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Brazil, the Bomb and the Poet: Cecília Meireles and the Gandhian Seminar (1953)

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Abstract. In 1953, a group of nine delegates (from non-communist countries) met in New Delhi to discuss Gandhi's "outlooks and techniques" as a creative means to resolve Cold War nuclear tensions. This article mainly focuses on the politics and lyrical impressions as observed by the Brazilian poet Cecília Meireles in the Seminar proceedings and the *Diário de Notícias*. As the only Latin American delegate to attend the Seminar, she sheds new light on the ways emerging countries such as India and Brazil cope with racism, war, hunger, and violence. One pressing Gandhian issue which Meireles and other delegates address is the ethical role of "machines" in modern society. Problems faced by postcolonial cultures, such as industrialization, poverty, and racial strife, seem to take a different (and more dangerous) perspective when thought of in terms of machines and progress. To elucidate this "machine-like" rhetoric, the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari have been applied throughout. Other participant comments such as those by Ralph Bunche and John Boyd Orr allow for additional insight into topics still relevant today.

Keywords: Cecília Meireles, Gandhi, Nuclear War, Brazil, India.

Lingering ghosts of H-bombs' past haunt us once again. Shadows and voices of the dead, they arise in apostrophic gestures inferred among political discussions in recent summits, names hushed amid corridors of conferences and behind closed doors. Invisible forces, those that threaten through paranoia to cause our pitiful destruction (the "Outside Enemy" or "One sole madman," as commented by Žižek)¹ and those which seemingly have no power over us except to loom and threaten us with guilt, drive the many facets of nuclear discussions, to encourage what Deleuze and Guattari would call a schizophrenic interplay of "Rhizomatics = Pop analysis."² When truth-telling and myth-making conflict with our own desires to rise above and beyond our assumed perceptions of reality, we lose touch with precisely what we should hold onto, that is, our affective body, ethics, the whole assembled state of being:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 257)

To give a jarring example of a pop (gun) rhetoric of destruction: a recent article written by Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft refuses to support the abatement of nuclear weapons programs; the Bomb exists as a pre-emptive measure to count the future dead ("Death is the death of the other people," as Lévinas reminds us [*Tei* 236 / *TI* 258-59]). We tally, assume the fallen numbers of our (invisible) "hostile alliances" will always be greater. Kissinger and Scowcroft make clear that: "in assessing the level of unacceptable damage, the United States

cannot assume that a potential enemy will adhere to values or calculations identical to our own. We need a sufficient number of weapons to pose a threat to what potential aggressors value under every conceivable circumstance. We should avoid strategic analysis by mirror-imaging” (“Nuclear Weapon Reductions”). The West, with its broken mirror, needs to be able to “verify” or “project” its “confidence” in order to maintain the upper hand.

But whose (invisible) hand, which reflecting body part of those long gone and those still present can we count? Whose tongue? Which tallying machine? These synecdochal questions, so relevant today, actually emerged more than fifty years ago. Formal dialogues on the threat of nuclear proliferation and ways to deter it took place in 1953 among the palatial gardens of Hyderabad House in New Delhi and the cool marble walls of the recently built Parliament building. Amid the backdrop of a romantic Orientalism, an incongruous group of philosophers, diplomats, poets and academics met to seemingly engage with Gandhi’s techniques of non-violent resistance (*Satyagraha*)³ and present a set of measures to the United Nations that would bring war-torn countries and fragmented (political) bodies together in their search for peace. Among those present was the Brazilian poet, Cecília Meireles (1901–1964), the only official woman delegate to fully participate and the only Latin American representative invited. Meireles makes reference to the threat of invisible forces in her notes on the Seminar: “No entanto sabemos todos o que há por detrás daquelas sóbrias linhas—uma tragédia ultrapassada, mas de conseqüências evidentes: a idéia de guerra; a crise econômica; a busca de uma orientação espiritual, entre o descrédito dos antigos valores e a expectativa de valores novos ainda não aparecidos...” [Meanwhile we all know what can be read between those somber lines—a tragedy surmounted only by obvious consequences: the idea of war, an economic crisis, the search for spiritual direction among discredited old values and the expectation of new ones that have yet to appear...] (“Onde se fala o Japão” 199).

Meireles and others make bold questions and assumptions in this Seminar to come to understand not only the relevance of Gandhi in a post-atomic world but what really is at stake: whether India (and developing countries such as Brazil, Iran, Egypt) should ever make use of violence (read: atom bomb) to overcome poverty, economic hardship, and postcolonial dependency. Although almost nothing is known of this Seminar (*The New York Times* makes brief mention of it in passing [7 January 1953]⁴) — due to the rarity of the proceedings owned and disseminated by the Indian government, UNESCO, and Ralph Bunche and Lord John Boyd Orr papers⁵ — the uniqueness of these encounters allows us insight into how the gravity of nuclear war forces radical alternatives for peace and change. The Gandhian Seminar, as it came to be officially called, actively sought to engage with non-Western philosophies, ideas, and poetics (Gandhi, Tagore, Saadi, Hafeez Julundhri, and Orfi Shirazi) to posit “other techniques” that engage with an ethics of being especially when faced with the likelihood of another war, with the terrible possibility of extinction caused or provoked by minority and postcolonial cultures.⁶

The members present were of distinguished, if not unusual scholarly merit: two Nobel-Peace prize winners, Lord John Boyd Orr (1880–1971; Britain/Scotland) and Ralph Bunche (1903–1971; US); two controversial intellectuals, Louis Massignon (1883–1962; France) and Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984; Italy); three politicians, Acharya Kripalini (1888–1982; India), Ahmad Matin-Daftari (1896–1971; Iran), and Mohamed Hussein Heikel (1888–1956; Egypt); the Diet Leader and council advocate of Pacific Relations, Yusuke Tsurumi (1885–1973; Japan), and the established Brazilian intellectual, Cecília Meireles. Other participants such as the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Indian educationalist, Humayun Kabir, attended to relay insight into the personality and actions put forth by Gandhi.⁷ Notably absent were delegates from the USSR and China, who had been invited but declined to attend. At the preliminary meeting held on the 5th of January at Hyderabad House, it was decided that Boyd Orr would be Chairman and Bunche and Hussein Heikel, Vice Chairmen. Boyd Orr and Bunche mostly opened

and closed the sessions, and, as it turns out, subtly tended to push their own (covert) agenda, what Boyd Orr later defined as “special interests.” Most of the members were expected to give position papers on their views on Gandhi and the peace process, but more importantly, on the delicate dilemma of whether or not capitalism and its invisible hand, its pro-democratic ideologies, and its “might makes right” actions will prevail especially in developing countries such as India, Brazil, and Pakistan. Gandhi proves to be useful for what he did not do (provoke violence) but for what he could have done (caused rioting of the masses). The possibility of aggression and resentment, aggravated by recent memories of those killed in battle or harmed by nuclear destruction, seems to simmer at each surface of dialogue. For Bunche and Boyd Orr, their aim was to negotiate and convince members that colonial resentment was not the solution but opting-out of communism was. The ideology of the West was to transcend the basic realities confronted by delegates of third-world sovereign states (including economic hardship, racial strife, and political division). Of utmost importance was the primacy for security, global peace (by way of Gandhi), and allied democratic strength.

The Seminar was held for thirteen days from the 5–17 January 1953, with only the opening and closing sessions open to the public, and among these, four were classified as “secret.” Whether it was deliberate or not to minute these confidential sessions, they are included “verbatim” in the proceedings published by the Indian government.⁸ Heated discussions on topics such as race, disarmament of countries, loss of identity through the Second World War, communism, Harijan (Dalit) identities, the importance of educating the masses (including the poor and untouchables) were among several of the sensitive issues brought up by the delegates. Among those attending, and for the focus of this paper, was Cecília Meireles, who not only brought up questions in the Seminar about the role of the machine and its uses when pertaining to the loss of individuality and labor (sounding more Marxist than capitalist), but chronicled her experiences in a more personal way in the form of articles later sent to the *Diário de Notícias* and also as “sense impressions” in her *Poemas escritos na Índia* (1953; 1961).

Meireles was not accompanied by her husband at these meetings, and she makes no mention of him at all in her notes on the conference; she may very well have been commissioned by the Brazilian government to attend the Gandhian Seminar on her own merit for her life-long work on educational issues in Brazil, her ability to speak French and English, and her previous engagements with other academics and diplomats in countries such as the United States and Israel.⁹ Of the notes / chronicles published on India only a few will be made mention here, as they directly pertain to the Seminar.¹⁰ It is not clear whether Meireles wanted the public to know the seriousness of the discussions, or even, indeed, her own politics, as her notes were published almost a year or two after attending the Seminar, and some observations were cleverly mixed in with her travels and encounters with merchants, families, and palaces.¹¹ She does, however, emphasize that India and Brazil have much more in common than others may think, not just historical factors, but those pertaining to their industrialized (and democratic) futures. Meireles’s sharp eye often wanders to seminal topics which eventually (or covertly) emerge from the Seminar, such as how the underprivileged, the hidden Dalits, or those who have no voice may be able to emerge from poverty through education and better working conditions, as written about by Gandhi (not dissimilar to the “favelados” in Brazil); in her *crônicas* we often find her actively interacting with poor children, servants, and almost-invisible merchants.¹² Similarly, too, we see her engage with (and topical to this discussion) the right to have access to nuclear armament programs especially for those dependent countries; although Meireles deeply believes in Gandhi’s actions for non-violent resistance, she does seem to ponder the thought that minority cultures (Brazil? India?)¹³ might one day in the future resort to owning weapons especially as a means to preserving their identities.

Thus it is with a push-pull, ebb and flow between her notes and *crônicas* and the discussions of the Seminar, that we come to a schizophrenic Deleuze-Guattarian reading between

sensory perception (an Orientalist colorful landscape distracting us from the heaviness of the topics at hand, as described by her narratives and poems) and rationalist critique (of the dry and almost forbidding topics of the Seminar). Her travels and escapades along with the proceedings, and add to that, the otherness of Gandhi's own politics of non-violent resistance (as read by the delegates in his *Hind Swaraj*),¹⁴ make for a dialectic dervish of rhizomatic readings. We do not know in which direction her narratives turn, just as we cannot closely follow the logic of the delegates. There is no clear path to the "truth" or no obvious map in which contemporary discussions on nuclear war or colonialism can be easily plotted out. Gandhi tells us that truth must always be sought, even if it means losing everything: "They must be prepared to lose every penny rather than give up passive resistance. Passive resistance has been described in the course of our discussion as truth-force. Truth, therefore, has necessarily to be followed and that at any cost" (*Home Rule*).

Those first days of January begin with Meireles colorfully setting the scene ("Ritmo de um congresso" 185–188). Surrounded by a tropical lushness and mystery reminiscent of *1001 Nights*,¹⁵ the delegates arrive at the spacious and ornate Hyderabad House built in 1926. Patios, birds, roses, beautiful carpets, the magical nightingale or *bulbul* as Meireles now calls it, all this magnificent countenance of a fading Orientalism lulls us into her reading. New vocabularies surface to light, marvelous wonders: "páni, dudh, ruti, garam, thanda, sundar, sáfar, tchucklanokar"; they become a poetic catalogue of pleasures: "pássaros, panos, bordados, versículos do Alcorão..." [birds, silk, embroidery, verses from the Koran...] (187). Even the delegates do not escape enchantment of the palace, as Yusuke Tsurumi falls for the chatter of the birds flitting in the patios. She describes the birds in a delicate "brotherly" manner, carefully recalling Japan's dead:

Vinha andando, vinha andando, e os pássaros não se importavam com ele. Então, o professor parou. Os pássaros, na mesma, a conversarem os seus assuntos particulares ou universais. O professor achou interessantíssimo [...] Nem olharam para ele. Porque os pássaros na Índia não têm medo dos homens. Não há memória, na sua tradição, de homens que houvessem feito mal aos seus antepassados? Ficamos todos ali a pensar em pássaros mansos em gente mansa, e eu a recordar aquela palavra do jovem muçulmano: *bai*. Podíamos todos ser irmãos? Podíamos. Devíamos (187)

[He kept drawing nearer, drawing nearer, yet the birds paid scant attention. Then the professor stopped. The birds going about their business chatting away about their particular or universal things. The professor thought it very interesting...They didn't even look at him. Birds in India do not fear men. Could it be that they do not remember or have no history of men hurting their forebears? We all remained there thinking about gentle birds and gentle people and I thought of that word spoken by the young Muslim: *bai*. Could we be all brothers? We must.]

From the Palace to the Parliament House, Meireles reveals more glistening details. It is there where she sees "elevadores, varandas, portas, sáris, turbantes que vão e vêm" [elevators, varandas, doors, saris, turbans coming and going] (188); she lets her mind wander from the topics of the Seminar, to which Meireles pretends to pay scant attention. When she does turn her focus to the Seminar, she appears to gloss over the themes at hand, turning instead to the physical responses and gestures of her Indian counterparts. She immediately dispels stereotypes both in the ways in which they answer questions and also in their eagerness to "redeem" the status of their nation. Christian themes may seem out of place for this remark, except for the fact that she is taken by the Indian delegates' enthusiasm to do the right thing in constructing their bold country: "O que mais me encanta na Índia é a ânsia do povo em realizar coisas boas, de um modo

exato. A ânsia de construir. De dar um sentido à independência, obtida com tantas e tão longas lutas. A busca de uma direção. Um interesse patriótico, junto ao eterno interesse sobre-humano. Realmente, como uma ressurreição” [What enchants me most about India is the eagerness of the people to achieve good things, in an exacting way. The desire to build, to give meaning to their independence achieved after so many long battles. The search for direction, a patriotic enthusiasm along with an eternal pursuit of divine things. Really, as in a resurrection] (188).

As readers of her *crônicas*, we are treated sparingly to her intelligent or serious observations spoken in the Seminar. She narrates flittingly like those sparrows she describes and refuses to allow her thoughts to be controversial and heavy. Meireles appears to downplay her participation in politics (which the Seminar papers do not). Why the hesitation? Even in her poetry she drives at themes more relevant to the Seminar: genocide, war, death, time, topics on World War II, an ethics of responsibility toward the Other, a fear of the atom bomb. Her “crônicas” refuse to participate in the logic of “right or wrong” but point to impressions, tones, and themes which may captivate readers more, especially those who are used to her poetic persona as a “poet of the clouds” or even perhaps female readers, who might judge her as being too forthright in her political convictions.¹⁶

Hesitating, doubting, she confesses in her narratives that she has nothing “real” to say in a Seminar among such distinguished and honored guests. As a rhetorical strategy of sympathy, she lets the audience feel her anxiety and side with her: “Que posso eu dizer aqui..?” she keeps asking herself [What can I say here?] (“Pequena voz” 193–195). Nevertheless, she hints at her important political role. As the only Latin American representative invited to the Seminar, she displays with melancholy (perhaps because Brazil seems so far away: “tudo muito longe”) a sharpness for revealing the similarities between both Brazil and India. It is not just the tropical vegetation and similar fruit and spices (to which she often draws our attention), making Brazil akin to the Orient, but the inherent and “endearing” poverty. Both share a “pastoral stillness” not found elsewhere (what she calls “sossego [de] pastoral” 193). Where other countries have the force and gravity of historical events like the Second World War behind them, Brazil has a non-eventful past by comparison. It cannot compete in historical diversity as do Japan, France, and the United States, but it can teach India not to make the same modern mistakes. Industrialization is a painful lesson to learn for an obsequious postcolonial country. It should find a way to hold onto its Gandhian peaceful lessons of the village and remember to stop and reflect in rural-romantic time.

Then, parenthetically, she makes brief reference to the machines she will comment later on in the Seminar; and if we do not catch her remarks, they too will be forgotten as interspersed reflections. Yet, it is here where her thoughts on India and Brazil lie. If India is on the way to constructing a bold and new future, Brazil can only rue its past: “E de ti, que fizeram?” [And you? What did they do to you?] For Meireles, Brazil is already being devastated by its “artificial machines” driven by competition. If we read too quickly, we will miss her capitalist reproach. The fast world of the city seems to be destroying the idyllic countryside with its flora and fauna and simple cottages surrounded by cattle, “sem deformações, extravios, embustes...” [without blots, waste, falsehoods...] (“Pequena voz” 194).

“Ocorre-me a presença da máquina...” [The presence of the machine occurs to me...] Her thoughts on what to say in the Seminar seem last minute, as if they were passing nostalgic follies on the loss of identity in a (post) modern world. Machines destroy humankind, Gandhi constantly repeats in his *Hind Swaraj*.¹⁷ Perhaps it is this observation (bemoaning a loss of innocence bound with the romantic self), which Meireles also notices. But so, too, does she take note how art suffers when technology (or its machine-like tally) gets in the way:

Penso nas emissoras de rádio, nos estúdios de cinema, – em tudo quanto está convertendo a arte em negócio. Sempre as cifras por detrás da máquina. Isto são

máquinas pequeninas. De aparência inofensiva. Que matam lentamente, matando o livro, matando a cultura – a pretexto de divulgá-la – porque máquina, já por si perigosa, tem atrás de si a perigosíssima cifra. A cifra que se converte no supérfluo. A cifra que dá prestígio. A cifra que engana, mente, corrompe, porque a sua natureza é satânica (“Pequena voz” 195)

[I think of radio stations, movie theaters, in everything that is turning art into business. There are always sums working the machine. These can be small machines, neutral in appearance. That slowly kill us, kill the book, kill culture – only feigning to promote them – because the machine, already in itself dangerous, always has dangerous sums running through it. Sums which become superfluous. That give value. These tallies deceive, lie, and corrupt because they are by nature Satanic.]

The theme of loss and nostalgia for a Brazil (almost) long-gone is one which will appear constantly in her poems after her travels to Europe and India. Indeed, that may be why in her narratives she allows the descriptive free flow of her colorful observations to overshadow her more serious thoughts on what is being lost in the process of industrialization. Meireles likes to digress. She twirls a nostalgic Tagore (“e que se faz depois, do tempo economizado...?” [and what does one do later with extra time...?]) along with a poetic Rilke (“rendas que têm dentro de si os olhos das rendeiras...” [that a pair of eyes turned into this small densely woven piece of lace...?]),¹⁸ as well as a descriptive passage when encountering a poor market bazaar (“Pequena voz” 195). This is a coterie of impressions to pause, reflect, and mourn the loss of slow time. For Meireles, in this brief *crônica* (“Pequena voz”), India has only one lesson, and that is, not to follow in the “ways of the machine” but to take Gandhi’s words seriously: we must give them up, else there will be no room for pure thought (Truth) to be known or studied.¹⁹

However, as much as she truly feels the loss and nostalgia of the past through sensory depictions and intricate detail, she realizes in her other narratives that “stopping time” is an impossible task to practice, especially in a Seminar room filled with men who do not listen to each other. Perhaps we should return to her initial doubts as to whether her ideas presented in the Seminar really count. (Do Brazil’s count? Do India’s? Do Iran’s?) Her personal notes are pessimistic. Without a higher standard of living, without education, and without wanting to attain a better way of life, there is little hope for progress in developing countries.

Somber reflections coupled with poetic-like descriptions like those above occupy much of Meireles’s sojourn within her place among “illustrious men.” Descriptions in her narratives of her “humble” self leave her (scholarly) readers feeling deceived, as if she had been a meager participant in the Seminar, one who barely said a word or one who had scant opinions. That is a far cry from the actual proceedings. Not only does Meireles ask pertinent questions about Gandhi, war, and education, but she also leads one of the most productive sessions of the Seminar.²⁰ Hints at her serious participation come in bits and pieces, such as in the *crônica*, “Onde se fala o Japão e onde se vê a Índia” [Discussing Japan and foreseeing India]. In this narrative, she takes Professor Tsurumi’s words to heart and pushes for a more ideological agenda (one of the few *crônicas* to do so). For Meireles, Tsurumi represents the face of suffering of those ghosts of nuclear war. He is not only a Japanese professor and philosopher but also a living testament to the recent horrors of decimation. His presence at the Seminar startles Meireles, as his words and past actions indicate to her that he may be the only “true” delegate to closely follow in Gandhi’s example. She cites his past actions of going from village to village attempting to help survivors (199).

The Japanese professor’s voice in pleading for a better world only heightens the tension in the room. Meireles feels the phantoms’ presence and “shivers” [sobressalta]. Even so, she understands the incongruence of speaking about Gandhi when it should be the victims of war

who should be revered. Contradictory thoughts, those which are also reflected in the Seminar, set in: should Japan have the use of military artillery to protect itself from further atomic atrocities? Should India be allowed to invest in military means (nuclear weapons)? For a peaceful loving and newly created nation where Gandhi is spiritual leader, it seems unthinkable to have an “armed” India. The ghosts of the war dead do not leave her, however. She lets readers know that in the northeast region of India the government seems to be training strong soldiers for battle.²¹

To turn away from the ghosts of the past proves too difficult for Meireles while observing Tsurumi and his stoic pain; inevitably, she seems to switch off. Her descriptions now turn to the eminent Indian politician and professor, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and his speech on Gandhi. She does not focus on the content but remarks on his manner, his prominence, his voice. They are disappearing qualities that cannot be captured on paper. He is a creature just as ethereal as the ghosts that haunt the room, but his spirit is much lighter. He encapsulates the positive aspects she found lost or lacking in Tsurumi. Radhakrishnan evokes an Oriental mythology, with his white turban, his physical aura, his calm voice, his grandeur: “E o sábio aparece-nos aqui de um modo quase mitológico, semi-envolto em nuvens – pois é como nuvem branca a sua roupa, e é principalmente nuvem branca o seu enorme turbante, com uma forma que eu ainda não tinha visto, neste país onde os turbantes passam e repassam diante dos meus olhos noite e dia” [And the sage appears before us here in almost a mythical way, encased in clouds – as his clothes appear cloud-like, principally his giant turban, wrapped in a way I had never seen, in this country where turbans come and go before me night and day] (“Onde se fala o Japão” 202).²² He “floats” out of the room, allowing her to return to the birds she sees every morning. She lets her mind wander from his sparse words to his “divine” presence. His fluid expression and picturesque aura appear to drown out the sadness in the room.

Drawn into this enchanted picture, her readers are not made privy to the harsh depictions of the state of India which Radhakrishnan speaks about in the Seminar proceedings (the use of violence when it comes to nationalist concerns, his profound disillusionment with the separation between Hindu and Muslim states, the poor and hungry, etc.) Only one ideological constraint does seep out of her narrative, and that is his supposed aversion to communism. Meireles notes that the Indian professor disputes communism as a false pathway against the Indian spiritual community. Yet, he also hints that without the economic backing of the West, India may have no choice but to resort to it, as also suggested earlier by Pandit Nehru in his opening remarks to the delegates.²³

Her closing remarks on the Seminar prove to be the most politically controversial of her Indian narratives. In her “Raiz das catástrofes,” she makes the bold statement that words alone will not solve the world’s problems, particularly when it comes to the reduction of nuclear weapons. For Meireles – and perhaps for the others – the Seminar, the proceedings, the dialogues, the fervent messages agreed around the table are all symbolic gestures of a willing cooperation and political détente but, in the end, utterly impractical. Her words could be interpreted as cynical, but she claims to understand the reasons as to how or why those less-privileged may resort to violence:

Mas também não se pode dizer simplesmente à Violência: “Termina!,” e esperar que ela, que se chama Violência, fique de súbito dócil e obedeça. Porque a Violência já é uma explosão de mil causas. Em cada criatura humana há mil aspectos possíveis de violência: frustrações físicas, materiais, sociais, morais, intelectuais, políticas...Essa confusa unidade humana é que constitui os povos e as nações. E os povos e as nações tanto mais tumultuosos serão quanto mais caóticos e violentos forem os elementos que os compõem (“Raiz das catástrofes” 224)

[But also one cannot simply say to Violence: “Stop!” and then wait that it remains docile and obedient. Because Violence is already an outburst caused by a thousand reasons. In every person there are a thousand possible explanations for violence: physical frustrations, material, social, moral, intellectual, political...That total muddled humanity is what defines people and nations. And of those people and nations, the more chaotic and violent they are, the more unsettled.]

Meireles sides with other Indian nationalists such as Kripalini, Radhakrishnan, and Nehru to acknowledge that there might be circumstances when violence must be used, not just in self-defense but also to highlight the situation of those who have no other recourse but to use it against imperialist aggressions (“para se defenderem em caso de agressão” [to defend themselves in case of attack] 224). Although Meireles does not explicitly say so in her narratives, we must wonder whether she was referring to Brazil among those underprivileged countries which do not have access to the Bomb but one day might. Internal national strife such as political differences, unequal social class, economic immobility, religious antagonism and racial problems must be dissipated for violence to be eradicated. But this she feels is far away, a dream that only could occur in Seminars and gatherings such as this one. The aims of UNESCO and the Indian government to bring world peace may be a flitting reality. In her mind doubts still remain: “Por muito longe e confuso que esteja o Ocidente, há-de alcançá-lo este depoimento de boa-vontade e esta esperança que reuniram os participantes do Seminário de Gandhi em Nova Delhi?” [As much as the West is far away and confusing, should this delegation of good-will come to attain it, in expectation of those participants who have come to the Gandhian Seminar in New Delhi?] (227).

THE SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

In 1949, nearly two years after India was officially partitioned, UNESCO took the initiative to partner with the Indian National Commission for Cooperation to implement new and innovative techniques to help develop a peaceful “Orient.” According to the Indian Muslim scholar, Abul Kalam Azad, UNESCO was keen on establishing democratic policies in previously contested regions to strengthen ties with the West (*Gandhian Techniques* 1). Gandhi’s ethics and belief system could be a means to ease East-West tensions (and Soviet interventions) and a way to facilitate dialogue and exchange programs with other (minority) countries and intellectuals. When UNESCO approached the Indian government, they took a “great interest in the proposal” (1-2). In their initial meeting, headed by Ralph Bunche, they adopted the resolution to: “initiate, direct, and stimulate, in cooperation with other bodies with similar aims, the study of the ideas and techniques expounded by Gandhiji” (i).²⁴ UNESCO was part of the East-West strategy to calm Cold War tensions and to appease the international climate of activism and protests (Wong 349–360). Although UNESCO claimed in later proceedings that a cooperative effort on all sides had been accomplished successfully through a better understanding of Gandhi, they made clear that their role was to make sure that India and Pakistan and any developing country prioritized its opposition against communism and not harbor or support the use of nuclear weapons.²⁵

Pandit Nehru, whom Cecilia calls “an artist” and is one of the opening speakers of the Seminar, was often ambivalent in his views on UNESCO’s role (and equally NATO’s) in supporting decolonization and independence movements in postcolonial countries. When it came to his position on how Africa and Asia should cooperate with the West, his views were often vague (Wong 352). Certainly, when he begins to address the Seminar on 5 January his tone seems indecisive. Where the group of intellectuals aim is to officially apply Gandhi in reforming education and non-violent practices to countries such as India, he openly places doubt as to the “real” intentions of the Seminar:

Mr. Chairman and Friends, I confess to a feeling of great diffidence in having to address you on the subject of this Seminar. When I first heard of this Seminar some time ago, I could not make out how – and I speak with all respect – a number of people meeting together for a few days, a number of eminent people could consider and come to any decisions about such topics. (9)

Nehru was seen in the early 50s with suspicion by the United States for “failing” to resolve endemic and religious problems within his own country.²⁶ Internal strife, nuclear arms, and how to appease the marginalized and underprivileged groups (the untouchables, religious outcasts) were made to be “top priority” for the Gandhian Seminar, and, rightfully so, Nehru observes this “cooperative” process critically. The Seminar may have, too, given Nehru pause for thought; he became a strong advocate against the use and testing of nuclear weapons shortly after 1954, calling for a “standstill agreement.”²⁷

For how can Gandhi and his so-called techniques resolve modern technological problems when India is still appeasing the ghosts of its British colonial past? Perhaps because of his proximity to Gandhi as both a friend and strong political ally, Nehru’s opening remarks make mention of those “invisible forces” which guide India, among them the illogical “impressions” of a Gandhi recently gone. His thoughts on the ways that non-violent actions and education reforms could be implemented strangely resemble Meireles’s poetic sensations in her narratives. That Gandhi was a contradictory man, Nehru remarks, cannot be overstated, but that he can be emulated or studied, he clearly cannot say, as his “emotions get in the way” (9, 10). Gandiji, as Nehru and others call him, often had an “irritating” effect on others, one that goes beyond “curious” and makes one “ashamed” (10, 11). For Nehru, Gandhi cannot be particularized. He can be compared to Socrates, but only as a controversial figure, one who does not always agree with the status quo. Nehru declares (and perhaps with abated breath to Bunche and other delegates), that there really can be only one way of understanding Gandhi in the Seminar, and that is, to serve the needs of the West, to “agree with it” (11). Those who do not are “wicked.” His nuanced stance, as is Gandhi’s, may be neither but as he suggests, “half-way...shades of grey” (11).

But whose practice, which method? Indeed there are two names associated with the Seminar who framed the Gandhian practices to fit their own “private” ideologies, and they are Ralph Bunche and Lord John Boyd Orr. Their missions were doubly covert: to encourage India (Iran, Brazil, Pakistan, etc.) to follow in the Western ways of capitalism and democracy and turn its back to the Bomb, but also to eradicate, from their point of view, two fundamental problems threatening all nations, that is, racism and poverty. Over the years both diplomats were to become known primarily for these two endemic issues, and it may for this reason precisely why they led the “secret” sessions. They aimed to fruitfully and more critically challenge the ways in which East-West relations were resolving them. Cecília Meireles makes note of racism and poverty when she directly addresses the Seminar in her presentation paper, indicating how closely she was paying attention all along.

SECRET SESSIONS

In one of the four secret sessions held in the Seminar, Ralph Bunche makes clear that along with the threat of impending atomic warfare, the next largest threat is the “subject of hatred” with regards to: “a) economic tensions; b) minority groups; c) racial prejudices (because minority groups are not always racial, they may be religious); d) fear and the resulting hysteria; and e) [generalized] hatreds” (203). A life-long pursuer of racial equality, being African-American himself, Bunche understood the implications that the Gandhian outlook on race could have for other nations (especially apartheid South Africa). Bunche creatively rephrases discussions of

non-violence or the ability to ease tensions among minority groups as both a colonial and capitalist race-riddle, one that he admits he may not be able to solve or avoid (203).

For Bunche, appeasing strife among minority cultures (in the Indian case Hindu and Muslim) turned into a top priority, to prevent one group from possibly committing violence against the other. Gandhi's ideas serve a purpose in allowing insight into the ways that he attempted to introduce Harijans as legal Indian citizens. If the marginalized could have a potential voice (through education, health, and inclusion), then there would be no need to resort with the "enemy" (communism, Russia, and China).²⁸

Fired up against the tense arguments presented by the Indian politician, Achyara Kripalini, who makes the statement that "some caste people believe that it is their duty, religious duty, to maintain untouchability," Bunche can only respond: "just as certain people in America thought that it was their religious obligation to maintain slaves" (259). Even so, Bunche understands the severity of racial tensions (in the US) when he justifies the use of violence for self-protection or Civil Rights: "If the Negroes decide to suffer in patience and not hit back, it will not be a check to bigots. It will be an encouragement. I don't want to encourage bigots and aggressors" (260). Whether because the Seminar was held in India or because the issue of untouchability was too big or too sensitive to delve into, other delegates besides Kripalini (Kabirand Nayyar) did not support Bunche's point of view in allowing the most vulnerable to fight back. Violence enacted by the lowest castes to protect themselves was reprehensible; it was unthinkable (260, 261).²⁹

Understanding the gravity of the racial question was one issue that Meireles complicates in the Seminar when presenting her position paper. In many of her poems and, indeed, her *crônicas*, we find a poet who contradictorily maintains that Brazil ignores racial inequality (in that most Brazilians disregard it), while at the same time observing how blacks and the underprivileged are treated in Brazil and elsewhere.³⁰ She writes often about the problems incurred in the falsely propagated myth that there is a felicitous and equal miscegenation process which treats blacks on equal par with whites and indigenous people:³¹

Only for the sake of truth and from a personal standpoint, I dare to say that many of the difficulties of Brazil at present arise on the one hand from the diversity of the primitive population of Whites, Negroes and Red Indians [sic] who are not completely amalgamated, as well as from the problems caused by this complex coming together of different cultures and from the vastness of its territory and the repercussion of international problems of utmost importance in the process of its national integration. This great complexity, however, enables us all the more to "share" the Indian problems: the variety of populations, the multiplicity of languages, the religious diversity and the contrast between its millennial existence and its recent Independence. (*Gandhian Techniques* 76)

Meireles may have been aware that Bunche had an interest in Brazil's cultural policy on race, as he was one of a handful of foreigners to write articles for the Brazilian newspaper *Quilombo* against racism and prejudice.³² He was also later a leading member of race relations sponsored by UNESCO in the 1950s and 60s. Shortly before Bunche had joined UNESCO, the organization had invested in a project on understanding race in Bahia, Brazil led by Arthur Ramos and others.³³ UNESCO's involvement in Brazil spurred Brazilian intellectuals to begin to write and think about race, most notably Gilberto Freyre and Roger Bastide, whom Bunche both knew and with whom he corresponded.

The question of race, as dealt with by Meireles as a way of understanding India, was made more striking by Lord John Boyd Orr. For the Scotsman, the problem of colonialism was not one of minority cultures not getting along because of racial or religious strife, but because of

economic dependency. Bluntly put, “it is for the sake of profit that the exploiter wants to keep down the wages of coloured people [sic]” (262). This point was further seconded by an outsider, Shushila Nayyar,³⁴ when in a flash of conservative but contradictory resolve, she repeats that the “economic factor” had caused minority tensions among groups, including the “Negroes vs. the Whites,” the “untouchables vs. the other higher castes,” and the “Muslims vs. the Hindus” (266, 267). Bunche does not agree, and it is this divergent point where Bunche clearly misreads the delegates’ intentions, most notably those of Boyd Orr. Gandhi’s techniques of *Satyagraha* for most of the delegates could only work through the acceptance of self-suffering by the poor and disenfranchised; no mention was made in the Seminar to hold whites, elites, and higher social classes accountable to Gandhi’s practices (267).

Where race for Bunche becomes the central issue that aggravates and makes minority cultures side with the Soviet Union (communism), for Boyd Orr poverty or endemic economic inequality is deemed the main cause. Even though Boyd Orr eventually acknowledges the importance of race to Bunche (in his concluding remarks, nonetheless), he advocates that starvation, poverty, and ill treatment of those with lesser means keep widening the divide between “the haves and the have-nots” (385).³⁵ Economic injustice is the consequence of imperialism, leading to a life of exploitation. Boyd Orr keeps reminding the delegates of his experiences with the FAO, which sought ways to ameliorate starvation in those countries affected by colonialist rule or the Second World War (*Gandhian Techniques* 72). Even so, usually concise in his discussions on the limitations of capitalism (and “free democracy”), Boyd Orr seems to sidestep the issue at hand, that is, that the West with all its wealth cannot control the threat of an imminent war. To answer the pressing question of “Why should we kill each other?”, Boyd Orr appears to keep his mind open: “[delegates] can criticize any country; we have also a right to change our opinions. Indeed I am prepared to modify my views in the light of our discussions” (27). Gandhi, therefore, proves very useful for Boyd Orr in ameliorating the tensions among countries, a rhetorical strategy to reframe issues of power, wealth, and colonialism.

It is clear that Boyd Orr understands the gravity of power. Disarming minority cultures can make them remain (comfortably) invisible. He pursues his point, however: “These small nations should say: we are against armaments,” but all the while in pauses and digressions, he avoids the “Korea problem” (that violence may be used, even by the UN, when it comes to “defense of ideology.”)³⁶ Bunche adds to the contradiction: “Force was used in these circumstances. The UN had to save the Republic of South Korea” (233).

MACHINES

With his initial threatening remark, “Make no mistake about that. This process is gradually drifting towards liquidation of the human race” (26), Boyd Orr sets the tone of the conference as one of a menacing drive for power. All throughout the Seminar, the ominous threat of war through the prospective use of the atomic bomb is never too far away. The Bomb and, worse, the availability of it to be used by minority cultures has to be averted. With simplistic rhetoric (smaller nations and larger nations, armies and their techniques, the advance of science and the slowing of distance), Boyd Orr’s words in the Seminar strongly set out the boundaries and limitations of the Bomb. To negotiate peace is to firmly seek out a solid commitment from the delegates to side always with Western democracy. Boyd Orr’s ideological battle holds steadfast. He doggedly implements an effective anti-war “rhetoric-machine,” whether that means espousing Gandhi’s techniques (against nuclear war) or an anti-poverty campaign or implementing equal labor practices throughout the world.

Defining “machine” in the Seminar depended on context and speaker.³⁷ While at first the term should have had a direct correspondence with the way that Gandhi employed it (as an industrialized danger), as the Seminar progressed, it began to shift, change with each signifying context. “The “machine” proved to be a fickle definition to pin down. In his early publication

Hind Swaraj, Gandhi explicitly sets out his opposition against the general use of machines, especially those that replace human dignity. More metaphoric in his descriptions of “machine” than in his later publications, Gandhi sets up a counterpoising “dialectic” between the dignity of manual labor and the dehumanization of industrialized work, in several modes. When in his publication the Reader asks the Editor “I can see that you will discard all machinery. What then, is civilization?”, Gandhi’s response is a return to a “corporal” body that functions with “hands” and “feet,” attune not only to the work that the body produces, but to spiritual growth. The “machine” turns deadly when industry disregards the dignity of the human body. The machine with all its defects purposely “wounds” the body India. Personifying a machine, Gandhi responds: “Beware and avoid me. You will derive no benefits from me and the benefit that may accrue from printing will avail only those who are infected with the machinery craze” (*Hind Swaraj*). To restore human dignity, only “hand-made” things should be learned and taught, equally in schools and passed down through the generations. Crafts such as book-binding, spinning, weaving, and pottery are to be championed by those “untouchables” and those with great skill. In this way, each individual and each school can be “free” or “autonomous,” both as creative individuals and separate and self-supporting entities / institutions.

Uses and metaphors of the machine make for the most interesting read of the third session of the Seminar, which was led by Cecília Meireles. As stated above in her article published in the *Diário de Notícias*, Meireles had briefly noted the importance and role of the machine in the Seminar and in Gandhi’s teachings.³⁸ Where she downplays her opinions in her narratives, she presents herself as a strong diplomat in the Seminar proceedings (*Gandhian Techniques* 75–105). Her rationale in the third session leads inevitably for her to question the use of the machine in new and developing countries such as India and without a doubt (as we read in her notes), Brazil. She remarks: “To remind everyone of Gandhi’s sayings about industries and more generally about the exaggerated use of the machine in everyday life. The machine is good when it helps man, evil when it takes his place” (80).

Meireles does not advocate for the use of the atom bomb in her paper, but she does focus on the moral implications of the dangers of war and industrialization. As far away as Brazil the effects of war can be felt, and to alleviate the pressures of a growing society, she suggests a double-tiered strategy: to improve the local and regional economies (national) of countries like Brazil and India and to improve the global standing and recognition of the same countries within a larger scale (international). She and Boyd Orr both correlate the use of everyday technology to a more advanced but also consumerist society. With more machines and the capacity to handle them, there might be a desire to acquire the Bomb. Gandhi represents a radical alterity to nuclear possibility. His ideas might be able to alter the state (and mind) of the world, a pause to reflect and build upon the foundations of humanity, that is, through truth and education.

Boyd Orr takes the discussion even further when he remarks, “One of the great dangers of the machinery is that once you get it going you cannot stop it...” (93). He implies that once a community becomes educated and industrialized it “can start enormous production, maybe of atom bombs and various things like that. And when once it starts producing war materials, it is difficult to stop it” (93). Supporting Meireles’s nostalgic view (and Gandhi’s) on the return to the local village and hands-on mode of slow production, Boyd Orr emphasizes that machines can only be useful if they provide for better social services, education, health and even leisure time.

Other responses to Meireles’s position paper and to the meaning of “machines” eventually led to a vigorous if not back-biting debate. In particular, the future President of Iran, Ahmad Matine-Daftari, probed the discussion even further when suggesting that Gandhi’s ideas may be admirable but difficult to implement. One of Gandhi’s fervent disciples, Kripalani, equally remarked:

This industrial revolution had its worst repercussions on the colonial countries. As industries went on developing, huge stocks of manufactured goods accumulated in the factories. They were much beyond the requirements of home markets. Factories had to close down throwing many to unemployment and that naturally led to terrible unrest. Unless markets were found for the goods produced by the factories, there appeared to be no solution to the problem. (84)

For these delegates (from India, Iran and beyond) halting the process of industrialization all for retaining an (invisible, innocent) identity was not just an impossible ideal but also an utterly impractical one. They had no choice. They had to remain dependent on their Western allies for economic survival. They were not about to stop production just to bring values such as “peace” or “freedom” or “resistance” into localized action.

In light of this (almost-invisible) Seminar, it is interesting to note Meireles’s final thoughts on how difficult it might be for Brazil and India to negotiate alternative pathways for themselves as industrialized and independent nations against the shadow of their more powerful allies (which were still suffering from the aftermath of the Second World War). Meireles had the foresight to compare India and Brazil together. She also made clear that as much as Gandhi provided a gentle alternative to self-protection through resistance and non-violence, the Indian spiritual guide was all but unable to resolve the consequences of Cold War suffering, especially when time, motion, technology, and “machines” were moving at such rapid pace at the risk of another (shameful and looming nuclear) war:

Encerra-se um congresso destes, olha-se para o Ocidente e pergunta-se: onde, quando, se repetirá o que se fez aqui, para se insistir, mais uma vez, na vitória do Bem sobre o Mal, numa vitória sem violência, a vitória que o coração e a inteligência pedem, o que não pode tardar mais, porque estamos cobertos de vergonha diante de um mundo coberto de sangue, desmoralizados e cheios de terror? (“Raiz das catástrofes” 226, 227)

[Upon closing such a Seminar such as this one, we look at the West and ask ourselves: where or when will these events take place again? To demand once more a victory of good over evil, a victory without violence, a victory solicited by the heart and mind. We cannot wait any longer. We are bathed in shame unto a world bathed in blood, demoralized and filled with terror.]

□□□□□

¹ Ideological or political rhetoric that provokes fervent belief and paranoia against a regime (like Iran) creates a never-ending Nietzschean cycle of “invisible” threats (conspiracies, communism, “war on terror”), which supposedly diminishes our “visible” structures of democracy (our freedom, safety, and human rights). Žižek criticises the “ ‘false moral premises’ of Cold War politics transplanted from a policy of détente of MAD (Mutually assured destruction) to ‘ONE SOLE MADMAN [sic]’ ” (a puppet master who runs the whole show such as Ahmadinejad). Žižek finds the invisible and illogical threats always escalating to “do whatever we want you to do.” Slavoj Žižek. “Give Iranian Nukes a Chance,” *In These Times* web only. 11 Aug 2005. 12 Apr 2012 <<http://www.lacan.com/zizekiranian.htm>>.

² “Writing weds a war machine and lines of flight, abandoning the strata, segmentaries, sedentarity, the State apparatus” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 24). Deleuze and Guattari push the limits of monstrous discourse and politics when they envision an “assemblage in heterogeneity,” a rhizomatic carnival of narrative breaks and networks which forcefully departs from binarisms, logic, and historical and mythical (Oedipal) thought.

³ Gandhi gave his philosophy of “disobedience” or “non-violent resistance” the Hindu name of *Satyagraha*. He founded his tactic or passive communal action upon Thoreau’s essay on civil disobedience in which the

American writer encouraged group participation against the enslavement of man. Gandhi wrote an essay on this issue for a contest in the *Indian Opinion* on 9 November 1907, calling for a radical opposition towards the British government, and he was imprisoned two months for it. George Hendrick. "Influence of Thoreau on Gandhi." *The New England Quarterly*. 29.4 (1956): 467, 468. Bhiguapti Singh further defines Gandhi's practice of non-violence as "ambiguous" in that for Gandhi, "disobedience [was] not "resistance" [...] but a "desire." " There is a need for a better future or further self, in the same way that Deleuze and Guattari's "desiring-machines" may push the subject towards an ideal quest for another (possible) world or being. See: "Reinhabiting Civil Disobedience," 372–373.

⁴ *The New York Times* places great doubt as to the final "peaceful" outcomes of the Seminar. It tells that there are: "four important factors at work: 1) The advance of technology, which could eliminate hunger and disease but which, if left uncontrolled, also could annihilate mankind; 2) The concentration of power in the hands of a small minority; 3) the existence of two most powerful nations in place of a number states of more or less equal strength; 4) the tremendous awakening of "ethical consciousness" among the masses." The article ends pessimistically: "The general trend of opinion appeared to be that while Gandhi's ideas of non-violence looked fine on paper, it was doubtful that they could be translated into action in the present state of the world, in which groups and nations are being swayed by "powerful conflicting loyalties"."

⁵ See: Ralph Bunche papers, Box 399, Folder 19 [India 1953 January, meeting Jawaharlal Nehru, at Mohandas Gandhi's tomb, and meetings in New Delhi and Bombay]. UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Manuscripts Division. 2 Mar 2012 <<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/special/scweb/>>. Also see: Lord John Boyd Orr papers, Scientific and Engineering Papers, National Library of Scotland, 4 Mar 2012 <<http://www.nls.uk/collections/manuscripts/collections/scientific-engineering>>. UNESCO papers which make reference to the Seminar include: *Second Extraordinary Session* (Paris: 1953) and its own publication, *Men against Ignorance* (1953).

⁶ Ralph Bunche and others strongly hint that the real objective of the Seminar is not to remember or idolize Gandhi or even to employ his techniques, but to find out whether India, Pakistan, or other minority cultures could ever conceive of violence as a solution to empower themselves from the East-West colonial economic (and ethnic) divide.

⁷ Other delegates included the Indian patriots, Zakir Hussain (1897–1969) and Kaka Saheb Kalelkar (1885–1981), the German controversial pacifist, Martin Niemöller (1892–1984; Germany), Gandhi's secretary Pyarelal Nayyar (1899–1982; India), the soon to be second President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975; India), the Indian educationalist and philosopher, Humayun Kabir (1906–1969; India), the leading Marxist and Indian nationalist, Acharya Narendra Deva (1889–1956; India), and the prominent Muslim leader against the partition of Pakistan, Abul Kalam Azad (1868–1958; Pakistan).

⁸ *Gandhian Outlook and Techniques* (Ministry of Education: Government of India, 1953). In the concluding remarks made by the delegates, it was mentioned that the Seminar was to be translated into different languages and made available to other countries. To my knowledge, this is the only publication of its kind (and was left pending, perhaps, by UNESCO).

⁹ Cecília Meireles's second husband, Heitor Grillo, worked for Brazil's Secretary of the Interior and was commissioned several times to travel to Europe. We know that Meireles, for the most part, accompanied him on these travels. We cannot be sure whether Grillo went with Meireles to India in 1953 without having access to her manuscripts and papers, which for scholars are not easily available. She does, however, keep mentioning a female friend, Jeanne, who came with her on several excursions.

¹⁰ The *crônicas* are found in: Leodegário A. De Azevedo Filho. *Cecília Meireles Crônicas de Viagem 2 (Obra em Prosa)*. 2nd edition. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 2001): 39–228. The Seminar appears under these newspaper / *crônica* titles: "Uma voz no Oriente", "Pelo Mahatma", "Adeus, amiga", "Retrato de uma outra família", "Ritmo de um congresso", "Ocidente Perplexo", "Pequena Voz", "Onde se fala o Japão e onde se vê a Índia", "Um grande discurso", "São belos, estes dias..." and "Raiz das catástrofes."

¹¹ Most of the articles written on India for the *Diário de Notícias* were not published immediately but five months to a year or two later. Meireles may have “toned” down their content to sidetrack readers from the seriousness of the Seminar and the role she played in it.

¹² We also see an active ethical engagement with the underprivileged in her poems.

¹³ Meireles does not make clear as to who may have the right to use violence for self-preservation. We can assume that she may be thinking of India and even Brazil.

¹⁴ Mohandas Gandhi. *Hind Swaraj or Home Rule*. 1909. This is a book of philosophical (and Westernized) curiosities. Its premise is a dialogue between the Editor and an always-antagonistic Reader, who does not quite believe the arguments of Indian Independence set forth by the Editor. Gandhi does not pretend that the ideas of freedom and independence are completely Indian, and so allows his allegiance to the Western canon to show through. He pays homage throughout to Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson, Plato, and Socrates. The main aim is to teach the Reader(s) the spiritual superiority of passive resistance, only obtained by “self-reliance” (*Swadeshi*) and “Home Self Rule.” The chapters are broken down into several sub-themes, among them (and the one most commented on in the Seminar) is on “Machines.”

¹⁵ Meireles translated *1001 Nights* into Portuguese very early in her career, in 1926.

¹⁶ As a well-known public figure during her lifetime, Cecília Meireles knew how to manipulate both her private and public persona. Her poetry often exhibits a very different (if not private, darker) personality than her prose. She may have even learned the art of first-person manipulation from the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, whom she admired throughout her life.

¹⁷ Gandhi’s thoughts on machinery sound distinctly rhizomatic: “Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery there are large cities; and where there are large cities, there are tram-cars and railways, and there only does one see electric light. English villages do not boast of any of these things. Honest physicians will tell you that where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered. I remember that when in a European town there was a scarcity of money. The receipts of the tramway company, of the lawyers, and of the doctors went down and people were less unhealthy. I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery” (*Hind Swaraj*).

¹⁸ Excerpt translated by Franz Wright in: Rainer Maria Rilke. *The Unknown Rilke: Selected Poems* (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College Press, 1990): 31–32.

¹⁹ Gandhi remarks: “Some men will give up all machine made things at once. But, if the thought is sound, we shall always find out what we can give up and gradually cease to use it. What a few may do, others will copy; and the movement will grow like the coconut of the mathematical problem” (*Hind Swaraj*).

²⁰ As declared by Ralph Bunche and Boyd Orr in the Closing Sessions (*Gandhian Techniques* 310–342).

²¹ It is not clear as to whether she is referring to the military base in Kashmir set up by the British or whether these soldiers constitute a separate army altogether aiming to prepare for future war.

²² Meireles comments on the physical aspects of other speakers in a poetic way: Acharya Kripalini, she likens to a white bird (“um pássaro branco”); Ralph Bunche is a polite man demonstrated by his manners: “com pausas tímidas, incertezas, reticências...” [with timid pauses, uncertainties, secrets...]; Lord Boyd Orr’s white eyebrows hide his reticence and shyness (“como a pupila acesa sob a floresta branca das sobancelhas...” [like a pupil burning amidst a sea of white eyebrows]; “Um grande discurso” 205).

²³ Nehru declares that unless there are more negotiations with poorer and lesser developed nations (and more economic support from Western countries), war might break out: “So we see the world going step by step towards same tragic disaster – and everybody realises the awfulness of that disaster and everybody would like to avoid it” (*Gandhian Techniques* 17, 18).

²⁴ In his papers Bunche often cites Gandhi as a source of inspiration when seeking negotiations and peace in war-torn nations. Bunche, however, makes it clear that Gandhi’s ideas only go so far for the US and Western alliances. See: Ralph Bunche. *Selected Speeches and Writings*. Ed. Charles P. Henry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

²⁵ See: UNESCO. *Second Extraordinary Session*. Paris 1953 and FSC Northrop. “Concerning UNESCO’s Basic Document on World Philosophy.” *Philosophy East and West*. 1.4 (Jan 1942): 59–67.

²⁶ See: Vera Micheles Dean. “The United States and India.” *Far Eastern Survey*. 21.5 (2 Apr 1952): 41–46.

²⁷ Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace of 1954 heavily influenced Pandit Nehru's position against nuclear testing.

²⁸ Gandhi used the popular term "Harijans" (meaning "children of God") for the untouchables or Dalits. He also published a newspaper with the same name (in the singular). He was a strong advocate for their ability to vote in elections (and fasted many a time for their representation) but, as some critics have noted, he was contradictory and even ambivalent about giving them full rights and freedoms within Indian society. See: Nizar Ahmad. "A note on Gandhi, Nation and Modernity." *Social Scientist*. 34.5 / 6 (May–Jun 2006): 50–69.

²⁹ We can also hear in the not too distant din the racial quandary posed by Deleuze and Guattari in a *Thousand Plateaus*: "For what can be done to prevent the theme of race from turning into racism, a dominant and all-encompassing fascism, or into a sect and a folklore, microfascisms?" (379)

³⁰ In her travels to the United States in 1940, Meireles points out the disparities between blacks and whites that sharply existed, and she writes about them in her poetry and narratives. Readers get hints about Afro-Brazilians' understanding of race on a day-to-day basis when she comments on the ways her nanny Pedrina has to do things differently such as riding in the back elevator or keeping quiet (See: Meireles's *Olhinhos de gato*).

³¹ Meireles advocates for racial "equality" in her prose just as much as her intellectual peers do, most notably Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Gilberto Freyre (both believers in "racial democracy.") Meireles suggests otherwise in her poetry that all is not "equal." Blacks are treated differently when working in menial jobs such as cleaning streets and taking care of children.

³² From 1948–1950 *Quilombo* published a column called "Racial Democracy" to which Ralph Bunche signed his name. See: Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães. "After Racial Democracy." *Tempo* 3. (São Paulo, 2007). 1 Mar 2012. <http://socialsciences.scielo.org/scielo.php?pid=S0103-20702007000100002&script=sci_arttext>.

³³ See: Arthur Ramos' archive at the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro: *Arquivo Arthur Ramos: inventário analítico*. Organização Vera Faillace (Rio de Janeiro, Edições Biblioteca Nacional, 2004).

³⁴ Sushila Nayyar (1914–2000), who became a highly regarded politician, is not registered as an official delegate. She was the younger sister of Pyarelal Nayyar, Gandhi's personal secretary, and may have snuck into the Seminar.

³⁵ The expression "the haves and the have-nots" was actually used first by Bunche in the discussion.

³⁶ Other delegates understood the gravity of the war with Korea such as Kaka Kalelkar who coldly mentions: "We entered Korea to save Korea and ended by destroying Korea" (*Gandhian Techniques* 233).

³⁷ "Machine" as a definition in the Seminar had many uses, as: "war machine"; "industrial machine" (80); an "anti-handicraft machine" (81); a "psychological weapon" (82); "a machine of foreign domination"; "machines for mass production"; "machines for self-reliance"; "nationalised / socialized machine" (88); "replacement machine" (90); "machine production" (91); "leisure-producing machine" (93); "social welfare machines" (93); "anti-ethical machine" (94); "sewing-machine" (124); "the machine age" (124, 413); "anti-conflicts machine" (137); "atomic machine" (224); "cheap machine goods" (296); "soulless machine" (392); "simple machines" (395).

³⁸ Meireles never cites Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* directly, but as the delegates were given the book to read, it could be assumed that this is the source from which she derives most of her thoughts.

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