order of legal repression and the messianic bodies themselves almost echo as an overt expression of messianic function. This same association of ‘red’ as that of salvation, of creation degenerate into ‘blood’ when Mao himself addresses the party council and calls upon his dissident erstwhile comrades to either “re-join the red army or spill their own blood” in an almost subversive cultural idea.<sup>lvi</sup> This degeneration of messianic liberation into mythical tropes again could be analysed by the sharp critique of the Chinese world in the years after the Cultural Revolution died down.

Interestingly, there is a specific dimension of symbols that have been used to look at the contours of open/closed references. For instance, let us take up the parallels of counter-revolutionaries and dissidents (in fact most dissidents were the counter-revolutionaries in the latter half of the movement): the dissidents as “snakes crawling on the ground... have to be dragged out”, “the fig leaves must be ripped off” or “wolves in sheepskin” also border upon the semantics of a hidden dimension that requires to be brought to light. This appears almost in opposition of a hidden messianic world that has to be manifested within the material world; messianic advent is ‘pure’ revealing itself but here the dissidents that were once ‘messianic’ but now ‘mythic’ need to be ‘revealed’ as ‘impure’ within the ‘pure’ realm of the already manifested messianic that harps on bloodshed to save itself. Thus, the ‘hidden’ and the ‘revealed’ become interchangeable. Or let us say through the ‘sacrifice’ of the messianic bodies (now the dissidents), the mythic tendencies that threaten the messianic would overpower in the contest to revert back into cyclical life. Clearly, once the ‘messianic’ now the ‘mythic’ and once that was considered as the ‘mythic’ domain now becomes the domain of the messianic, for the ‘revolutionaries’ shedding blood beyond the revolution. This leads to complete erosion of the Idea and its meaning. Symbols degenerate to mean nothing.

The other symbol of filth/cleanliness is also equally significant in this regard. The cultural movement expressed through Mao’s own language has often referred to itself as “a broom”, an agent of purgation. Consider, “The turbulent stream of the revolutionary mass movement has been washing away the filth left by old society.” Or “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, like a mighty red torrent, is sweeping away the old”.<sup>lvii</sup> Such instances flooded the newspapers during the revolutionary time. The idea of the revolutionary event as a cleansing agent was proclaimed right from the first incidences of revolutionary occurrence. But the idea of the filth changed with time. “The bourgeoisie-democrats are the filth trying to sabotage the revolution, the masses who are yet to join the Red Army will do in time. Educate them. If they do not understand the revolution, explain it them. If they do not agree, teach them dialectics. If they question us or turn us foes, with power to spare we must pursue the tottering foe.”<sup>lviii</sup> Or say the famous enunciation of Mao Zedong, “Contradiction among the people may arise but has to be resolved through principled struggle which is non-antagonistic. But contradiction between people and enemy must be antagonistic and as class struggle.”<sup>lix</sup> This within half a decade turned to “Once you start beating the dog, beat it to death.”<sup>lx</sup> Or, “None that oppose our method is our people, they are enemies of people and have to be finished.”<sup>lxi</sup> This rupture of symbolic violence into physical violence, implosion of the messianic paradigm, the ‘blurred’ understanding of

people and the enemy or people turning into enemy, the unsettling ever-changing semantics, and the degeneration of the mystic symbol into polemical representation works through language. Aesthetics and polemics merge into despair.

To cite an instance by Lai Ying a revolutionary who disagreed with the methods of Mao's supporters in the communist party had personally undergone imprisonment is confessional in his book and asserts, "...in addition, the Maoists were no longer prepared for any form of countenance. Whereas for Mao, revolutionary officials could be differentiated from capitalist roaders on the basis of unselfishness and convivial affinity for the masses, for the Red guards, lacking sufficient information for such fine determination, the two were defined in consistent structural terms, unexceptionally being suspected of being bourgeois. This not only led to the purge of most officials with any experience to run the country but made it impossible to establish any form of authority for the revolutionaries. If One Red Group would seize power, it would promptly be assaulted by another Red group, which denounced the former in the same symbolism previously used against authorities."<sup>lxii</sup> And Mao had displayed this development with considerable dismay: "This is extreme anarchy, it is most reactionary...they do not refer to anybody as chiefs, they always have to be chiefs now."<sup>lxiii</sup>

### **The Curious Cuban Case: Language and Messianic Implosion**

My final study will be on the Cuban revolution of 1959 that has served as 'a model' not only to the Latin American world with regards to socialist transformation but also of revolutionary 'messianism' for decades. The movement, popularly, symbolic is now an expression against both colonial and neo-colonial forms of government; the twin figures of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara would undoubtedly be the greatest of the messianic figures in 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary history. Guided by the principles of 'radical equality' and 'social justice', there has been clear evidences of post-revolutionary despair which for long, has been ignored by orthodox revolutionary practitioners. Revolutionary language, in the Cuban context is permeated with vocabularies of combat and struggle against the 'counter-revolutionaries', imperialists and profit makers, of masses without revolutionary consciousness. To read Cuban history of the revolution, the idea of 'mass mobilization' would be significant as a recurrent symbol of political discourse. 'Mass mobilization', 'class conflict', and 'street battle' have gained importance as methods of revolutionary action and thus have constituted the progressive field of politics (that which bears the potential to degenerate into polemics). On the other hand, the messianic ideas of liberation from foreign colonialism and imperialism and the intra-national bourgeoisie dominance has an unmistakable 'truth' content to it with the ideas of 'justice' percolating down to the most deprived of the classes.

"Imperialism wants to do battle, mobilize its nest of worms, promote subversion, it doesn't matter. There is also virtue in this, it invigorates the revolutionary, it excites him, it quickens his fighting spirit....The Revolution needs the enemy, it does not fly from the enemy, it needs the enemy. To develop himself, the revolutionary requires his anti-thesis, the counter-revolutionary."<sup>lxiv</sup>

Castro's ideas on messianic struggle are firmly established upon 'dialectics'. Castro, to start with, had adopted Marxist-Leninist political blueprint belatedly, he has repeatedly denied having communist allegiance during the initial period of the revolution.<sup>lxv</sup> He had reportedly asked the US for financial aid till he had ensured himself of a communist route to success.<sup>lxvi</sup> Added to

that, there has been several criticism and suspicion on his revolutionary understanding by staunch Marxists.<sup>lxvii</sup> Unlike the Soviet or Chinese wars of socialist transformation, the 1959 movement did not have a prior vision of a communist transformation in theory *vis-a-vis* class analysis.<sup>lxviii</sup> During the Russian revolution of 1917 and through the Chinese civil wars, an analytical study of the different classes and class alliances had already been made, unlike in Cuba. To add to the complexity, Cuba had varied and complex race realities that had been absent in Russian and Chinese understanding of the revolution.<sup>lxix</sup> With this the fact that Castro himself belonged to the reformist orthodox party prior to the military take-over by Batista and his sudden induction to revolutionary revelation have been questions of disagreement for communists following the Marxist-Leninist line.<sup>lxx</sup> My intent in delineating these points is chiefly to understand that the Cuban character of revolutionary discourse had borne its own moments of tension between the discourse paradigms and its political culture. Apter, in his study, comments that more than any other form of revolutionary consciousness (class based or through party structures), Castro excessively banked on what he calls the “mobilization system.”<sup>lxxi</sup>

He says, “The mobilization system contains an implicit assumption: that which divides men from one another is due to unnatural causes...men must be freed from these differences through by acts of leadership and exceptional public will. Harmony from the political sphere depends on the messianic leader who points out to the dangers and noxious poisons of faction. Many such leaders are charismatic and represent ‘the one’. They personify the monistic quality of the system. To achieve such one-ness, mobilization system begins by politicising all political life. As a result, politics as such disappears. This is in keeping with monistic political belief. Conflict is not only bad but also counter-revolutionary.”<sup>lxxii</sup>

What is of interest here is the fact that unlike the Bolshevik revolution or the Chinese cultural period or the Naxalbari movement, there was never any space left for ‘dissidence’ on the method/conceptions of the movement right from its initiation; that is to say that the Cuban revolution never had an organized party structure that could accommodate the cultures of ‘debate’ and ‘discussion’ (which symbolically stand for the ground to defer ‘execution’ and invoke less bloodshed) which for most other communist movements had been an essential feature in its revolutionary consciousness.<sup>lxxiii</sup> It was only in the latter stages of proletarian revolution that the mythic order in the image of ‘excessive blood’ threatens messianic advent in other movements; however in Cuba, per contra, ‘messianic meaning’ was always fused with its contradictory implications within the mythical structure; in other words messianic conception became only the ‘end’ and never the ‘means’ for a liberated form of historical creation.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Castro’s significance as an orator had been well-founded right from the inception of his political career with his win in seat of the Cuban Congress; his rhetorical ability had huge outreach. Castro’s revolutionary rhetoric was based on creating a common notion of “a useful past”, a “collective idea” that affirms a revolutionary ‘Cuba for all Cuban cultures’ and simultaneously distances allegations of opportunism.<sup>lxxv</sup>

The symbolism in Castro’s speech is spectacular. Recurrent references to word-symbols like that of ‘freedom’, ‘true democracy’, ‘cultural heterogeneity’, ‘inclusivity’, ‘true consciousness’, ‘love for liberty’, or ‘use of violence against will of people’ have been used throughout the revolutionary course of the movement.<sup>lxxvi</sup> And they had their associative parallels too: ‘freedom’ is ‘tyranny being thrown’, ‘true democracy’ is ‘obligation to the history and to the people of

Cuba', 'cultural heterogeneity' is 'Cuba for all Cuban cultures', 'true consciousness' parallels with 'safeguarding the revolutionary outcome', 'love for liberty' to 'prevent taking over the reins of power', and 'non-violence' as a function of 'soul searching'.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

One of the most prominent speeches by Castro was delivered on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1959 on his arrival in Havana. In the very initial words of his address he asserts, "I believe this is the turning point in our history: the tyranny has been overthrown. The rejoicing is immense. But yet there is much to be done. We mustn't fool ourselves into believing that the future will be easy; everything will be more difficult in the future...Telling the truth is the first duty of the revolutionaries. Deceiving the people, raising false hopes, always brings the worst of consequences and it is necessary to warn everyone against over-optimism."

Again, he furthers this idea of allegiance to 'truth' by saying, "The Revolution is still being led by the army in the battle order. Who, now and in the future, may be the enemies of the revolution?..The worst enemies which the Cuban Revolution can face is us revolutionaries."

His speech continues to self-search if the revolution was being guided by some 'ideal' or 'use it as a pretext' to 'establish another ignominious dictatorship.' He points out that the gravest crime then would be to "act against nation's peace."<sup>lxxviii</sup> Castro, in fact, tributes all revolutionary prisoners and those massacred from various anti-government organizations who did not ally with Castro's revolutionary party.<sup>lxxix</sup> And what is remarkable in his speech is the overt assertion of the messianic philosophy that comes closest to Benjamin's assertion "of spilling out blood". He says, "The 26<sup>th</sup> July Movement not only devised the guidelines for war but also established how the enemy was to be treated during the hostilities. This was perhaps the single revolution in history where not a single prisoner of war has been murdered, in which no wound has been abandoned..." Or "can anyone, aspiring to be a minister seek to shed blood in this country? No!"<sup>lxxx</sup> And finally, he puts forth the most important symbol of the revolution, that which denounces 'cult personality' in favour of 'freedom!'

All these are essentially belonging to the dimension of the 'messianic', divine justice that sanctifies revolutionary violence as divine violence. But most importantly what is remarkable about Castro is that he identifies the potential of divine violence being reverted back to the mythic existence through indiscriminate spilling of blood. Messianic symbolism that identifies the threat of mythic rupture promises to 'arrest' those moments of divine manifestation. This would also mean that through this conscious identification of mythic/historic rapture by Castro, the symbols of the political can conjugate with that of the lyrical, thus optimising Rancier's misgivings.

But political symbolism, as mentioned earlier, lies in the realm of material actions. For Castro, unlike Mao or Majumder, post-revolutionary language never degenerates into open calls for 'blood' or 'killing dissent', his symbolic analysis would be on the association of a repetitive vocabulary that draws meaning out through contradictory actions. The politics of contradiction is not linear in the sense that word-images and action-substances never align to a singular understanding but actions themselves contradict each other from time to time as to conceive the 'lie' that relegates revolutionary 'truth' content.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

To cite instances, one might re-read his re-affirmation to adopt the 1940 constitution in post-revolutionary Cuba (at least on three occasions, 1953, 1959 and 1962). Or promising measures like a profit sharing system for workers with industries and re-distribution of land for landless labourers.

But in post-revolutionary Cuba, Castro ruled by decree only till 1976 after which he formed a new constitution occupying three of the most powerful positions in the govt and declaring himself to lead through these positions “till he chose to step down.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> ‘Cult personality’ establishes itself over ‘freedom’ and aligning with Castro’s almost prophetic assertion ‘revolutionaries begin to become its greatest enemies’. The ‘power of people’ become synonymous to a filtered form of bureaucracy, ‘cultural heterogeneity’ gets suffused under sole admission of Cuban communists and ‘to soul search’ becomes ‘purging souls of the republic to abide by one vision for Cuba.’<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Every case that challenged the govt in various facets of public life were dealt with an iron-hand and immediately codified into law, the same ‘law creating and law preserving violence’ that Benjamin relates as a primary function of the mythic order. Under Castro’s regime, the Cuban govt de-recognized human right organizations, other political parties, independent labour unions and a free press. These include international organizations as the Red Cross Organization and Human Rights Watch to appraise the condition of human rights in Cuba for about fifty years.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Cuba had become “the second largest prison for journalists”, the various, almost McCarthyan waves of arrest called the Black spring. Again, this, for research purposes, allows us to have access to very limited particular cases of abuse (that I will deal with in the next chapter).

Again, the newly victorious rebels had initiated executions based on suspicion that in early 1960s climbed to excesses. Amnesty International in its five decade long documentation of human rights in Cuba has reported more than forty thousand cases where public disagreement with the government has lead to imprisonment or execution.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Under this category, fall the names of academicians, intellectuals, journalists and former allies.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The most spoken about assault on democratic gatherings would remind us of the Varela Project in 2003.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The government statements repeated the claims of ‘democracy’ and ‘vanguard politics’ as done to ward off “would be assassins and stooges” from the U.S. and that applied for independent journalists, university professors and ‘underground’ pressure groups.

Here, if we refer to the persuasive speeches of Castro, we realize that most of it could be denoted as ‘polemics’ on retrospect. The messianic bodies (the comrades who fought for the revolution) sacrifice themselves in favour of a new historic order during the revolutionary struggle of Cuba but in post- revolutionary period, they sacrifice this very Idea and their own messianic identities to embrace the causal, symbolic dualities that invite the mythic world.

The contradiction in actions can be noted in the dichotomy between a progressive health care programme and educational system that effectively speak highly of revolutionary success but at the price of sacrificing civil and political liberties, thus forming a perpetual state of tension between understanding totalitarianism *vis-a-vis* bare/historical life existence.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> The perpetual tendencies to carve out an enemy even from one’s own ( as scapegoats) betrays the messianic utopia that aesthetic language once had promised , perhaps only to be fragmented by its polemics.

Thus symbolic language and aesthetics along with the act of persuasion has played a vital role in creation of messianic utopianism. Again, language in its associations to its own semantics has dissolved meaning formation within the paradoxical interstices of ‘revelation’, ‘obscurity’ and ‘expression’. Messianic quest that lies in the half-revealed dimensions of the symbolic also bears the silence of possible implosions within both the spheres of aesthetics and politics. Thus with

every God emanating ‘presence’ looms the ‘absence’ of dissolution, putting theory and ethics under custody.

## END NOTES

<sup>i</sup> While concrete ideas incline on a singular dimension of understanding, they are based on a singular ontological and behavioural definition of function. In that there are some properties that are ‘universally’ found under definite functions. That which we can understand through ‘regular phenomena’. In case of ‘essential’ presences, the overwhelming role of phenomenology and the broad range of varied properties hinder a singular deduction of meaning which then opens up endeavours of interpretations and re-interpretations and thus is elusive in nature.

<sup>ii</sup> Giorgio Agamben in his attempt to understand the problems of metaphysics, ethics and nihilism marks the split between ‘Voice’ or muted speech against articulated speech as one of the major reasons of ‘failures’ in Western philosophical thought. He concludes that “philosophy that only thinks from the foundation of a Voice cannot deliver the resolution of metaphysics that the nihilism toward which we are moving demands. It can be resolved by existing in language without being called there by any Voice.” Here, I have used it in similar contexts where the function of language is ideally thought to be against obscurity or mystic conceptions.

See: Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History*, translated by Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (London: Verso), 1993, 16-26.

Derrida talks about the ‘absent metaphor’ in similar light though he uses it in a more positive frame of reference that ally closely with post-modern semantic plurality and cultural euphoria.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> In most mystical/theological texts, the idea of a parallel world (s) is based on the idea that any change in the non-manifested world has direct bearing on the visible, material world. For example, the recurrent concepts of heaven and hell, the world of nature in pantheistic thought, the idea of witchcraft, or even philosophical positions like that of rasa aesthetics in Indian thought---all derive from similar conception of causality, poly-temporality and multi-dimensionality.

<sup>v</sup> See: Agata Paluch, “The Power Of Language in Jewish Kabbalah and magic: how to do (and undo) things with words.”

See: <https://www.bl.uk/hebrew-manuscripts/articles/the-power-of-language-in-jewish-kabbalah>

<sup>vi</sup> See : Saul Sosnowski, “ ‘The God’s Script’---A Kabbalistic Quest”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol.19, No. 3, Tribute Issue For Jorge Luis Borges (Autumn 1973), 381-394. Also See: Steven B. Katz, “The Epistemology of the Kabbalah: Toward a Jewish Philosophy Of Rhetoric, *Rhetoric Society Quaterly*, Vol.25, 1995 :107-122.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid

<sup>viii</sup> The dichotomy of Nietzsche’s disbelief in the traditional metaphysical usage of language as against Scholem’s linguistic machinery is a contest between obscurity and symbolism.

See: Daniel Abrams, “Presenting and Re-presenting Gersholm Scholem: A Review Essay”, *Modern Judaism*, Vol.20, no.243, (May 2000), 226-243.

<sup>ix</sup> In the Sefiroth of the Kabbalists, god manifests himself in ten spheres or aspects of activity. The 22 letters are themselves a part and parcel of this area; they are configurations of the divine energies, which are themselves grounded in the world of sefiroth and whose appearance in the world either beyond, outside or beneath the realm of divine emanations is simply a process of de-refinement and an intensified crystallization of these innermost sign of things, as they correspond progressively evolving and increasingly condensed media of the creation.”

See: Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory Of the Kabbalah.”, *Diogenes*, No.79, 59-80.

<sup>x</sup> Gershom Scholem ,*On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (NY: Schocken Books) 1965, 35-36.

<sup>xi</sup> Goethe in *Maximen and Reflexionen* as quoted in Nathan Rotenstreich’s “ Symbolism and Transcendence : On Some Philosophical Aspects Of Gersholm Schoem.” in *The Review Of Metaphysics*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (June, 1978),604-614.

<sup>xii</sup> See: Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory Of the Kabbalah.” , *Diogenes*, No.79, 82.

<sup>xiii</sup> This will effectively lead to a discussion on Neoplatonism , the Torah and the ideas of Pantheism : Neoplatonist philosophy rests on ontic continuity between the hidden world and the visible world and thus reveres the presence of God in nature. Gnosticism , on the contrary, believes in one divinity that suffers a rupture with the material world which is also the world where reality of evil exists.

<sup>xiv</sup> Gersholm Scholem’s understanding of nothingness is similar to conceptualising the transcendental aspect of God. The name of God is rooted in “nothingness” i.e. beyond any lexicon of human articulation. This also becomes the ground for distinguishing between him and his creation.

See: Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory Of the Kabbalah.” , *Diogenes*, No.79, 68-129.

<sup>xv</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by M.Macquiere and J Robinson (NY: Blackwell), 1965, 22-31.

<sup>xvi</sup> Jacques Ranciere has constructed the dual spheres of the aesthetic and the political (more appropriately polemical) to understand the problems of language and praxis.

See: Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics Of Aesthetics: The Distribution Of The Sensible*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum), 2005. Also See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum),2015.

<sup>xvii</sup> Walter Benjamin has been inspired by Judaic mystic interpretation of scriptures where ‘bare’, mythical life of seamless circuitry is denounced in favour of historical agency that comes with the ‘promise’ of the messiah. Giorgio Agamben further develops on the context of bare, human life devoid of political/personal liberty (a condition called zoe) as opposed to bios which implies political life that directly partakes of sovereign rule. However, in various political regimes, the segregation of cultural/numerical/linguistic/religious minorities lead to a condition that reduces social existence to ‘bare life’ but exercises political power on those bare forms of existence. This condition can be neutralised only through working outside law, a condition called as ‘the state of exception’. Agamben opines that the ‘state of exception’ has be to the new normal to prevent reduction ogf human existence to bare life.

See: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.*, translated by Daniel Heller Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1968.

<sup>xviii</sup> Jacques Ranciere bases his political and aesthetic philosophy on the understanding of the ‘distribution of the sensible’. In the political sphere, this ‘distribution’ concerns actions that challenge the hierarchical order of a “set of social conditions”. Those actions ideally lead to ‘dissensus’ that apart from disrupting institutional rule also breaks the “perceptual” and “epistemic” obviousness of the system.

In aesthetics, this fosters the free play of aesthetic sensibilities . This constructs a form of particular partition of the sensible by disrupting the existing sensible perception. This disrupts hierarchy to build an aesthetics on ‘equalities’.

See: Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of The Sensible*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum), 2005. Also See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum), 2015.

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See: Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics Of Aesthetics: The Distribution Of The Sensible*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum), 2005. Also See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum),2015.

<sup>xx</sup> Ranciere builds his argument on ‘equalities’ that are respective to the political and aesthetic dimensions.

See: Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics Of Aesthetics: The Distribution Of The Sensible*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum), 2005, 140-142.

<sup>xxi</sup> Here, I am referring to Althusser’s ideological state apparatus that reduces subjects to a secondary point of reference.

<sup>xxii</sup> Romantic thought with its blatant statements on freedom concerning the subjective self automatically confronts the political operation of law. The various strands of imaginative dimensions that pertain to individual and social dreaming or explore the strains of Gothicism and the unconscious are all revolutionary statements against the absoluteness of the legal order. (We can refer to English, French and German romanticism for a better understanding of the strands).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ranciere speaks about the idea of ‘genres’ referring to the classical understanding of divisions between various performative/literary practices. He concludes that the classical world understood genre differentiation through the mode of representation and nature of enunciation.

See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum), 2015, 11.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid, 12, 13, 14

<sup>xxv</sup> Ibid, 18,20,22-24

<sup>xxvi</sup> Here, the sensory reception of any object or an experience is only understood through interpretation. This includes the dynamics of phenomenology and cognition.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum),2015 , 30.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The fact that word-symbols become so diverse in semantic associations that there can be no minimal point of reference become a problem of conception. Hence symbols can mean to an idea or exactly its opposite idea under similar contexts and similar relations, thus destroying any possible idea of meaning-formation. Of course I refer to the greater problematization of meaning with deconstructionist, post-modern theory.

<sup>xxix</sup> Similarly since the idea of revolution is often conceived by a few bodies that invoke the various nuances of a messianic ideal, the idea of messianic truth might not singular or whole: here, since there would be various dimensions to a revolutionary struggle: it would be plausible to understand the various facets of messianic truths as the truth cluster or the ‘constellation of truth’ that Walter Benjamin talks about in his conception about truth.

<sup>xxx</sup> To Ranciere, the perpetual ‘attachment’ of word-symbols to word-meanings lead to a form of repetition that draws out the ‘truth content’ of the meaning. Hence symbols indulge in arbitrary associations and meaning in politics is slashed in favour of polemics.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Democracy that is ideally to be run by the masses is theoretically uncertain of its relation to causality and the relapse into mythic order. The idea of democracy risks the idea of repetition which might lead to destruction of ‘meaning’ and thus preclude messianic advent within a ‘liberated ‘order.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ranciere broadly discusses the separation of aesthetics symbols and political meaning so that the ‘truth’ content (original meaning) through aesthetic symbols is preserved. This entails a ‘return journey’ for the symbol so that there is possibility of ‘original association’ again. Ironically the process of separation and accompaniment is cyclic and repetitive to create and preserve meaning while polemical repetition leads to destruction of meaning.

See: Jacques Ranciere, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum),2015 , 18.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Every idea of secular aesthetics in diverse cultural understandings bear relations to the religious sphere given that religion has been the first ‘associative’ cement of pre-modern societies.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Every messianic idea requires its consolidation through mass understanding and adoption of meaning. However the same understanding risks a return to the mythic order of repetition and destruction of meaning.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Walter Benjamin's idea of fragmented truth lies in the understanding of polymorphic but complementary ideas that bear original bearing upon life and its original essence.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> The hidden world is imagined to be a parallel world in existence that is not revealed to our sensory functions; this world establishes its relationship with the manifested world (here in term of language) through the non-acquired or non-comprehensible space within which this association is established. The 'absent' logic of the association is the logic that is non-comprehensible to human cognition and only adopted by humans through usage.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See: Charu Majumder, "What Possibility The Year 1965 is Indicating?", *The Collected Works Of Charu Majumder* (Kolkata: Deshbharati Prakashani), 2004.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> In the Naxalbari agitation, it is the Congress govt in Bengal which represents the oppressive state machinery; the historical background being rising poverty, unequal commodity distribution in the economy and the burgeoning inflation.

<sup>xxxix</sup> See: Charu Majumder, "What Possibility The Year 1965 is Indicating?", *The Collected Works Of Charu Majumder* (Kolkata: Deshbharati Prakashani), 2004, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

<sup>xl</sup> Arun Mukherjee reports in his book that the latter half of the Naxalite revolution lost its popular support after attacking schools, libraries, and institutional locations that served as cultural epicentres. To add to it, the CPI (ML) mouthpiece *Deshbharati*, edited by Saroj Dutta, whipped up murder mania. In one of its editions, it supported "induction of criminal and anti-social elements into action to ensure better score." The Naxalite dissidents who fall out of ideas of incessant murders were dubbed as "class enemies". CPI(ML) leaders who were later killed after being branded so were cadres of Asim Chatterjee, Souren Bose, Sadhan Sarkar, Shaymal Ghosh, Sudhir Chandra Nag and Kamal(?) that scored at about 500 in number. On one occasion Suniti ghosh (pen name Soumya) himself complained of a conspiracy against his liquidation. The list also includes personalities like Justice K.L.Roy of Calcutta High Court and Prof. Gopal Sen , VC of Jadavpur University.

<sup>xli</sup> See: "Face to Face with Charu Majumder", shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in, 2001, 21-22. . The researcher has preferred anonymity but has declared himself as an important member of the central committee of the CPI(ML). He was Majumder's courtier at that time. His being a courtier speaks about his significance in the party.

<sup>xlii</sup> Ibid, 24-31

<sup>xliii</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>xliv</sup> See: Charu Majumder, "Boycott Elections!" , *Selected Works of Charu Majumder*, (Kolkata: Deshbharati Prakashani), 2004.

<sup>xlv</sup> Here, ideology is supplanted by actions that make 'blood' the drawing force behind the movement and hence, the worship of personality cults that belong to the mythic domain of fascism.

<sup>xlvi</sup> See: Charu Majumder, "Develop Peasants' Class Struggle Through Class Analysis, Investigation and Study", *Selected Works of Charu Majumder*, (Kolkata: Deshbharati Prakashani), 2004.

<sup>xlvii</sup> See: "Face to Face with Charu Majumder", Shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in, 2001, 28.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Of all understanding, Benjamin's idea of messianism being momentary is the struggle between mythic symbolism and the domain of violent action that barges into revolutionary terror.

<sup>xlix</sup> See: See: Arun Mukherjee, *Maoist Spring Thunder: The Naxalite Movement 1967-1972* (Kolkata: K.P.Bagchi and co.), 2007, 122-126.

<sup>l</sup> Here, ‘rhetoric’ in ideology contends between the ‘truth content’ of the idea and a pure polemical medium of persuasion

<sup>li</sup> In fact it belongs more to Leninist thought than Marxist understandings.

<sup>lii</sup> See: Mao Tse-tung, “Why is that Red Political Power can exist in China?”, *Selected Works of Mao-Tse Tung*, Volume 1, (Hyderabad: Kranti Publications), 2011.

<sup>liii</sup> Anthony Grey, a British journalist who was made a prisoner for a few months records his surprise in symbolic tokenism. “Black paint ran down every wall. Every streets were daubed with slogans, even bed-sheets had been daubed with ‘Down with white, Down with Grey!’, even bathrooms were painted black with slogans.”  
See: Anthony Grey, *Hostage in Peking* (London: Michel Joseph), 1970, 104-105.

<sup>liv</sup> See: JMJP editorial, March 18,1967 as quoted in “Thought Reform and Cultural Revolution: An Analysis Of Chinese Polemics” by Lowell Dittmer, *The American Political Science Review*, Vo.71, No. 1, March, 1971.

<sup>lv</sup> See: Wu Pin, ‘Struggle Firmly against Class Enemies’ in JPRS, no. 39235, 46-48 as quoted in “Thought Reform and Cultural Revolution: An Analysis Of Chinese Polemics” by Lowell Dittmer, *The American Political Science Review*, Vo.71, No. 1, March, 1971.

<sup>lvi</sup> See: “Thought Reform and Cultural Revolution: An Analysis Of Chinese Polemics” by Lowell Dittmer, *The American Political Science Review*, Vo.71, No. 1, March, 1971, 75.

<sup>lvii</sup> See: “Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, *JPRS*, no. 41202 (Peking: New China News Agency), 1968 , 23-27

<sup>lviii</sup> See: John Gittings, “Inside China”, *Monthly Review*, no. 2, 1972..

<sup>lix</sup> See: Mao Tse-tung, “On Contradiction”, *Selected Works of Mao-Tse Tung*, Volume 1, (Hyderabad: Kranti Publications), 2011,54.

<sup>lx</sup> Ibid

<sup>lxi</sup> See: Mao Tse-tung, “Why is that Red Political Power can exist in China?”, *Selected Works of Mao-Tse Tung*, Volume 1, (Hyderabad: Kranti Publications), 2011.

<sup>lxii</sup> Lai Ying, *The Thirty-Sixth Way”: A Personal Account Of imprisonment and Escape from Red China*, translated by Edward Bahr and Sidney Liu (New York: Doubleday), 1974, 56-67

<sup>lxiii</sup> Chairman Mao’s speech at the meeting with Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan , *JPRS*, no.49826,44-45

<sup>lxiv</sup> <sup>lxiv</sup> George Viator, “Cuba Revised after 10 years Of Castro”, *Foreign Affairs*, Jan 1970, 312-321.

<sup>lxv</sup> Castro in fact proclaimed himself to be “an anti-communist” and the fact that his heart lay with the western hemisphere. He said, “We have declared that the democratic ideal is one that can best serve the people of this continent. Nevertheless, the economic condition of latin America make it impossible to attain their democratic ideal. Be it a dictatorship of the left or a dictatorship of the right, a dictatorship is a dictatorship.”

<sup>lxvi</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Marxist suspicion of Castro was based on his former dalliance with US, his seeking financial aid from the US and his controversial comments regarding Cubist dictatorships.

Ibid, 23-28

<sup>lxviii</sup> Castro had declared his allegiance to Marxist Lennist ideology in 1961.

<sup>lxviii</sup> Chinese and Russian pre-revolutionary study by revolutionary parties extensively conducted on the basis of class and gender unlike the Cuban movement that made Marxism the primarily ideology in the middle of the movement

<sup>lxix</sup> Cuban history witnesses the composition of Cuba's society based on several racial alliances and ambivalences, a rather peculiar effect of cross-cultural colonization. This also complicated the Marxist uniformist line of class analysis that tweaked Cuban approach t the movement

<sup>lxx</sup> See: Paul C Sondral, *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, ( New York: Braziller), 2001, 28.

<sup>lxxi</sup> David E Apter , *Political Religion in the New Nations*, ( New York: Braziller), 1998, 43-46.

<sup>lxxii</sup> David E Apter , *Political Religion in the New Nations*, ( New York: Braziller), 1998, 43-46.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> See: Irving Pflaum, *Tragic Island: How Communism Came into Cuba*, ( NY: Prentice Hall), 1964, 11-45.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Castro's control over media, his use of army, mass organizations and a post-revolutionary allegiance to Marxist-Leninist communist party have all been dealt with in Sondral's book.

See: Paul C Sondral, *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, ( New York: Braziller), 2001.

<sup>lxxv</sup> George Viator, "Cuba Revised after 10 years Of Castro", *Foreign Affairs*, Jan 1970.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> One might refer to these speeches. See: Speeches by Fidel Castro: "History Will Absolve Me" (1953), "The Revolution Begins Now"( 1959), "When The People Rule"( 1959), " Abstract Of Establishing Revolutionary Vigilance in Cuba" (1961), "Our Criminals Are Leaving To Their Allies in the US"(1980), " Blaming Stalin for Everything would be Historical Simplism" (1992).

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Speech by Fidel Castro as a Commander-In –Chief on his arrival in Havana on 8<sup>th</sup> January,1959.

<https://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-commander-chief-fidel-castro-his-arrival-havana-delivered-ciudad-libertad-then>

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Speech by Fidel Castro as a Commander-In –Chief on his arrival in Havana on 8<sup>th</sup> January,1959.

<https://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-commander-chief-fidel-castro-his-arrival-havana-delivered-ciudad-libertad-then>

<sup>lxxix</sup> Ibid.Walter Benjamin's conception of politics of "pure means" talks about divine violence that is not driven by the idea of blood but the idea of harmony and historical agency. In revolutionary conceptions, bloodshed has been an integral phenomenon but what determines historical order from mythic life is precisely the point where blood becomes the singular idea behind a movement.

<sup>lxxx</sup> See: Walter Benjaimn, "On the Critique Of Violence" in *One Way Street*, edited and trans by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag), 1970, 138-139.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> The art of totalitarianism has been philosophically associated with the idea of personality cult and hero-worship. Castro's personality was over-arching in a way where political dissent could be silenced by a major larger than life figure that became synonymous with Cuban identity.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> Castro has stepped down only in 2008 in favour of Raul Castro after a fifty year rule at a stretch.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Racist policies have prevailed in later years, homosexuals have been confined, political dissidents imprisoned and executed.

See: “ Fidel Castro’s Dark Legacy : Abuses, Draconian Rule and ‘Ruthless Suppression’ by Rory Carroll in *The Guardian*, Sunday, Nov 27, 2016.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Ibid

<sup>lxxxv</sup> Amnesty International has asserted that the total no. of civilian casualties in Cuba (1959-2005) would be around 4000.

See: <https://www.refworld.org>

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Amnesty International has mentioned 75 prominent jailed dissidents during the Black Spring.

See: Edward Gonzalez and Kevin F. McCarthy, *Cuba After Castro: Legacies, Challenges and Impediments*, ( NY: Rand Publications), 2004, 8-9

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Ibid, 9-12.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Here, historical life is contrasted on two planes: of liberty and segregation as opposed to social welfare. If liberty and inclusivity is sacrificed to promote mythical authoritarianism which on a nuanced post-modern character also promotes facilities as a valve from uprisings. This becomes a point of contention to understand if ‘liberty’ becomes the sole ground of understanding ‘messianism’ and how it cultures the idea of exclusive, discriminatory ‘benevolent’ dictatorship.

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