



Discussions and interventions

The Insurgent Universal: Between Eurocentric Universalism and the Pluriverse

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Universality is something of a dirty word in critical scholarship these days. Decolonial theorists, in particular, have noted the role that universalism has played in concealing the particular interests of white European colonizers and providing the colonial project with a veneer of moral sanctity and scientific objectivity. They further claim that Marxism reproduces the colonial narrative of inevitable historical progress towards a distinctly Western modernity, framing the particular interests of the white male factory worker as those of a putatively universal working class, and imposing a civilizing mission on subaltern peoples through the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of an urban intellectual vanguard (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2011; Walsh 2012). Against theories and ideologies of universal emancipation such as Marxism, communism, and socialism, which are accused of complicity in the “civilizing” project of colonialism, and of sympathy with the Eurocentric commitment to replacing multiple realities with a single Western world, leading decolonial theorists such as Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar propose the construction of a pluriverse in which diverse indigenous cultures coexist and flourish. In Escobar’s words, “the notion of the pluriverse questions the very concept of universality that is central to Eurocentric modernity,” replacing it with “pluriversality as a shared project based on the multiplicity of ‘ways of worlding’”, which is actualized when, for example, “indigenous peoples... mobilize on behalf of mountains, lakes or rivers, arguing that these are sentient beings with ‘rights’, not mere objects or resources” (Kothari *et al.* 2019: xxxiv). From this perspective, a truly emancipatory politics must reject universality as irredeemably tainted with the stain of Eurocentrism and can only be comprised of “diverse projects coming from the experience of local histories touched by western expansion”, which reaffirm “the ‘traditional’ that the ‘modern’ is rolling over and ruling out” (Mignolo, quoted in Escobar 2004: 218).

In his contribution to this special issue on pluriversal politics, Jason W. Moore presents a forthright rebuttal to the decolonial condemnation of Marxist universalism, and a trenchant critique of the political limitations of the pluriverse. Building on his own historically rich and conceptually complex world-ecological reformulation of the Marxian critique of political economy, Moore accuses decolonial theory of embarking upon a flight from world history through its reduction of capitalism to one among many

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forms of the coloniality of power, and of misrepresenting Marxism as a species of European universalism equivalent to the colonial project. He challenges these tendencies by identifying the endless accumulation of capital as the material force driving colonial expansion, which should fundamentally be understood as a project of class power, for which the discourse of European universalism has served as an indispensable tool of ideological legitimization. By elevating this discourse to the determinant causal factor of colonialism, and abstracting from the class relations that underpin the colonial project, decolonial theory mystifies the material processes that are actually driving the world-history of modernity. In doing so, it tends to limit the battle against the coloniality of power to the realm of competing narratives, and to romanticize indigenous territories as pluriversal spaces supposedly independent of capital, replacing a universal politics based on the class relations traversing global capitalism with an external opposition between essentialized European and indigenous identities. Moore counters this approach by defending the Marxist project as a “dialectical universalism” diametrically opposed to the abstract universalism of Eurocentric thought, and calling for a revival of the internationalist tradition of the anti-capitalist left in the name of a “planetary proletariat” (Moore 2022).

This is a powerful argument, which Moore develops with far greater depth and nuance than can be conveyed in such a brief summary. His paper should be studied in detail by all those committed to the decolonial project of the pluriverse. But I fear that his uncompromising line of attack might discourage such engagement, given that it builds directly on the very same Marxist foundations already rejected out of hand by decolonial theory as complicit in Eurocentric universalism. This rejection rests on a seemingly deliberate misreading of the Marxian tradition, as Moore convincingly shows. But for this very reason, his decision to respond by setting out a condensed restatement of the central arguments of this tradition, while summarily dismissing decolonial theory and the pluriverse, is likely to contribute to an ongoing dialogue of the deaf. This paper takes a different approach, by seeking to meet decolonial theory on its own terrain and to contest it on its own terms, through an exploration of an alternative form of political universality that shares many of its concerns. It should be read alongside Moore’s contribution, as a companion piece in our shared commitment to the urgent task of re-establishing universal emancipation at the heart of critical scholarship.

Moore’s affirmation of the project of universal emancipation overlooks a recent resurgence of this project in radical political theory, which is grounded less in the dialectical universalism of the world-historical process than in close attention to the spontaneous universality that emerges in concrete moments of subaltern struggle (Buck-Morss 2009; Badiou 2012; Tomba 2015; Haider 2018; Žižek 2018; McGowan 2020; Kapoor & Zalloua 2021). This approach was pioneered by Susan Buck-Morss in *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, which argues that “the project of universal freedom does not need to be discarded but, rather, redeemed and reconstituted on a different basis” (Buck-Morss 2009: 75). Renouncing the grand historical metanarratives that decolonial theory regards as abstract and totalizing, Buck-Morss’s argument is based instead on the concrete history of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, in which the black slaves of Saint-Domingue overthrew their colonial masters and founded the Haitian state. The slaves exposed the hypocrisy of the French Revolution, which framed itself in the language of universal freedom, but which failed to extend this principle to the enslaved populations of its colonies. But they did so, not in defence of a pluriverse based on their own ancestral cultures, but in the name of universality itself. The Haitian constitution became the first in the world to genuinely enshrine the

principle of universal freedom, which is therefore the legacy not of colonial Europe but of the victims of its oppression, and which originates not in the minds of Eurocentric intellectuals but on the barricades of subaltern struggle:

“The definition of universal history that begins to emerge here is this: rather than giving multiple, distinct cultures equal due, whereby people are recognized as part of humanity indirectly through the mediation of collective cultural identities, human universality emerges in the historical event at the point of rupture. It is in the discontinuities of history that people whose cultures have been strained to breaking point give expression to a humanity that goes beyond cultural limits. And it is in our empathic identification with this raw, free, and vulnerable state, that we have a chance of understanding what they say. Common humanity exists in spite of culture and its differences” (Buck-Morss 2009: 133).

The common humanity that spontaneously arises amidst revolutionary upheaval has been conceptualized by Massimiliano Tomba in terms of an insurgent universality. Like Buck-Morss, Tomba explores the tension between the universal claims of the French Revolution and the universal demands of the oppressed. He coincides with the decolonial critics of universalism in arguing that the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 concealed the interests of white male property owners beneath a disingenuous celebration of universal freedom. However, he also draws attention to the lesser known but far more radical Declaration of 1793, which was formulated in response to the initial phase of the Haitian Revolution, and under pressure from the demands of women and the poor in France itself. This Declaration, which was initially endorsed and ultimately suppressed by the Jacobins, was grounded not in “juridical universalism” but in “the neglected legacy of insurgent universality” (Tomba 2015: 109). Tomba introduces a crucial distinction here, between the *ideology* of universalism and the *actuality* of universality. Whereas juridical universalism is imposed from above as a set of abstract principles, “insurgent universality has to be understood concretely: it is constituted by individuals who act in common and put in question the hierarchical organization of the social fabric” (Tomba 2015: 117).

This reformulation of the universal project rejects both the abstract universalism of Eurocentric ideologies and the organicist particularism of decolonial theory, while remaining focused on capital as the ultimate and unavoidable enemy of an emancipatory politics. Its source lies not in theory itself but in the spaces of struggle, the moments of revolt, and the experiences of comradeship, in which the universal dimension emerges like a flash of lightning, simultaneously exposing false universals and transcending closed identities. As such, insurgent universality cannot be categorized and dismissed as just another variant of universalism by the denizens of the pluriverse. Instead, it introduces a third term into this supposedly binary opposition, as a universality that emerges, like the possibility of the pluriverse itself, from within the constantly shifting multiplicity of subaltern struggles in and against the churning worldwide vortex of global capital accumulation.

The detection of the insurgent universal at work in the world can accordingly be understood as a decolonial project in itself, to the extent that it is faithful to the principle of building theory on the basis of subaltern struggles, rather than imposing it upon them from above. However, the dichotomy that decolonial theory establishes between top-down universalism and a bottom-up pluriverse threatens to blind it to manifestations of insurgent universality performed by subaltern subjects in their confrontations with global capital. We therefore need an alternative approach that is

attentive to the possibility that “universal humanity is visible at the edges” (Buck-Morss 2009: 151). The remainder of this short paper sketches such an approach. The next section seeks to grasp the universal “not by subsuming facts within overarching systems or homogenizing premises, but by attending to the edges of systems” (Buck-Morss 2009: 79). These include the *spatial edge* of the extractive frontier, the *temporal edge* of the spontaneous uprising, and the *experiential edge* of crossing the line between obedience and revolt. Decolonial theory frames such edges as divisions between Eurocentric universalism and the pluriverse. But they can instead be seen as openings onto the actuality of insurgent universality, as illustrated by a brief account of a spontaneous uprising on an Amazonian oil frontier in the third and final section of the paper.

Insurgent universality on the edges of worlds

The extractive frontiers of global capitalism are the privileged sites at which decolonial theory stages its dichotomized collision between Eurocentric universalism and the pluriverse. Long framed by colonizing ideologies as the borderlands between modern civilization and primitive barbarism, such frontiers promise windfall profits to those with the power to plunder their resources (Moore 2015). The frontier process forces open vast tracts of land, necessitating rapid infrastructural developments and triggering massive influxes of landless and workless populations, while encroaching on the territories of indigenous peoples. But it also opens political possibilities. Decolonial theory locates these possibilities in the “exteriority of capitalism” (Mignolo 2002: 75), which is said to lie on the other side of the frontier, and which is believed to harbour “long-standing place-based logics that are irreducible to capital and imperial globality” (Escobar 2004: 221). From this perspective, the struggles that play out on the extractive frontier tend to be framed in terms of a Manichean confrontation between a universalizing capitalist growth machine on one hand, and indigenous communities defending their particular ways of life on the other.

Under conditions of global capitalism, however, even the most far-flung places are entangled in the dynamics of accumulation, and the most pristine community on the remotest frontier has already been irredeemably altered by the arrival of the frontier itself, through which the class relation between capital and labour, and the exchange relations of the world market, begin to internally reconfigure the very cultures that decolonial theorists claim to be exterior. This is not to deny that different cultures maintain distinct identities. But to the extent that we are entangled in these dynamics, we all now inhabit a single world. This commonality is not grounded in a universal human essence of mental rationality or material need, as imagined by Enlightenment liberals and orthodox Marxists respectively, but in the relationality of a “shared deadlock” (Kapoor & Zalloua 2021: 16). As Slavoj Žižek argues, “The world we live in is one, but it is such because it is traversed... by the same antagonism that is inscribed into the heart of global capitalism. Universality is not located over and above particular identities, it is an antagonism that cuts from within each ‘way of life’” (Žižek 2018: 13).

This antagonism gives rise to a frontier proletariat at the extractive *spatial edges* of this planetary system, understood not as a homogenized mass indoctrinated by an intellectual vanguard, but as “an explosive combination of different agents” (Žižek 2009: 92). This composite class is as old as the commodity frontier itself. As Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have demonstrated in their radical history of Atlantic commerce, the

English colonial expansion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was enabled by the labour of indigenous peoples, “dispossessed commoners, transported felons, indentured servants, religious radicals, pirates, urban labourers, soldiers, and African slaves”, comprising “a multi-ethnic class that was essential to the rise of capitalism and the modern global economy” (Linebaugh & Rediker 2012: 4–6). But this “motley crew” did not behave as passive servants of capital. Instead, they constituted an insurrectional force, which led strikes, riots, and mutinies, creating autonomous maroon communities in remote jungles and on uninhabited islands, and operating pirate ships on egalitarian principles, according to which rank was abolished, and spoils were enjoyed in common. This frontier proletariat was not defined by a racial, cultural, or ethnic identity of any kind. On the contrary, it was formed by “the ‘outcasts of all nations’ – the convicts, prostitutes, debtors, vagabonds, escaped slaves... and political prisoners, all of whom had migrated or been exiled to the new settlements ‘beyond the line’” (Linebaugh & Rediker 2012: 158). Yet precisely for this reason, its collective actions gave expression to a “universalism from below” (Buck-Morss 2009: 106). This was equally the case in the Haitian Revolution, which occurred on the Caribbean sugar frontier, and constituted “the first victorious workers’ revolution in history” (Linebaugh & Rediker 2012: ix). Field slaves and free labourers were united in rebellion. Racial hierarchies were eradicated from the new constitution, in which all Haitians were defined as black regardless of their race. And when the French troops advanced to crush the insurrection, they realised that their adversaries were not chanting traditional African songs but singing the *Marseillaise* to symbolize the fact that they, the rebel slaves, and not the colonial Europeans, were the true agents and embodiments of universality (Buck-Morss 2009; James 2001).

These historical examples of insurgent universality, it should be noted, arose precisely through the lived experiences of coloniality to which decolonial theorists are rightly so attentive. Similar fusions of cultures, races and ethnicities continue to generate similar political possibilities, as will be demonstrated in the following section. And yet the presence of insurgent universality within these contexts is obscured by the insistence of prominent decolonial scholars on the persistence of an exteriority to capital, and by their imposition of a strict division between the alleged universalism of Eurocentric modernity and an indigenous pluriverse. The dissident decolonial theorist, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, has rebelled against this orthodoxy, by arguing that this binary opposition is itself a violent abstraction, to the extent that it denies the fact that “we indigenous were and are, above all, contemporary beings and peers, and in this dimension we perform and display our own commitment to modernity” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012: 96). Indeed, she goes as far as to accuse Mignolo and other members of the decolonial academic elite of neutralizing “the practices of decolonization by enthroning within the academy a limited and illusory discussion regarding modernity and decolonization,” while “providing theoretical support for racialized and exoticized multiculturalism” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012: 105, 102). Martín Arboleda similarly argues that the strict division imposed by decolonial theory between “Global North and Global South... inadvertently reproduces the bifurcated world that it sets out to criticize” (Arboleda 2020: 212). According to Arboleda, the universalizing drive of global capitalism, in its relentless expansion of the extractive frontiers of this planetary system, is not only destructive of biodiversity and cultural difference, but also opens the possibility for new forms of universal struggle to emerge across these differences, “circumventing the culturalist trap of romanticizing a supposedly ‘pristine’ essence of the subaltern subject and instead rooting the determinations of its political agency in the entanglements

and interdependencies that underpin capital accumulation on a world scale” (Arboleda 2020: 217).

From the perspective of mainstream decolonial theory, as Moore has noted in his contribution to this special issue, such Marxian claims regarding the world-historical dynamics of capital are dismissed as complicit in the universalizing Eurocentric project (even when articulated from the positionality of a South American scholar like Arboleda). Against such supposedly totalizing discourses, decolonial theory draws attention to temporal “discontinuities, ruptures and shifts in the historical process” (Chakrabarty 2007: 23), which disrupt the narrative of teleological progress from primitivism to modernity that underpins abstract universalism in both its liberal and orthodox Marxist forms, according to which specifically Western principles are “assumed to have a universal value across time and space” (Mignolo 2002: 69). However, such *temporal edges* are not necessarily wellsprings of pluriversal difference, but can themselves be moments of the emergence of the insurgent universal. This is the argument of Alain Badiou, who has been dismissed by the decolonial theorist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro as “an old pontiff of the Universal,” which is condemned as nothing less than “the bimillennial patriarchal, repressive, transcendent, racist and phallographic narrative that runs like a red thread throughout the West’s history, from Saint Paul to Marx... and beyond.” (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro 2017: 56). This is somewhat ironic, given that the universality that Badiou is attempting to vindicate is directly opposed to any such transcendent narrative, and is grounded in the very same moments of rupture celebrated by decolonial theory. Badiou has conceptualised such moments as Events, which are radically heterogeneous to the established temporality in which they occur. Against the historical determinism of orthodox Marxism, he argues that an Event is irreducible to the material circumstances of its emergence, and is embodied in the contingent actualization of universal equality staged in spontaneous uprisings by those excluded from the false universalism of the capitalist world order. According to Badiou, an Event is “a sort of grace supernumerary to every particularity”, in which “the production of equality and the casting off... of differences are the material signs of the universal”, understood not as a conceptual abstraction but as “something that exists in its active process” (Badiou 2003: 109; Badiou 2012: 87).

The universal dimension that shines through a spontaneous uprising of this kind is directly experienced in the “collective creative exaltation” of the Event itself, which possesses a carnivalesque dimension (Badiou 2012: 90). In his study of medieval carnival, Mikhail Bakhtin has noted that such moments are marked by “the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions” (Bakhtin 1984: 10). In the uprising, as in the carnival, universality exists not as an abstract principle but as lived reality in which “life is subject only to... the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit... vividly felt by all its participants” (Bakhtin 1984: 7). As Badiou observes, reflecting on his own involvement in such Events: “I know from experience that a new political situation can only be known from within its own process... Political novelty, which is subjective, does not allow itself to be grasped from the outside at the moment of constituting itself” (Badiou 2012: 32). This is the *experiential edge* famously defined by Hunter S. Thompson as an ineffable domain of shared humanity known only to those who dare to transgress the limits of state-imposed social order: “The Edge... There is no honest way to explain it, because the only people who really know where it is are the ones who have gone over” (Thompson 2003: 282).

This commitment to thinking and acting from the edge is in apparent accordance with the methodological principles of decolonial thought, which insists on building

theory on the basis of subaltern experience, rather than imposing Eurocentric assumptions on such experience from outside. Indeed, the concept of the experiential edge would seem to resonate with Mignolo's method of "border thinking," which critiques the putatively neutral position of "zero point" knowledge assumed by Western thought, against which he proposes border thinking as "the epistemology of the exteriority," which is "grounded in the experiences of the colonies and subaltern empires" (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006: 206). But border thinking is structured in advance against the possibility that such experiences could include an experience of universality. Mignolo insists that universalism is projected onto the subaltern from the Eurocentric perspective of zero point knowledge, while "pluriversality, and not universality, is the major claim made by border thinking" (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006: 210). Writing from a similar perspective, Catherine Walsh juxtaposes "the hegemony, 'universality' and violence" of "Eurocentric modes of thinking" against "a different thought constructed and positioned from the histories and subjectivities of the people," which leaves no conceptual space for the possibility of a universality thought (or enacted) by "the people" themselves (Walsh 2012: 12). And in her analysis of the extractive frontier, the decolonial scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris asks: "In zones of continual extractivism, what responses, engagements, and viewpoints emerge that do not exhaust difference but instead proliferate it?" (Gómez-Barris 2017: xx). From such a starting point, eruptions of insurgent universality would seem destined to either be overlooked due to their apparent failure to "proliferate difference" or condemned for seemingly contributing to its "exhaustion." Despite being committed to the validation of subaltern experience, border thinking is thus unable to think – let alone *experience* – the actuality of the insurgent universal.

Insurgent universality on the Savage Road

The decolonial project of the pluriverse is attentive to extractive frontiers, historical ruptures, and epistemic borders – spatial, temporal, and experiential edges at which it repeatedly finds evidence of a pluriverse of indigenous communities resisting Eurocentric universalism. But closer examination of these three edges has revealed the spectre of an alternative form of universality emerging within each of them, as an emancipatory potential that the decolonial approach tends to render invisible and to determinedly ignore. I will now conclude with an illustrative example of a spontaneous uprising that recently erupted at the confluence of these three edges to create "a liminal space, where human universality comes fleetingly into view" (Buck-Morss 2010: 175).

In 1979, a new road was sliced into the Amazonian oil frontier of northern Ecuador. The road came to be known as the *Vía Auca* – the Savage Road. It was named after the '*aucas*' – or savages – as they were disparagingly referred to by mestizo settlers: the *Huaorani* indigenous nationality who inhabited the region. The Savage Road ran straight into their territory, following the path of newly discovered oil wells. In 2015, the Ecuadorian government signed a \$4.9 billion contract with the Franco-American multinational Schlumberger for the exploitation of Block 61 – an oil field located in the region of the *Vía Auca*. Schlumberger would ramp up extraction from the block through a vast infrastructural expansion. The work was subcontracted to the Argentinian company *Construcciones Globales Andinas* (CGA), which established a production complex on the outskirts of the town of Dayuma on the Savage Road. In August 2017, around

eighteen months after construction work had started, I visited Dayuma as part of my research into the historical geography of the Ecuadorian Amazon (Wilson 2021). But as I passed the gates of the production complex, I could see a demonstration involving indigenous people taking place outside. And within hours of my arrival, I found myself caught up in an uprising against the company. From the perspective of decolonial theory, this struggle might be assumed to epitomise the supposedly ubiquitous confrontation in such circumstances between the universalizing Eurocentric imperative of extractive capital and the territorial defences of an indigenous pluriverse. But it turned out that the indigenous rebels blocking the company gates were not insisting on the preservation of their traditional ways of life against the global oil industry. They were oil workers fighting for better pay and improved working conditions, and unemployed proletarians demanding the right to participate in the extraction of natural resources from beneath their lands.

This frontier proletariat comprised landless mestizo peasants from the Ecuadorian highlands, impoverished Afro-Ecuadorians from the historical slave communities of the coast, fugitive members of the *Shuar* indigenous nationality who had migrated from the southern Amazonian region of the country, members of the *Kichwa* who had escaped indentured slavery along the River Napo, and members of the *Huaorani* who had arrived in the region a century earlier, fleeing enslavement during the Peruvian rubber boom. Brought together by the diverse acts of dispossession and displacement that had driven them to resettle along the Savage Road, these disparate racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities came to form a motley crew reminiscent of the renegade pirate ships of the seventeenth century, which was united not by a common identity but by a shared experience of alienation. In the early 2000s they had launched an escalating series of uprisings against the oil industry. This movement was met with military repression which led to its further radicalization, culminating in a series of violent confrontations that came to a head with a military crackdown in Dayuma in 2007.

The repression had been brutally effective, and no further uprisings of any note had occurred in the region in the following years. But simmering resentments had continued to accumulate. The demonstration that I observed on my arrival in Dayuma was just a small sit-down strike outside the gates of CGA – the Argentinian construction company subcontracted by Schlumberger. I interviewed two of their leaders about the systematic exploitation and abuse to which the workers were subjected by CGA. Both leaders were arrested a few minutes later, and these arrests provoked the uprising. Suddenly hundreds of workers were on the streets, CGA was shut down, and Schlumberger's expansion of the oil frontier was brought to an abrupt halt. Within minutes of this explosive Event, the general manager of CGA had been kidnapped by members of a local *Shuar* community in retaliation for the arrest of the strike leaders, and a military division deployed to rescue him was approaching at speed. But the workers, together with unemployed locals and veteran militants, maintained the blockade of the company gates, demanding the release of their arrested leaders and the expulsion of CGA from Block 61. The next morning they were joined by indigenous communities from up and down the Savage Road, and the blockade took on a carnivalesque dimension, filled with music and dancing and the symbolic mocking of authority. Through this process, the historical divisions between indigenous nationalities and mestizo peasant colonizers were superseded by the spontaneous lived experience of insurgent universality, embodied in the collective use of *Shuar* body paint and wooden spears, and articulated in powerful speeches in which *Shuar* leaders repeatedly insisted that “We are all indigenous!”

After nine days of escalating struggle, the uprising succeeded in forcing the state and CGA to sign an accord with the workers that brought the blockade to an end. But none of the agreed measures were implemented, and a month later the revolt exploded once again. This time it was on a much larger scale, involving the majority of the local population, lasting for twenty days, and severely restricting oil production throughout the region of the Savage Road. Faced with a deepening crisis, the Ecuadorian government finally expelled CGA from Block 61. But at the same time, the unity of the original uprising was being eroded by Schlumberger, which remained in control of the oil block. While CGA was being expelled, Schlumberger and the government were working behind the scenes to divide the uprising by encouraging each individual community to identify with its own specific ethnic identity and narrow economic interest. The result was the fragmentation of the movement into multiple indigenous and mestizo particularisms, and the reproduction of the power of state and capital on the Savage Road. The success of this strategy demonstrates that, like the ideology of Eurocentric universalism critiqued by decolonial theory, the identity politics of the pluriverse constitutes a crucial element in the ideological repertoire of the coloniality of power. As Asad Haider concludes in his assertion of the emancipatory necessity of insurgent universality:

“Universality does not exist in the abstract, as a prescriptive principle which is mechanically applied to different circumstances. It is recreated in the act of insurgency, which does not demand emancipation solely for those who share my identity but for everyone... This is a universality that necessarily confronts and opposes capitalism... Every compromise of this kind of universality, every step away from the primacy of insurgency and the revolutionary potential of anti-capitalist organization, [has] led back to the particularism of the existing order” (Haider 2018: 113).

I have discussed the uprising on the Savage Road in much greater detail elsewhere (Wilson 2022). This brief sketch aims only to illustrate the flourishing of an insurgent universality in precisely those places that decolonial theory teaches us to only see a pluriverse. Like Moore’s dialectical universalism, this form of universality introduces a third term into the binary division that dominant strands of decolonial theory seek to establish between abstract Eurocentric universalism and a pluriverse of indigenous lifeworlds. But in contrast to Moore’s approach, it does so not by demolishing the central tenets of decolonial theory, but by working with them in an attempt to demonstrate that even on the basis of their assumptions, an emancipatory universality can be affirmed. The insurgent universal arises not in the core of global capitalism but on the *spatial edges* of the extractive frontier, as demonstrated by the frontier proletariat of the *Vía Auca*. It emerges not through the gradual unfolding of a totalizing historical process, but at the *temporal edges* at which this process suddenly comes apart, as in the contingent explosion of the uprising in which I was involved. And it is not imposed by the metanarratives of Western intellectuals, but is directly lived on the *experiential edges* marked by the collective decisions of subaltern subjects to cross the line of state-enforced social order, as demonstrated by the intense and joyful struggle on the Savage Road. This was not a dry universalism drawn from dogmatic manifestos, but a living universality that leapt from the flames of sudden confrontation. Not a working class of white men defending their privileged position in the stable core of the global system, but a motley crew of indigenous and mestizo renegades, fighting tooth and nail on the extractive frontier. Not the steady march of historical progress toward a universal future, but a moment of temporal rupture in which universality was immediately

present. And not the imported ideology of foreign intellectuals, but the boisterous self-expression of undisciplined renegades. This form of universality is consistent with Moore's contribution to this special issue, and concurs with the decolonial critique of Eurocentric universalism. As such, it is a point on which the Marxist and decolonial projects might find common ground. More importantly, perhaps, the actuality of the insurgent universal demonstrates that the emancipatory horizon of subaltern struggle extends beyond the fragmented panorama of the pluriverse.

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