

**LA FIGURA HUMANA:
PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AND CROSS-READINGS OF INDIGENOUS
SUBJECTIVITY IN CAYAMBE'S FLOWER PLANTATIONS¹**

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INTRODUCTION

The study of *social formations* has been best approached as the study of verbs, as analyses, literally, of the processes which converge in *forming* the reproductive possibilities of a particular kind of society at a particular moment in its history. Critical points in this history arise as new forces come to be dominant in a society and to exert unbalanced influence over re-defining the limits of these possibilities-- i.e. achieve a hegemony of structuration-- which achieves its social form through the insertion of individuals into collectivities and the positioning of these collectivities in relation to an image of the emergent totality. Insofar as such processes occur through concrete relations between actors, they produce over-determined moments in which differently positioned people come to face each other-- and themselves-- in the image of this totality and the terms of their inclusion in it are laid bare. These moments, their multiple forms of inscribing inclusion and exclusion, are key indicators of how a definite social formation is producing its structure of power and the kinds of responses generated.

There is little doubt that Cayambe is at such a critical period in its history. The very recent arrival and rise to dominion of cut flower plantations has quickly elaborated a regionalized economic structure around a transnational logic of capitalist production, only decades after the near-total control of the same territory by hacienda complexes. The expansion of this agro-industry throughout Cayambe has meant that sectors of the bourgeoisie have, if not made it their home, had to ensure that structures are adequately in place to guarantee the stable local availability of resources necessary for the smooth generation of profit: principally water, land, agro-chemicals, a physical infrastructure, and labor. The majority of an estimated 15 000 people directly employed on these flower plantations live in rural community structures and claim indigenous, and largely peasant, identity. That these two structures-- plantations and communities-- have not found themselves to be perfectly compatible may be evidenced by the ongoing struggles between representatives of each over these resources throughout the last fifteen years. Perhaps most contentious has been the movement of workers between these two systems,

¹Sincere appreciation goes out to all at the Instituto de Ecología y Desarrollo de las Comunidades Andinas (IEDECA)-Cayambe, the Centro de Estudios y Asesoría en Salud (CEAS), the Junta de Aguas de Gaunguilqui-Porotog, especially Gerónimo Lanchimba and family, and the workers, owners, and administrators of cut-flower plantations who have tolerated my entry into their spaces.

indigenous *comuneros* working in flower plantations, and the efforts at both ends to control the degree to which this movement contaminates the ability of each to reproduce itself. In this paper I am interested in one such effort, on the part of plantation administration, which is directed specifically toward this purpose.

Here I am giving pause to a moment in the process of worker selection used in a number of Cayambe's flower plantations, the application of a technique from clinical psychology in which the patient/ candidate is asked to draw a human figure, which is then analyzed by the industrial psychologists— who routinely head management teams— as containing “projections” of the applicant's unconscious character traits.² These procedures represent cross-‘ethnic’ as much as cross-class *encounters*, a scene in which white urban professionals, using European-derived normative evaluation techniques, assess markers of conscience, through the detour of the body, of mestizo, afro-ecuadorian, and principally indigenous laborers, in the assessment of their value to the industry. These tests are administered as ways of controlling the entry of undesirable characters into the plantation, a category which I flush out below. What is of interest to me in analyzing these analyses is the way their purpose and method of interpretation intersect with the fact of the plantation sector's encapsulation and intersection with a predominantly indigenous population, and the potential effects of the growth of an aggressive capitalist industrial sector upon that population which may be brought to light by such a focus.

CONTEMPORARY LABOR MARKET DYNAMICS

During the eighteen months I have spent immersed in Cayambe's flower economy, I have watched a growth of anxiety among management about the need to be increasingly attentive to how labor is recruited. Union presence has nearly doubled in the plantation sector, theft has increased, there have been murders reported among plantation workers, and the once overabundant labor market seems to have dried up. This last point is related principally to the identification of Cayambe as overburdened with available labor, ironically a product of the plantation sector itself, and the influx of competitive labor buyers, principally for the new oil pipeline and offshoot construction projects. Responses have been multiple and often desperately, though contradictorily, combined in a single production unit. These include:

- X An extensification of promotional activity and bus routes, to places as distant as Ibarra and Cumbaya, as well as more removed rural areas throughout the region..
- X A growing use of independent labor contractors, or ‘*terceristas*,’ by which laborers can be held in permanent temporary status and never fully assumed as a responsibility of the plantation's administration.
- X Wage and service wars among plantations to attract new, ‘quality,’ workers.

²These tests are not administered in all plantations, yet their use in some is emblematic of the broader manifestations of the kind of capitalist rationality outlined in this paper. I have examined the use of these tests in three related plantations, formed in 1992, 1998, and 2000 and employing 500, 150, and 63 workers respectively. With a reported average labor turnover rate of 10% per month in these plantations (considering that of temporary workers hired only for peak seasons), this would mean that 7 585 people have been subjected to this test by these three industries alone, over half the number of people I calculated elsewhere to be working in Cayambe's entire flower sector (Krupa 2001: 10).

- X An increase of screening procedures by management over applicants and a tightening of disciplinary measures over their workers.

The plantations I am drawing experience from in this paper use all of these methods simultaneously. While the first three tendencies contribute to a loss of certainty, on the part of management, of the type of person who might seek employment in their plantation, the fourth is designed to regain it. The human figure personality test is most specifically put to use for this purpose.

THE HUMAN FIGURE TESTS

The interpretive schema applied to the human figure tests in Cayambe's plantations is a derivative of the now-classical clinical psychology of British psychoanalyst Karen Machover (1949), down-scaled to fit the time requirements of industrial selection processes and modified to accommodate the particular needs of production and images of who just might walk through the doors.³

Uniquely influenced by the applied work of Freud, Machover's interest was in identifying formative moments in the personality development of her patients and, as such, her work has been most conventionally adapted to work in the clinical psychology of children, and has been widely influential in this regard. For example, it has made its way into the popular "HTP battery" test, in which usually child patients are asked to draw a house, a tree, and a person, under the idea that "it has been demonstrated that the favorite theme of the child, in terms of drawings, is the human figure, the next favorite is the house, and later the child begins to draw trees and flowers (Costa et al 1988:99)". To draw a human figure (of all, "the closest transmission link of conscience and of relations with the environment (ibid: 100)") is seen as a basic human capacity, replicant of a childhood hobby, universal in its articulation with ego-formation, and thus tapping fundamental aspects of individual character.⁴ The general idea behind the technique, according to its creator, is that "in drawing the human figure, the person projects the concept he has of his body image, the conception of his own body, its functioning in the physical and social world, and his relations with the phenomena which occur before him (Machover in Costa et al 1988: 177)." While the body-as-object appears important in the instruction of Machover, its materiality is downplayed in the non-clinical application setting, in which the analyst's responsibility is for not the person but for industry, her interest not in providing treatment to a patient, but functionality to the production line.

³The most widely circulated guide in Cayambe's flower plantations is a translation of Machover's work by Cuban psychologist Juan Portuondo (1980).

⁴The idea that the *process* itself, not to mention its analytical framework, might have its cultural specificity is flatly refused in the literature and by all plantation psychologists I spoke with. Nonetheless, Friedmann Godesteanu and Perez Arteta (1980: 204) have mentioned briefly in a study conducted in Ecuador that "greater homogeneity is observed in the drawings of children when the variable 'geographic region' is taken into account. This homogeneity is also present, although to a lesser degree, when the socio-economic variable is taken into consideration". Dr. Arturo Campaña (personal communication), a clinically-trained psychologist who has worked extensively with peasant populations in Cayambe, including the administration of 'incomplete sentence' tests, claims that rural people tend not to produce abstractions in projective tests, a difference he feels is probably culturally motivated in some way, and which would greatly influence the way a human figure is drawn.

The fact of the body as-such is thus suspended as it assumes a purely textualized form, a device of pure *projection* of the conscience.

The human figure drawings are one part of a set of evaluation methods used by plantation administrators to screen applicants. Before entering the office of “*gestión humana*,” solicitors complete a basic application (“*solicitud de empleo*”), which is presented to the psychologist along with a collection of documents: national identification card (*cedula*), proof of education, police record, proof of military service in the case of men, a doctor’s certificate proving non-pregnancy in the case of women. Note that none of this relates directly to labor history, as would references from previous employers, for example. The documents complete other functions: principally, they ensure that the applicant has passed through a number of formative processes, i.e., has come to some extent *prepared*; they guarantee that she or he remains to an extent monitored and monitorable by a number of state agencies; they create a mystique of high requirements for entry, widely dispersed among working populations, which acts to de-select whole sectors of potential applicants before even applying;⁵ and, since most people arrive lacking one document or another, they allow management to put a suspect applicant’s dedication and honesty, their *character*, to test, by conditioning their acceptance on presentation of the missing items.

These papers are reviewed and the applicant is presented with a blank sheet, a pencil and an eraser and asked to draw a person or human figure, at their design and speed. When finished, only a few questions are asked about the drawing: if it is a man or a woman, the character’s age and, only on occasion, what the ‘person’ drawn is doing or thinking. The applicant is then asked to recount the passing of their life: at what age they left school, at what age they worked in such-and-such job, for how long, then what, etc. The years recounted and motivations for life changes are written alongside the drawing and the years are tallied and checked for correspondence with the actual age of the applicant. While the majority of this information is outlined in the application, the process of recounting one’s life events has another value, managers have told me. Its purpose is principally to check for gaps in the story, evasions of certain periods, or gross variations between age and years recounted. The ability and desire to accurately and honestly tell a stranger what one has done with each year of one’s life, like drawing a person, is taken without question as an organic human capacity. Failings in this are said to reflect a deficiency of basic motor skills, repression or, more likely, intentional fabrications related to hiding criminal or delinquent activity, in all cases, evidence of undesirability. Such intuitions are always to be confirmed, the plantations psychologists

⁵The dispersal of this ‘mystique’ and pre-screening has its effects: plantations with such documentation requirements generally acquire a status of abstractly-defined superiority among workers, reflected in a desire among people committed to working in the flower sector to be accepted for employment there; these plantations become used as emblems for self-degradation for not having ‘*papeles*’ and thus working in other plantations; the work clothing of these plantations transfer this status differential into the social realm, in auto-identification with having achieved a degree of *distinction*; and as getting a minimum wage job increasingly demands having ‘*papeles*,’ and is recognized as such, at the same time as an increasing number of people are forced to seek such forms of employment for their basic subsistence, new sectors of the population are moving through such state-regulated procedures as schooling and military service.

tell me, by reference back to the particular features of the drawings, the more authoritative revelation of deviancy. What do people draw and how are they interpreted?

The drawings are analyzed in positive and negative terms, to bring in desirable traits related to the tasks of work, and to screen out dangerous and unproductive elements that might be smuggled in. The former, defined as “aptitude” and a physical “predisposition to [manual] labor,” is identified “when the figure indicates movement, activity” as well as when applicants draw broad, over-extended shoulders.⁶ Among the most interesting drawings I encountered in plantation archives are those which play on this rather elementary analysis and seem to invoke irony in manipulating the scene of being asked to produce a sketch in order to get a job working in a flower plantation, by actually drawing a person working in a flower plantation. Nineteen of the 77 sketches which formed my sample group, a full 25%, literally drew themselves into the plantation: all of which were hired.⁷

Against the search for useful traits in the drawings, however, far more attention is paid to detecting dangers, dangers which, again, are related to the conscience, and a good number of the human figures in company files have been branded and de-formed by the analyst’s circlings of various body parts and forms of drawing which are causes for concern. Mouth, eyes, neck, hands, body direction, sex, age, and general ways of outlining the figure draw the most attention. The latter is divided into drawings with smooth continuous lines and those which are short, choppy, and repetitive. “Sketches [which] are not continuous, [which] are instead jumpy, weak, [show] we have found unstable personnel, a person who doesn’t have defined objectives and which, therefore, faced with their first problem, is going to go, and this you can prove... the figure is given to you with discontinuous sketching, is here and there, and this reflects instability.” An open mouth is said to be an indication of either alcoholism or “oral aggression,” clear divergences from Machover’s guide which treats this as an identification with oral sex (relevant, I am told, when evaluating the state of their under-age workers). The eyes “show the level of adaptation or of relation with the environment” and “of analysis”. The neck refers to the management of instinct, of rationality. A thick neck is found in people who “don’t manage well their impulses,” a thin one in those who are “overly moralistic, overly ethical, overly rigid.” Hands are deemed important for their symbolic position of mediating contact between the person and the world, and are analyzed as the best indicator of inter-personal relations. Big hands convey ambition, hands which appear bubbly or glove-like convey communication problems or introversion, and hands with fingers that end in points show aggression. That the majority of drawings reviewed have

⁶These quotes and all others appearing without reference are taken from interviews with various plantation psychologists who will remain nameless. Underlining in these quotes is intended to denote emphasis in the original delivery.

⁷ These drawings depict people holding flowers (3) , fumigating flowers (4), touching plants with flowers (3), with work clothes on (1), classifying flowers in post-harvest (1), with miscellaneous agricultural tools (3), with comments written by the doctor beside the drawing, from the applicant’s explanation of what the figure is doing, which say ‘getting ready to work’ (2), and, perhaps the most ironic of all, drawn as an executive (2).

had the hands circled by management indicates the importance they ascribe to monitoring human-world relations, an attention which has been explained to me by the need to control the entry of “aggression” which exists in the area, defined as violence, general antagonism, and an inability to accept orders and supervision. A person who draws a figure in profile, is someone who suffers from “evasion” and who, “in time, will fly from your hand”. Sex and age are treated as pure projections, opposite-sex drawings as identification with the mother or father, as the case may be, and the age applied to the figure by the applicant, their “mental age.” While most people attach their own age to their drawing, in a number of cases the applicant draws a much younger person, including children. According to administrators, this is their mentality and “they have to be managed from this age”.⁸

From this, we can piece together a profile of management’s image of the psychological composition of the ideal worker: she or he is accustomed to physical labor, is tolerant of working conditions and is stable, is communicative but vocally passive, is analytical in the right way, controls their emotions, is not a moralist, is extroverted but not violent, and who acts their age. This, basically (**show drawing**). Proof that the projective tests work to fill openings with the right kind of people was offered to me by way of an example, in which the head of human resources was on vacation and secretaries were left in charge of admissions. They did not administer the test. At the end of the month a worker hired by the secretaries, though forced to be legally affiliated with an independent contractor (*contratista*) and not the company, was angry that he was not paid when the rest of the staff was, and made it known that he was going to denounce the company to the local *teniente politico*.⁹ Because the first of the month fell on a weekend and regular workers were actually paid ahead of time, the psychologist felt that this was not only an inappropriate response, but evidence of a kind of person the plantation should protect itself against: aggressive, impulsive, lacking reason, uncontrollable, and thus dangerous. What might be interpreted as a reaction to the consequences of highly precarious forms of labor recruiting, a fallout in the social contract of labor-equals-wage, the stripping of his collective identification as a worker by watching others being remunerated and not him, an appreciated critical consciousness, or even just the desperation of needing money, was instead held up as evidence of delinquent character and resulted in his immediate firing from the plantation (“before he caused any further damage”). As such, the missing projective exam was deemed the cause for allowing this person to pass through the net, under the supposition that such danger would inevitably

⁸I do not take it to be my task in this paper to evaluate the validity of these analysis, but rather to analyze their implementation. Nonetheless, all people who I had a chance to speak with after their completion of a drawing, in which that drawing was of a younger person, told me of some recent domestic situation which left them preoccupied with a child of theirs, who they were thinking about, and who they drew.

⁹*Contratistas* are independent labor contractors who, ideally, are in charge of bringing a given number of people to a plantation for the completion of a specific and temporary task. Recently, however, *contratistas* have been made permanent institutions in a number of plantations, ‘loaning’ their name on demand to plantation administration, such that the latter can contract a number of workers without assuming responsibility or liability for them. This allows management to avoid labor laws, fire or shuffle workers at will, hire minors, spend less on additional benefits such as protective clothing, transportation, and social security, which are often withheld from workers associated with *contratistas*.

have shown up in his drawing and have caused him to be turned away. As the psychologist went on to tell me:

I guarantee this, see, that people here can work in peace, that those here can have their minds at ease, that everyone is good, that if you put your eye on them they will take note [*si le llama la atención va a hacer caso*]... that people are manageable, that they're good people, that they're really good people. You yourself saw when I discharged people, when they came in to be sanctioned, you saw the attitude of the people, they're very receptive, are not quarrelsome [*no es peleoná*]; thus I, with these tests, am guaranteeing this, in other words, that we have an environment that is manageable... agreeable... nice.

How does his need for a manageable labor force relate to the actual kinds of humans that are applying for work in Cayambe's flower plantations? Despite the individualized instruction methods of clinical psychology and the radically atomized encounter in the evaluation procedure, administrators of 'human resources' departments have an impressive ability to re-insert people from their appearance as a pencil sketch on a white page back into a collectivized social form when asked about the reasons that people might appear with the kinds of psychological composition they are said to project. Here I am concerned exclusively with images of the social world of indigenous people produced by plantation administrators and the relationship between these images, analyses of the drawings they produce, and the attendant implications of managing a largely indigenous workforce.

INDIANS

"It's a very good test, because, at the same time, it allows you inclusively, if you analyze [it], to know the medium in which he [applicant/ worker] has developed, how he has developed, and why he has this type of attitude, and equally, his level of culture... it is all this."

The encounter I am describing here occurs as much between classes as between people identified as occupying different ethnic locations. For psychologists overseeing the hiring and administration of the plantation's labor force, their coming to occupy this position, in the main, represents their first and only direct meeting with indigenous people living in rural communities. It does not seem exaggerated to suggest that much of their 'coming to know the medium' in which their workers have developed happens through moments in their management of these workers in a context very much removed from that medium, inclusively, through their ways of reading the 'projections' brought out in the human figure drawings, informed, as they are, by theories of psychic formation created by people in mediums even further removed. That this 'knowledge' is then re-circulated (*projected?*) back into evaluating applicants, developing techniques of worker management and discipline ('creating a manageable workforce'), and further moving outward in scale by influencing the construction of broader policies giving shape to the regional economy (first of all, by being listened to by general managers and owners), indicates the significance of coming to know what its contours are. The following is a typical summary:

The [drawing of a] person from a rural environment is a lot more simple, they see themselves in this way, a lot more simple, I would say, very elemental, yes. This is the person [drawing] that has a head, arms, a body, and legs but, inclusively, a lot of times without proportion, without form. Yes, I think this is the way in which they see themselves since, as I told you, this is a projective test, it is what they feel or perceive of themselves. These people, a lot of times, since they don't much take into account the aesthetic part, or the

physical part of themselves; rather, they ensure, in fact, that they are strong, good for work, and nothing more. Therefore you see a figure that is very elemental, very simple.

This idea of a dis-proportioned or de-formed body in drawings by indigenous people was pointed out to me by all the plantation psychologists I spoke with, each of whom associated it with “disequilibrium in their social world, between themselves, and in their social relations”. The details of what this disequilibrium might be were hard to muster, but often came in fictitious anecdotes depicting suspicion, jealousy, and lack of friendship [*“no existe un buen compañerismo”*] or solidarity. Discontinuous lines of the sketch, discussed above, is also held to be common in Indian drawings yet, rather than showing an instability that leads to wanderlust, it is evidenced further as general insecurity, self-doubt, humility, and uncertainty, especially as they relate to social situations. Other features which are seen to be indications of inter-personal relations, such as the mouth and hands, also have their specifically indianized interpretations. Open mouths and pointed fingers are treated, principally, as the potential danger of this characterization’s inversion, in which overcoming humility reaches apparently pathological levels and is made manifest in persistent complaint, actions against the industry or its representatives, and the destruction of its property.¹⁰ The simplicity of the figures indigenous people are said to draw, lacking adornments and specifics of the body, is often contrasted with the elaborate “Costeño drawing” and evidence of each’s degree self-expression and communication, overly low among the former and overly high among the latter. Indians are

people who have difficulty with communication, who don’t express [themselves] easily, rather, to explain, if they don’t like something they pick up and leave and don’t, don’t give you the option of saying alright, what happened, how can I help you; rather, they simply pick up and leave, without even telling you...there has to be a reason, and yet they don’t express it, and this, I think that this has to become better, or we have to help them to have a better level of communication. But this is a whole social process in them, no? These are people who are very repressed.

The image produced, through all of this, is of a “whole social process” of deprivation, a deprivation of the fundamental aspects conventionally associated with culture– intimate social existence, language and communication, aesthetics, rationality, etc– and, in its place, an a-cultural workhorse is produced. That Indians are good only for work is certainly not a new idea among the Ecuadorian elite and their associates; what is new, however, is the offloading of the responsibility for generating this idea onto Indians themselves, here as auto-projection by an indigenous conscience that bends under the application of test procedures to confess its true nature, or further, its own view of its

¹⁰An example of this was given by a psychologist working in a plantation which recently expanded its search for labor some distance by sending a bus to the northern community of Pesillo. However little is known about Cayambe’s rural communities and their history, the association of Pesillo with the indigenous uprisings that occurred there decades ago enjoys wide circulation and often is used to characterize people from there as rebellious. Although hard workers, she assured me, their workers from Pesillo (now making up a fifth of their total labor force) “get angry at us over every little thing. Worse, not just one comes to make a complaint, but they come in groups of 10, 15... and they don’t listen to our explanations.” She assured me that I’d find evidence of this in their drawings which, by the way, I did not.

nature. The currently safe way to express such a blatantly racist standpoint in Ecuador is, this paper argues, through the idiom of *education*.

EDUCATION

The social world of Indians, in managerial visions, plays a central role in producing the socio-psychic disequilibrium said to be found in their comportment as laborers. This is a world apart from the national, with different norms and processes producing the conscience: “They are in accord with their medium because, look, a human being searches out the elements to adapt to the environment in which he has to live. Thus, I can say, it’s a way of conceiving themselves, this mental schema, because in their medium, they are just fine.” The critical explanation for this distinction between mediums, the term which structures their comparability, and the device which holds the secret to their potential synthesis is the education system, the principal vehicle for the production of a truly national subject.

Key to deciphering these visions is the ambiguity in national Ecuadorian Spanish, in the use of *educación* and *cultura*, in the broader sense of the former to refer to habits, norms, and customs, and the restricted meaning of the latter to mean having received formal education. Explaining features typical to the drawings of indigenous people, plantation psychologists routinely claimed that eyes are drawn without eyeballs: “it’s very common when a person has a low cultural level, to draw a vacant eye. This is because, definitely, they haven’t developed this intellectual capacity for reasoning, for analysis, for synthesis.” Another psychologist explained that it is because “they don’t have our culture, our education,” exemplified by the case in which a worker may have a tool, but won’t lend it to another who asks, who the goes on to steal it.

The implicit friction of Indians moving from the rural to the industrial is mediated by standard requirements for applicants to have completed primary education. As I have previously outlined (Krupa 2001), it is less the actual technical learning that goes on in the school and more the way the process is believed important in personal formation, inculcation of supervision and discipline— again the blur between culture and education— that is valued by management in producing an *understandable* and *manageable* worker.¹¹ ‘Education’ is important in stripping the Indian of the internalized markers of a removed rurality. Subsistence agriculture is treated with ambivalence here, at once the assumed reference point for capital’s valorization of the Indian’s pre-disposition to hard, physical labor (broad shoulders, the “elementary” body), and the equally-assumed foundation of their physical and mental autonomy (the psychic composition and material conditions

¹¹“I would say that there’s not that much shock because, inclusively, if you analyze the cultural level here, the majority, 70 % I think, of the people that work in our company are of a cultural level of in which they at least have completed primary/ [Me-] Level of education? /[Dr.-] Yes, level of education, up to primary, and normally they come in as such. Obviously, a person with their primary from the city is much more advanced than a person with primary from the rural zone, where they have only one professor for the whole school... there is a difference... equally with communication, someone from the city learns to be much more expressive, more extroverted, more communicative.”

underlying their ability to just “pick up and leave”).¹² Education thus forms a pivotal position in the formation of a true proletariat.

To this end, plantation administrators have worked hard toward the construction of plantations themselves as sites of *educación*, in compensating for inevitable deficiencies carried in by their workers, and in advancing the general regional production of a *cultura* appropriate to labor. Relating to character formation, in this case overcoming the communication problems of Indians:

Since I have this problem detected, I try to give them a better opportunity for communication. In this way, our disciplinary program has been a huge help. When I have a person in this position [of needing to be sanctioned], I take them aside, alone, and I say, ‘look, tell me what happened, what is going on,’ because they, at times, look for superficial excuses, and the true problem is much deeper, it’s down there. So you sensitize the person, you search out in the person, until the very person tells you the truth.

‘Schools’ themselves are set up in a number of plantations, in which workers passing their test period take a number of days away from their positions to learn how to be proficient in other areas of the plantation, the hierarchy of command and appropriate channels for voicing grievances, as well as math and writing skills, all of which they are later tested on. Again, the actual learning of technical abilities is plainly not the primary goal. In one plantation, their initial policy that those scoring less than 50% be fired had to be dropped, out of anger from supervisors that their best workers were routinely let go for such reasons. Similarly, the above psychologist recounted to me how a psychologist in another plantation she knows was applying ‘intellectual coefficient’ tests to applicants, with minimum requirements for entry. Laughing, she noted they had to chop this requirement in half in order to fill their ranks. “Thus, from this, we have seen that in this area, intellectual coefficient isn’t the most relevant. Here, the most relevant is attitude toward work and physical force.” So, I asked, the the requirement that applicants have a minimum level of education is for what? “*Respect. Above all, respect.*”

CONCLUSION

“Submission” to the rules of the dominant ideology might then be understood as a submission to the necessity to prove innocence in the face of accusation, a submission to the demand for proof, an execution of that proof, and acquisition of the status of subject in and through compliance with the terms of the interrogative law. *To become a “subject” is thus to have been presumed guilty, then tried and declared innocent* (Butler 1997: 118, italics added).

What we have in the worker selection process, then, is a set of techniques converging that are to accomplish two goals: evaluate the applicable skills of the applicant and their utility to industry and at the same time protect or police the same industry from danger that might intrude upon it in the person. All of this occurs in a setting in which a (pre-)laboring subject is evaluated before an authority of capital in a key moment in the reproduction of both, in fact, of labor itself as a fundamental social relation of production. What is identified, at base, by the administration of the human figure tests, is that labor comes in pre-formed, that it is embodied and mediated in its

¹²See Krupa 2001 for the way this agriculture-education contradiction plays out in structuring other aspects of the labor market, such as ideal age.

utility by the psyche which has been formed, in varying degrees, outside the control of capitalist regulation. The ‘class encounter’ here described is anything but a simple de-humanization of people to the terms of their relation, a meeting of buyers and sellers of labor power and the reduction of the latter to pure use-values, but more completely an evaluation of incipient workers’ humanity *by way of* its utility to capital. To the extent that this ‘humanity’ is made sense of in the identification of membership in a collectivity, the primary category of collective existence is an ethnic, or rather spatio- racial, one. What must be achieved in this encounter, and over the course of managerial-worker relations, is a transformation of this collective affinity, (in quite reductionist terms) from Indian to Proletariat, and that the terms of this category’s definition are set by capital, including how this individual-collective relation is to be inserted into the social totality. In other words, the production of a certain kind of subject. That capital’s ‘taking up the reins’ of social regulation involves a change in modes of expression, of ‘personality,’ of proper behavior and values, and that their normative valorization is tied intimately to success in earning a living, should caution us to the political project entailed, *however much repressed* (?), within these efforts.

Butler’s analogy of subject formation to the proof of innocence before an “interrogative law” aptly illustrates the scene I have been examining here, in a highly non-allegorical sense. The opening scene of this demonstration is the applicant’s successful passing of the projective test and questioning about their life history, of being declared innocent of delinquency or utter incomprehensibility, thus within earshot of the interrogator’s further calls. The theoretical work of Althusser on the subject, which Butler is summarizing in the above, elaborates upon this moment as the installation of an individual into a “grammar,” in a Lacanian sense, into a structure of codes, norms, and rules, which one must adopt the ‘language’ of as a pre-condition for identification and representation (1972). This is a process achieved by various institutions, or what Althusser called “ideological apparatuses,” the most important of which is the school, and which he identified as fundamental to the reproduction of labor-power in capitalist societies. Schooling, to Althusser, entails the production of a guilt before authority (“conscience”) which must be averted constantly thereafter by constantly putting the “skills” there learned to work, as proof of ‘innocence,’ i.e. accepting the terms of one’s subjection.¹³ Insofar as this structure is based in ‘language,’ inclusion is signaled by proper communication or, in Althusser’s terms, “speaking properly” (ibid: 131).

‘Speaking properly’ appears to be an instance of the ideological work of acquiring skills, a process central to the formation of the subject. The ‘diverse skills’ of labor power must be reproduced, and increasingly this reproduction happens ‘outside the firm’ and *in school*, that is, outside production and in educational institutions. The skills to be learned are, above all, *the skills of speech*... The reproduction of the subject takes place through the reproduction of linguistic skills, constituting, as it were, the rules and attitudes observed “by every agent in the division of labor.” In this sense the rules of proper speech are also the rules by which *respect* is proffered or withheld. Workers are taught to *speak* properly and managers learn to speak to workers “in the right way [*bien commander*]” (Butler 1997: 115-116).

¹³That this is not totally obscured from workers might be signaled by the number of people I spoke with after completing their human figure drawings who said that the last time they remember doing something similar was in school.

Again, the lack of allegory is striking, in the plantation psychologists' primary objection to the use of (still) Indian labor relates to their 'deficient' communication and speech abilities, that effort is directed to overlapping moments of labor discipline with teaching 'proper speech' which is exemplified by the confession, that educational requirements for applicants are motivated by the need for "above all, respect," and so on . We might interpret these frustrations in managing Indian laborers as the extreme limitations of capital's current ability to produce, in Gramsci's terms, "a new man suited to the new production process," indeed to produce 'proletariat' as a generally relevant and exclusive subject position. This limitation has not gone unnoticed. Efforts are underway by plantation owners to more directly control the formative processes of their workers, to oversee and finance health services which extend to the families and friends of workers, to plant day care centers and schools in indigenous communities which border upon plantations, to put latrines and sanitation services such as sewer systems in rural areas, and talk has even circulated about providing training courses by plantation agronomists to indigenous communities on the techniques of intensive agriculture. Whereas in Althusser's analysis, it is the state that acts as the central organizer of social formation, supplying the institutions that produce subjects appropriate to their place in capitalist production, here in Ecuador, in typical neoliberal fashion, the structuring of population regulation is taken up by capital with the potential effect of producing subjects properly inserted into a particular kind of state system. It is these processes—their projections of latent motives and dangers related to the production of a neoliberal political conscience—that we will need to put under interrogation and vigilance.

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