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GREEN GO HOME

TOMAS VU

The story of **Green Go Home** is part myth and part folklore. It is also partially a misunderstanding and to some degree, an invention of the imagination. Nonetheless, it makes for a compelling story. The term gringo—commonly used in Latin America to describe a Western foreigner—has been assumed by many to have etymologically originated with the phrase “Green go home!” One folkloric story holds that the origin of gringo is derived from a rallying chant. During the Mexican-American War, under the commands of General Taylor and later General Scott, American troops invaded and overwhelmed their opposition. At this time, according to legend, the American uniform frequently included green coats. Hence “Green go home!” became the recurring phrase of the population. Over time it was thought that “Green go home!” was shortened to “Green go!” and in turn became “gringo.” There are, however, alternative explanations. One earlier instance of the use of gringo can be dated to a 1786 Castilian dictionary by Terreros y Pando. In that volume the term was used to describe foreigners whose particular accents prevented them from pronouncing Castilian words properly. Moreover, in Madrid especially, the word was used to describe a person of Irish descent.

Detractors of the green coat theory have pointed out that U.S. troops wore blue during the Mexican Invasion, and therefore that myth of the phrase’s origin should be dismissed—though this etymology seems plausible, remaining a convincing image for many, even today. Another aspect of the folklore held that during the Mexican-American War, as reported by American newspapers, English-speaking American soldiers would sing a folk version of “Green Grow the Lilacs” (a song written by the English King Henry VIII). In this case, the use of gringo was attributed to the song’s lyrics.

In 1846, Roman Catholic Americans and recent immigrants—from Ireland and Germany—were sent by the U.S. government to participate in the Mexican-American War as fighting broke out. However, a combination of resentment over their treatment by Anglo-Protestant superiors, and a realization that they were fighting for a Protestant nation against a Catholic one, led many to switch sides. Captain Jon Riley, of County Galway, led this group of deserters under the name of St. Patrick’s Battalion. The song that they frequently sang, “Green Grow the Rushes, O,” serves as another potential origin to the term gringo.

Another variant of this story focuses on the green stripes worn by the 3rd Cavalry—the only U.S. cavalry to wear a green stripe on their uniform trousers. Within this unit there was also a prominent presence of Irish Americans, and so the regimental song was “Green Goes the Rushes, Ho.” Some believe that this green stripe was the source of the term gringo, while others think that as the Mexicans became familiar with the song, began to associated the American soldiers with the lyrics, “Green go (es the rushes, hol).”

In Brazil, gringo is also thought to have been derived from the English words green and go, but with a different basis. Rather than originating from military interaction, this term came about from foreigners’ exploitation of nature. The Amazonian rainforest was the green that for them was going, or being stolen and destroyed by outsiders, lending its verdant name to those exploiters. Alternately, in Puerto Rico it is thought that the term gringo refers to the locals’ desire for the U.S. military, characterized by their green uniforms, to leave their island. Hence the Puerto Ricans demanded, “Green, go!”

The origin of the prints and text—bearing graffiti over the images—was a collaborative installation first presented at the Colombia-American library in Bogotá, Colombia. The work was meant to address and interrogate the under-stabilized relationship of the two countries, and the institution (which is meant to be a sign of understanding and goodwill). The provocation inherent in “Green Go Home,” is positioned against the subtle underlying subtext of U.S. interventions, and colonialist attitudes, towards its neighbors in Latin America from Mexico southwards: an antagonism that has cost many lives and much strife. In the imagery itself, the presence of each character—from films to music to personalities of resistance—reveals itself to the viewer as addressing the condition of the graffiti text. The grid holds up the statement and reinforces the layers of interpretation, readings, and misunderstandings. “Green Go Home” is meant to be a wall of resisters, and of resistance.

“GREEN GO HOME,” a portfolio of 78 screenprints in an edition of 8, is a collaboration between Rirkrit Tiravanija and Tomas Vu / Printed by Nathan Catlin and Corey Riddell at the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies at Columbia University in New York, NY in 2013 / Each page measures 23 x 30 inches, printed on Mohawk Via Vellum Warm White, 89 gm / Pages are enclosed in a screenprint, mirrored stainless steel storage box.



This image is from the 1968 film “Planet of the Apes,” a story that deals with the downfall of man and the evolution of planet Earth after man has been made obsolete. Here, astronaut **Colonel George Taylor**, who has found his way back to Earth, kisses **Zira**, the scientist ape. This introduces a new breed of tolerance and suggests hope for peace.



Bruce Lee is one of the most influential martial artists of all time and a pop culture icon. He is the founder of Jeet Kune Doan, an eclectic/hybrid system of fighting and philosophy of life (“The art of fighting without fighting”). He is often credited with helping to change the way Asians were presented in American media.



Buckminster Fuller was an architect, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor and futurist. In his work he explored the constructing principles of nature to find design solutions. He is best known for the development of the geodesic dome, a structure that designed for utopian societies.



“**A Clockwork Orange**” is a 1971 film which uses disturbing, ultra-violent imagery to comment on psychiatry, youth gangs, and other subjects in dystopian future Britain. It is an exploration of human free will to choose between good and evil. This is image from the Korova Milk-bar where the droogs go to drink milk-drug cocktails.



Yuri Gagarin was a Soviet pilot and cosmonaut. He was the first human to journey into outer space, when his Vostok spacecraft completed an orbit of the Earth on 12 April 1961.



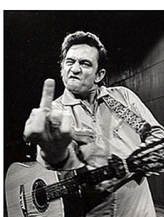
In the far future, a highly sexual woman, **Barbarella**, is tasked with finding and stopping the evil Durand Durand. In the film, Durand Durand is the inventor of the Positronic Ray, a weapon. Earth is now a peaceful planet, and weapons are unheard of. The film comments on feminism, sexuality, and the nature of peace.



Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani teenager who survived an assassination attempt by Taliban gunmen and went on to become an activist for education and women’s rights.



Leeloo, of “**The Fifth Element**,” is a humanoid woman reconstructed by scientists from found DNA. In the film she ultimately becomes identified with humanity after having come to witness the brutality of war and violence. She thus refuses to release the Divine Light, the only hope for saving the planet Earth from total annihilation.



Hello, I’m **Johnny Cash**. “**The Man in Black**” is an American singer-songwriter, maverick, and poet. Much of his music contains themes of sorrow, moral tribulation, and redemption.



Thich Quang Duc was a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who burned himself to death at a busy Saigon road intersection to protest the persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese government. Photographs of his self-immolation were circulated widely across the world and brought attention to the policies of the Diem government.



“**The Silver Surfer**” is a comic book superhero. Originally a young astronomer named **Norrin Radd** on the planet Zenn-La, he saved his homeworld from the planet’s devourer, Galactus, by serving as his herald. Now known as the Silver Surfer, Radd roamed the cosmos searching for planets for Galactus to consume.



Alberto Rojas Lesmes, otherwise known as “**Kapa**,” is a Colombian actor and environmental activist. This image was taken after he swam the Amazon River as a form of protest against increasing pollution. He swam almost without rest over 39 days, 8 hours a day.



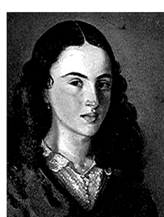
Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski, or the “**Unabomber**” was an American terrorist, mathematician, social critic, and neo-luddite. He launched a bombing campaign with a political philosophy against modern technology after watching the wilderness around his home destroyed by development.



The Unknown Soldier is a symbolic figure who represents the American G.I. in the Vietnam War. Also known as the **Angel of Death**.



Major Motoko Kusanagi is a character from the Japanese anime and manga series “**Ghost in the Shell**.” She has a fully synthetic body and is not certain her “ghost” retains any humanity. She speculates on the possibility that she is entirely synthetic, with artificially generated memories designed to fool her into thinking she was once human.



Policarpa Salazar, also known as **La Pola**, was a seamstress who spied for the Revolutionary Forces during the Spanish Reconquista of the Viceroyalty of New Granada. She was captured by Spanish Royalists and ultimately executed for high treason. She is now a heroine of the independence of Colombia.



Alan Turing is considered to be the father of computer science and artificial intelligence. He worked as a code breaker during World War II, during which time he developed his “Enigma” machine. His homosexuality resulted in criminal prosecution in 1952 and he accepted a treatment of chemical castration as an alternative to prison.



Stanley Kubrick’s seminal 1968 film “**2001: A Space Odyssey**,” deals with a series of encounters between humans and mysterious black monoliths that are apparently affecting human evolution. During a mission to Jupiter the sentient computer HAL 9000 rebels and takes control of the space-ship.