

ESDEVENIR IMMORTAL I DESPRÉS MORIR

Un projecte de comissariat de Caterina Almirall
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Aquest projecte proposa concebre el museu com un espai de negociació entre la vida i la mort, tot partint de les teories que els filòsofs russos anomenats "Cosmistes" van desplegar a finals del s. XIX i del seu projecte utòpic d'una humanitat immortal que gràcies a la tecnologia podria fins i tot ressuscitar els ancestres. Per solucionar la sobre població que implicaria la resurrecció de tots els avantpassats, la cursa espacial els facilitaria la tecnologia per conquerir el cosmos i enviar els ressuscitats a altres planetes que esdevindrien així, museus.

Segons Fedorov, un dels principals teòrics del cosmisme, el museu seria l'única tecnologia disponible que exerciria una afectació cap al passat i cap al futur en termes no progressius, "una tecnologia per fer que les coses perdurin, esdevinguin immortals". El museu, tal i com l'entén Fedorov, funciona com un mecanisme per guanyar al temps.

Aquestes idees apunten a la radicalitat d'un temps sempre present, on no hi ha lloc per a la imitació, la còpia, la reproducció ni la regeneració, i senyalen el valor únic de tot allò que es guarda al museu. La disjuntiva entre vida i mort, entre preservar i viure, entre guardar i perdre, i la negociació entre passat-present-futur, és el nus que articula aquest projecte. Així, la pràctica artística planteja una possible voluntat de permanència, un diàleg entre temporalitats, o per dir-ho altrament, com una manera de "parlar amb els morts".

INDEX INDEX

Agamben, Giorgio. (2005) Elogio de la profanación. En: *Profanaciones*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

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número porta ahora una majestuosa cabeza de toro, dan testimonio de una aporia que va unida a la totalidad del proyecto del autor.

Entre los motivos centrales de la lectura hegeliana de Kojève, de quien Bataille había sido oyente en la *École des Hautes Études*, figuraba el problema del final de la historia Y de la figura que el hombre y la naturaleza asumirían en el mundo post-histórico, cuando el paciente proceso del trabajo y de la negación, por medio del cual el animal de la especie *Homo sapiens* deviene humano, alcanzara su consumación. Según un gesto muy característico en él, Kojève dedicó a este problema capital sólo una nota del curso 1938-39:

La desaparición del Hombre al final de la Historia no es, pues, una catástrofe cósmica: el Mundo natural sigue siendo lo que es desde toda la eternidad. Y tampoco es una catástrofe biológica: el Hombre permanece en vida como animal que está en acuerdo con la Naturaleza o con el Ser dado. Lo que desaparece es el Hombre propiamente dicho, es decir, la acción negadora de lo dado y del Error o, en general, el Sujeto *opuesto* al Objeto. De hecho, el final del Tiempo humano o de la Historia, es decir, la aniquilación definitiva del hombre propiamente dicho o del Individuo libre e histórico, significa sencillamente la cesación de la Acción en el sentido fuerte del término. Lo que quiere decir prácticamente: la desaparición de la guerra y de las revoluciones sangrientas. Y además la desaparición de la *Filosofía*; porque cuando el Hombre mismo no cambia ya esencialmente, ya no hay razón para cambiar los principios (verdaderos) que están en la base de su conocimiento del Mundo y de sí. Pero todo el resto puede mantenerse indefinidamente; el arte, el amor, el juego, etc., Y, en definitiva, todo lo que hace al hombre *feliz*. (Kojève, 434-435)

El conflicto entre Bataille y Kojève se refiere propiamente a ese "resto" que sobrevive a la muerte del hombre que vuelve a ser animal al final de la historia. Lo que el alumno —que tenía cinco años más que el maestro— no podía aceptar de ninguna manera era que "el arte, el amor, el juego", como también (la risa), el éxtasis o el lujo (que, vestidos de un aura de excepcionalidad, estaban en el centro de las preocupaciones de *Acéphale* y, dos años más tarde, del *Collège de sociologie*), dejaran de ser sobrehumanos, negativos y sagrados para ser simplemente resultados a la *praxis animal*. Para el pequeño grupo de iniciados cuarentones, que no temían desafiar el ridículo al esencificar "la alegría ante la muerte" en los pequeños bosques de la periferia parisina, ni algo después, en plena crisis europea, jugar a "aprendices de brujo", predicando el regreso de los pueblos europeos a la "vieja casa del mito", el ser acéfalo entrevisto por un instante en su experiencia privilegiada podía, quizás, no ser humano ni divino; animal, empero, no debía serlo en ningún caso.

Por supuesto, lo que también se ventilaba en este punto era el problema de la interpretación de Hegel, un terreno donde la autoridad de Kojève era particularmente amenazadora. Si la historia no es más que el paciente trabajo dialéctico de la negación, y el hombre es el sujeto y, al tiempo, lo que se pone en juego en esta acción negadora, la culminación de la historia implicaba necesariamente el fin del hombre: el rostro del sabio que, alcanzado el límite del tiempo, contempla satisfecho este final toma necesariamente, como en la miniatura de la Ambrosiana, la forma de un hocico animal.

Por eso mismo, como manifiesta en su carta a Kojève del 6 de diciembre de 1937, Bataille tiene que apostar por la idea de una "negatividad sin empleo", es decir, de una negatividad que sobrevive, no se sabe cómo, al final de la historia y de la que no le es dado proporcionar otra prueba que su propia vida, "la herida abierta que es mi vida":

Admito (como una suposición verosímil) que a partir de ahora la historia se ha acabado (excepción hecha del epílogo). Sin embargo, yo me represento las cosas de manera diferente... Si la acción (el "hacer") es –como dice Hegel– la negatividad, se plantea entonces el problema de saber si la negatividad de quien no tiene “ya nada que hacer” desaparece o bien subsiste en el estado de “negatividad sin empleo”: personalmente, no puedo decidirme más que en una dirección, al ser yo mismo exactamente esta “negatividad sin empleo” (no podría definirme de manera más precisa). Reconozco que Hegel ha presentado esta posibilidad, si bien no la ha situado *en el final* de los procesos que ha descrito. Imagino que mi vida –o, mejor todavía, su aborto, la herida abierta que es mi vida– constituye por sí misma la refutación del sistema cerrado de Hegel. (Höller, 170-171)

El fin de la historia lleva consigo, en consecuencia, un “epílogo” en que la negatividad humana se conserva como “resto” en las formas del erotismo, de la risa, del júbilo ante la muerte. En la luz incierta de este epílogo, el sabio, soberano y consciente de sí, ve pasar ante sus ojos no cabezas animales, sino las figuras acéfalias de unos *hommes farouchement religieux*, “amantes” o “aprendices de brujo”. Pero el epílogo se revelaría frágil. En 1939, cuando la guerra era ya inevitable, una declaración del *Collège de sociologie* traduce su impotencia al denunciar la pasividad y la ausencia de reacciones frente a la guerra, como una forma masiva de “desvirilización”, que transforma a los hombres en una suerte de “ovejas conscientes y resignadas al matadero” (Hollier, 58-59). Aunque fuera en un sentido diverso de aquél que tenía en mente Kojève, los hombres habían vuelto a ser verdaderamente animales.

3. ESNOB

Ningún animal puede ser esnob.

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE

En 1968, con ocasión de la segunda edición de la *Introducción*, cuando el discípulo-rival llevaba ya seis años muerto, Kojève vuelve al problema del devenir animal del hombre. Y lo hace, una vez más, en forma de una nota adjunta a la nota de la primera edición (si el texto de la *Introducción* está compuesto esencialmente de los apuntes recogidos por Queneau, las notas son la única parte del libro que con toda seguridad procede de la mano de Kojève). Esa primera nota –señala– era ambigua, porque si se admite que en el final de la historia el hombre “propriamente dicho” debe desaparecer, no se puede pretender coherentemente que “todo el resto” (el arte, el amor, el juego) pueda mantenerse indefinidamente.

Si el Hombre re-deviene un animal, sus artes, sus amores y sus juegos deberán re-devenir también puramente “naturales”. Así pues, habría que admitir que después del fin de la Historia, los hombres construirán sus edificios y sus obras de arte como los pájaros construyen sus nidos y las arañas tejen sus telas, que ejecutarán conciertos musicales de la misma forma que las ranas y las cigarras, que jugarán como juegan los animales jóvenes y se entregaráن a su amor igual que lo hacen los animales adultos. Pero no se puede decir, entonces, que todo eso “hace *feliz* al Hombre”. Habría que decir que los animales post-históricos de la especie *Homo sapiens* (que vivirán en

Los juristas romanos sabían perfectamente qué significaba “profanar”. Sagradas o religiosas eran las cosas que pertenecían de algún modo a los dioses. Como tales, ellas eran sustraídas al libre uso y al comercio de los hombres, no podían ser vendidas ni dadas en préstamo, cedidas en usufructo o gravadas de servidumbre. Sacrilegio era todo acto que violara o infringiera esta especial indisponibilidad, que las reservaba exclusivamente a los dioses celestes (y entonces eran llamadas propiamente “sagradas”) o infernales (en este caso, se las llamaba simplemente “religiosas”). Y si consagrarse (*sacrare*) era el término que designaba la salida de las cosas de la esfera del derecho humano, profanar significaba por el contrario restituirlas al libre uso de los hombres. “Profano —escribe el gran jurista Trebacio— se dice en sentido propio de aquello que, habiendo sido sagrado o religioso, es restituido al uso y a la propiedad de los hombres”. Y “puro” era el lugar que había sido desligado de su destinación a los dioses de los muertos, y por lo tanto ya no era más “ni sagrado, ni santo, ni religioso, liberado de todos los nombres de este género” (D. 11, 7, 2).

Pura, profana, libre de los nombres sagrados es la cosa restituida al uso común de los hombres. Pero el uso no aparece aquí como algo natural: a él se accede solamente a través de

una profanación. Entre “usar” y “profanar” parece haber una relación particular, que es preciso poner en claro.

Es posible definir la religión como aquello que sustrae cosas, lugares, animales o personas del uso común y los transfiere a una esfera separada. No sólo no hay religión sin separación, sino que toda separación contiene o conserva en sí un núcleo auténticamente religioso. El dispositivo que realiza y regula la separación es el sacrificio; a través de una serie de rituales minuciosos, según la variedad de las culturas, que Hubert y Mauss han pacientemente inventariado, el sacrificio sanciona el pasaje de algo que pertenece al ámbito de lo profano al ámbito de lo sagrado, de la esfera humana a la divina. En este pasaje es esencial la cesura que divide las dos esferas, el umbral que la víctima tiene que atravesar, no importa si en un sentido o en el otro. Lo que ha sido ritualmente separado, puede ser restituido por el rito a la esfera profana. Una de las formas más simples de profanación se realiza así por contacto (*contagione*) en el mismo sacrificio que obra y regula el pasaje de la víctima de la esfera humana a la esfera divina. Una parte de la víctima (las vísceras, *exta*:¹ el hígado, el corazón, la vesícula biliar, los pulmones) es reservada a los dioses, mientras que lo que queda puede ser consumido por los hombres. Es suficiente que los que participan en el rito toquen estas carnes para que ellas se conviertan en profanas y puedan simplemente ser comidas.

¹ [N. de T.] *Exta, Mrum*: entrañas, intestinos.

Hay un contagio profano, un tocar que desencanta y restituye al uso lo que lo sagrado había separado y petrificado.

El término *religio* no deriva, según una etimología tan insípida como inexacta, de *religare* (lo que liga y une lo humano y lo divino), sino de *relegere*, que indica la actitud de escrupulo y de atención que debe imprimirse a las relaciones con los dioses, la inquieta vacilación (el “releer”)² ante las formas –las fórmulas– que es preciso observar para respetar la separación entre lo sagrado y lo profano. *Religio* no es lo que une a los hombres y a los dioses, sino lo que vela para mantenerlos separados, distintos unos de otros. A la religión no se oponen, por lo tanto, la incredulidad y la indiferencia respecto de lo divino sino la “negligencia”, es decir una actitud libre y “distraída” –esto es, desligada de la *religio* de las normas– frente a las cosas y a su uso, a las formas de la separación y a su sentido. Profanar significa abrir la posibilidad de una forma especial de negligencia, que ignora la separación o, sobre todo, hace de ella un uso particular.

El pasaje de lo sagrado a lo profano puede, de hecho, darse también a través de un uso (o, más bien, un reuso) completamente incongruente de lo sagrado. Se trata del juego. Es sabido que la esfera de lo sagrado y la esfera del juego están

² [N. de T.] En italiano, “rileggere”. El autor hace aquí un juego con “relegere”.

estrechamente conectadas. La mayor parte de los juegos que conocemos deriva de antiguas ceremonias sagradas, de rituales y de prácticas adivinatorias que pertenecían tiempo atrás a la esfera estrictamente religiosa. La ronda fue en su origen un rito matrimonial; jugar con la pelota reproduce la lucha de los dioses por la posesión del sol; los juegos de azar derivan de prácticas oraculares; el trompo y el tablero de ajedrez eran instrumentos de adivinación. Analizando esta relación entre juego y rito, Emile Benveniste ha mostrado que **el juego no sólo proviene de la esfera de lo sagrado, sino que representa de algún modo su inversión**. La potencia del acto sagrado —escribe Benveniste— reside en la conjunción del mito que cuenta la historia y del rito que la reproduce y la pone en escena. El juego rompe esta unidad: **como *ludus*, o juego de acción, deja caer el mito y conserva el ritual; como *jocus*, o juego de palabras, elimina el rito y deja sobrevivir el mito.** “Si lo sagrado se puede definir a través de la unidad consustancial del mito y el rito, podremos decir que se tiene juego cuando solamente una mitad de la operación sagrada es consumada, traduciendo sólo el mito en palabras y sólo el rito en acciones.”

Esto significa que el juego libera y aparta a la humanidad de la esfera de lo sagrado, pero sin abolirla simplemente. El uso al cual es restituido lo sagrado es un uso especial, que no coincide con el consumo utilitario. La “profanación” del juego no atañe, en efecto, sólo a la esfera religiosa. Los niños, que juegan con cualquier trasto viejo que encuentran, transforman en juguete aun aquello que pertenece a la esfera de la economía, de la guerra, del derecho y de las otras actividades que estamos acostumbrados a considerar como serias. Un automó-

tanto como algo inexistente —él existe, de hecho, instantáneamente en el acto del consumo— sino más bien como algo que no se puede tener jamás, que no puede constituir nunca una propiedad (*dominium*). El uso es, así, siempre relación con un inapropiable; se refiere a las cosas en cuanto no pueden convertirse en objeto de posesión. Pero, de este modo, el uso también desnuda la verdadera naturaleza de la propiedad, que no es otra que el dispositivo que desplaza el libre uso de los hombres a una esfera separada, en la cual se convierte en derecho. Si hoy los consumidores en las sociedades de masas son infelices, no es solo porque consumen objetos que han incorporado su propia imposibilidad de ser usados, sino también —y sobre todo— porque creen ejercer su derecho de propiedad sobre ellos, porque se han vuelto incapaces de profanarlos.

La imposibilidad de usar tiene su lugar tópico en el Museo. La museificación del mundo es hoy un hecho consumado. Una después de la otra, progresivamente, las potencias espirituales que definían la vida de los hombres —el arte, la religión, la filosofía, la idea de naturaleza, hasta la política— se han retirado dócilmente una a una dentro del Museo. Museo no designa aquí un lugar o un espacio físico determinado, sino la dimensión separada en la cual se transfiere aquello que en un momento era percibido como verdadero y decisivo, pero ya no lo es más. El Museo puede coincidir, en este sentido, con una ciudad entera (Evora, Venecia, declaradas por esto patrimonio de la humanidad), con una región (declarada parque u oasis natural) y hasta con un grupo de individuos

(en cuanto representan una forma de vida ya desaparecida). Pero, más en general, todo puede convertirse hoy en Museo, porque este término nombra simplemente la exposición de una imposibilidad de usar, de habitar, de hacer experiencia.

Por esto, en el Museo, la analogía entre capitalismo y religión se vuelve evidente. El Museo ocupa exactamente el espacio y la función que hace un tiempo estaban reservados al Templo como lugar del sacrificio. A los fieles en el Templo —o a los peregrinos que recorran la tierra de Templo en Templo, de santuario en santuario— corresponden hoy los turistas, que viajan sin paz en un mundo enajenado en Museo. Pero mientras los fieles y los peregrinos participaban al final de un sacrificio que, separando la víctima de la esfera sagrada, reestablecía las justas relaciones entre lo divino y lo humano, los turistas celebran sobre su persona un acto sacrificial que consiste en la angustiosa experiencia de la destrucción de todo uso posible. Si los cristianos eran “peregrinos”, es decir, extranjeros sobre la tierra, porque sabían que tenían su patria en el cielo, los adeptos del nuevo culto capitalista, no tienen patria alguna, porque viven en la pura forma de la separación. Dondequiera que vayan, ellos encuentran multiplicada y llevada al extremo la misma imposibilidad de habitar que habían conocido en sus casas y en sus ciudades, la misma incapacidad de usar que habían experimentado en los supermercados, en los shoppings y en los espectáculos televisivos. Por esto, en tanto representa el culto y el altar central de la religión capitalista, el turismo es hoy la primera industria del mundo, que involucra cada año más de 650 millones de hombres. Y nada es tan asombroso

which historical villains could not do any damage. It would certainly not be a capitalist society, simply because the market economy is not efficient enough to generate the resources necessary for a task as enormous as resurrection for all. It would also not be a society of separate nation-states because all the resources of the planet and all productive forces will need to be pooled together in a kind of a planetary union. There will be no competition, no private property, no hierarchies, probably no ethnic or gender differences: nothing that can produce strife or war. Besides, everyone will be immortal, so you couldn't kill anyone even if you wanted to.

On the other hand, what is worrisome is that if a certain form of biological longevity or digital immortality becomes possible much sooner, in the current state of society, then we may end up with the worst kind of oppression of all: an elite of immortal billionaires staying perpetually alive at the expense of enslaving everyone else. Interestingly, Peter Thiel is already using some type of blood transfusion from teenagers to keep himself rejuvenated physically and mentally. Apparently, the technique is effective and there is a commercial clinic in California offering this very expensive treatment to the very rich. In the mid-1920s Alexander Bogdanov set up an institute in Moscow to do precisely this, not as a commercial venture but as a plan for rejuvenating blood banks to be set up throughout the U.S.S.R., for the entire population. Ironically or otherwise, he accidentally killed himself when he exchanged blood with one of his students who was sick with malaria.

I understand what you say about the past entering the present and the future in damaging ways, but there are two kinds of pasts: a mythologized past that all sorts of despots and fascists

tend to evoke, the golden age that never really happened—a fabricated, whitewashed, curated fantasy designed to capitalize on today's fears; and the actual past—the lives of people that came before us, with all their pain, disappointment, and suffering as much as joy, hope, and love. Now, if all these people suddenly started coming back with their knowledge and memories, the mythical past would have no chance because we would begin to know what really happened. Interestingly, Fedorov does not locate utopia in the past. For him it's clearly in the future, but a future that somehow manages to fully recuperate the totality of past lives.

Your question as to which historical period the resurrected people will enter—this is interesting. It's something I've spoken about with Arseny Zhilyaev a number of times, because of his interest in museology.² Obviously, someone who lived in AD 1275 or 634 BC is going to have a rather difficult time if they are brought back in 2037: they may find it stressful, alienating, incomprehensible, and so forth. The evolved humans capable of technological resurrection may have already changed significantly from what we accept as the human form: they may have different bodies, entirely different ways of communication, no gender distinction or differentiation, and so forth. Fedorov does not write much about this aspect of things, but he does advocate space exploration and the settlement of other planets to house resurrected people, because Earth is simply not big enough to sustain such an enormous population. Arseny thinks that the solution may be in setting up these other planets as period-type reconstructions, essentially planetary museums, so that, for example, a resurrected Parthian peasant family would be housed on a planet that would

reproduce the reality of their original time. And the whole thing can be managed by artificial intelligence. When Arseny was talking about this, I had a thought that perhaps we are already living on one of these museum planets.

Regarding bodies with bullet holes, diseases, and other traumas—clearly it would be very cruel to bring people back in such a shape, and if there is going to be a technology to resurrect individuals who died hundreds and thousands of years ago, it will be sufficiently advanced to repair their bodies as well. The real question may be that, since the human form will continue evolving and changing, what body exactly is being resurrected—the old human or the contemporary one? In the writings of Fedorov and other cosmists, there are indications that we do need to evolve our bodies, at the very least to make the body strong enough to survive and live in space without oxygen and at extremely low temperatures. Some of the other ideas point to plant life as a better form, because plants are able to regenerate leaves, branches, and so forth, while we cannot regrow an arm or a leg. Yet other thinkers from this circle suggest that we should become self-feeding, so as not to kill and consume other organisms to stay alive—like some types of plankton that can derive sufficient energy from sunlight without the need to consume anything else. I think if I was resurrected as algae, I would be really shocked, because we are all so attached to our physical form. So it is an open question, how all these different forms of humans—the older ones and the future ones—could coexist and interact.

There is a funny short story by Sorokin, a contemporary Russian writer that is influenced by cosmism, in which something goes wrong and people are being resurrected partly as household appliances: so

someone is part human but they've got a fragment of a coffeeemaker stuck in their new body. That is also a possibility ...

As for Benjamin's fears for the dead if the enemy wins, for me this means that if the enemy wins there will be no resurrection. The dead are already unsafe because they don't have any rights in our society: they don't communicate, consume, or vote and so they are not political subjects. Their remains are removed further and further from the cities, where most of the living reside. Culturally, the dead are now largely pathetic comical figures: zombies in movies.

When we were filming the large ionizer dish in the cemetery in Kazakhstan, one of the workers jokingly suggested that we should also build a big wall around us, because if we turned this device on, maybe it would make the dead rise from their graves and they would attack us like cinematic zombies. I was thinking that they would probably just want to go home, to their families and stuff. Financial capitalism does not care about the dead because they do not produce or consume. Fascism only uses them as a mythical proof of sacrifice. Communism also is indifferent to the dead because only the generation that achieves communism will benefit from it; everyone who died on the way gets nothing. It seems that only indigenous cultures at this point keep some reverence for the dead. Fedorov writes that a true religion is a cult of ancestors.

HS I think we are getting to a place where a lot of this intersects in interesting ways with current mythology around AI, but also accelerationist lore—and this harks back to Peter Thiel, eventually. I think everything can be drawn from this paragraph:

It's the one where he comes very close to the worldview of cosmists in the sense that life on Earth is very much shaped and controlled to some extent by celestial, cosmic forces, specifically the effect of the sun on our planet. The sun is super generous in the sense that it gives Earth an incredible abundance of energy, more than we can actually use safely. Energy in the form of sunlight is converted to plant life, animal life, and, through the death of all this living substance, into coal, oil, gas—all these fossil fuels, which are essentially sunlight trapped below Earth's surface. The surplus of this energy needs to be spent through extravagant activities that require expenditures of huge amounts of energy: violence, war, sexuality, and so forth. Bataille sees art as one of the ways to expend this surplus energy nonviolently.

Fedorov's conception is similar and slightly different: he sees the entire surface of our planet, the biosphere in which we live and the planet's organic layer, the soil, as a kind of enormous cemetery where everything is made up of the remains of people, animals, plants—all the living matter that has died. We live in these remains, we literally eat, drink, breathe our ancestors, we are completely surrounded and entrapped in death and the remains it leaves behind. It is a horrific vision. So for Fedorov, the fight against death is a fight to liberate ourselves from the cycle of consuming the dead and being consumed ourselves, from being stuck in this swamp of dead bodies and misery.

Certainly, the fight against death has to start with a fight against militarism, fascism, racism, and sexism, because they kill and keep killing. But I am not sure that fascism is winning. To me it looks like the Alamo—a kind of a last stand before its final obliteration. For decades it was able to exist

In a veiled way and now it has come out in the open, largely because it feels it will not have another enhance. But what has come out is kind of ridiculous, amateur, buffoon-like. I was just reading an interview in *Der Spiegel* with the older brother of Geert Wilders. It's really interesting what an isolated, military, pathetic figure Wilders is—someone completely removed from contact with the "people" on whose behalf he claims to speak, someone whose main talent is coming up with short provocative slogans that circulate widely but contain no real plan or program. It's very similar to Trump and many of the other figures that have emerged on the right. It's entirely desperate. I don't want to just dismiss this or be too optimistic, because it's nasty and will take time and a lot of fighting to defeat. But it will be defeated, and then we are still in the cemetery eating the remains of our fathers and mothers... So, how to really move forward?

Death is capital quite literally, because everything we accumulate—food, energy, raw material, etc.—these are all products of death. But there is something else which seems to be fully in the realm of the living—labor, reason, love. I think maybe if the digital disruption you mention could be directed to amplify the latter and reduce dependence on the former, then this could be a step in the right direction. One of the scientists in the cosmist movement was Vladimir Vernadsky, a geologist who developed the notion of the noosphere in the decades before and up through the middle of the Second World War. It's a profoundly optimistic theory of how life on the planet will be transformed by an emerging sphere of reason and communication whose relationship to life will be similar to the relationship that the biosphere has to the geosphere.⁵ Arseny says that noospheric theory like an optimistic version of Anthropocene theory.

outcome? Will the ants take over? Or will someone smash the locked windows?

AV We can imagine solutions for the lack of surface area: either by designing a more efficient form of photosynthesis or growing some type of folding extensions. Wings could work very nicely and could also enable one to fly.

The question of superintelligence is interesting. I think the singularity people and various post-humanists are very concerned with this. They are also obsessed with transferring human consciousness into computers and resurrecting the dead through the use of something like interpellation algorithms, etc. But this may be on the wrong track because many of these ideas are based on thinking about intelligence, consciousness, memory, and thought, as immaterial phenomena that can be programmed into various types of hardware, like the religious idea that there is a material body and an immaterial soul that can exist separately from the body, enter other things, and so forth. These kinds of divisions between matter and spirit create a lot of confusion. Boris Groys thinks that this is a kind of medieval thinking that shows how young the field of computer science is and that it has not yet reached the contemporary level of reflection.⁶

I have not found detailed descriptions of exactly how cosmists imagined resurrection technology would work. Fedorov writes a lot about museums using their techniques for preservation, conservation, and restoration to not just maintain and repair artifacts, but to radicalize this technology to bring people back to life. He does not elaborate on how. One possible reference to a method that I came across is in a small book by Valerian Muravyov

about the production of time.⁷

Hito Steyerl and Anton Vidokle
Cosmic Catwalk and the Production of Time
34

Muravyov was a theorist, a social democrat, and was part of the February Revolution. After the October Revolution he was immediately arrested by Bolsheviks and sentenced to be executed. Apparently Leon Trotsky visited him in his jail cell, where they had an overnight discussion, as a result of which he was released and given a job as a researcher with the ministry of labor. In his treatise about the production of time (which he means literally), he talks about how events and phenomena occur when the same conditions are reconstructed: for example, water always boils when the temperature of 99.98°C is reached. It transforms into vapor and can condense into water again when the temperature is lowered. He wonders if water produced by the condensation of vaporized water can be regarded as the same water. He suggests that it is the same and this seems to imply to him that a recreation of certain conditions can result in the re-creation of more complex systems, even humans who "evaporated" in the past. He sees this as the control and production of time. He also makes a point of differentiating this from shamanism, which believes that the reproduction of certain sounds, movements, utterances, or mixtures of ingredients can result in the production of unrelated actions or objects elsewhere. He stays more on the scientific side of things.

Oh, and I would not worry so much about bringing back people with "ancient" thinking. It seems discriminatory and presumptuous to think that we are now, or will be in the future, smarter than Socrates or Aristotle and so many others ... but separate museum planets are a must!

I think Bannon was brought in on the second attempt to live in the Biosphere in 1994. The original experiment in 1991 also ended badly—apparently a love triangle among participants in the dome

to overcome the natural, social, sexual, and other limitations of our species. Fedorov was one of the first thinkers to advocate for this. For me, the main question here is who will take responsibility for this transition, for this permanent overcoming? To humans probably look like houseplants in need of cultivation and regulation. Because of this reality, I'd like to go back to Fedorov and develop more personal, or more properly human ways of speaking about our transformations.

For me one of the most intriguing questions for the contemporary artist who works with Russian cosmism, or one who has an interest in reaching a nonhuman condition in art, is: Do you personally want to be immortal? Because for me, as a conscious event, death is one of the most crucial points of humanity. Can you personally imagine your artistic life without death or aging at all?

ES I was recently watching a TV program in which a five-year-old Chinese girl was able to put animals to sleep merely by talking to them. All sorts of animals: a rabbit, a lizard, different types of birds, cats, dogs, and so forth. It was absolutely mesmerizing to watch. I've heard about similar abilities that some shamans are supposed to have, but I had never seen this before. Perhaps it was just a TV trick, but in any case talking to plants or even speaking on behalf of unhappy plants may not be as futile as it seems. At least plants and animals won't report you to the police!

But to answer your question: I think everything depends on what we mean by artistic life, and how we imagine it. On the one hand, an image of a zombified artist painting *crabstractions* for all of eternity is rather tedious. Fedorov, however,

had a much more complex conception of art than simply the production of aesthetic or conceptual objects. The kind of eschatology, the horizon of life he outlines in his writings, seems to suggest that the ultimate work of art is to work toward the spiritualization of inanimate matter: a kind of vast, animistic project of teaching the matter that makes up the universe to perceive, to feel, to think. Fedorov believed that the most unusual and significant quality of human beings is our capacity to feel, to understand, to think and to be conscious, and that this capacity has to be shared with all the matter that does not already possess it. I am not sure where this desire to animate the world comes from, but its not entirely unique to Fedorov. There is a kind of shamanistic sensibility to the entire geographical region from Japan to Scandinavia, and Russia is very much a part of that tradition.

So Fedorov, despite being devoutly Orthodox, felt it was our evolutionary responsibility to teach the cosmos reason, and that precisely this activity is the real work of art. How long would a work like that take? Probably an eternity ... So from that perspective, immortality becomes a necessity and we should begin working on it immediately.

I was reading something recently about the fact that there is a lot less difference between organic and inorganic matter than we tend to presume. Ultimately all matter, living or inert, is subject to the same cycle of organization and decay, even if the speed at which these processes occur is vastly different. In this sense planets, stars, galaxies—and arguably the entire universe—are not so different than our bodies. So maybe it's not impossible to somehow learn from the longevity of stone while teaching it our ability to be conscious, self-aware, and intelligent.

physical sexual desire. But then what would this society be? I guess its final goal would be to reconnect or redesign billions of independent pieces of previous lives into new constellations; a radical hybridity. This is a very Greenbergian notion: that the final goal of art is to give voice to yourself as a specific material or medium. When life is your artistic medium—from the big bang to immortality—there is enormous potential as an artist or curator. This would definitely raise new questions on old topics, like that of the spectator (how can we observe art pieces the size of the universe from within the same universe?) and institutional critique (how can we change the physical laws of artworks, determined as they are by the universe, themselves?). According to contemporary science, universes outside the one we inhabit exist. Our world, which appeared with the big bang, is only one possible constellation, and we may be able to access alternative ones via black holes. In the context of art, this gives enough distance to observe a universal art installation and to view it critically, while at the same time opening space to reflect on the medium. In this respect, what do you think about contemporary artistic attempts to overcome physical or mental human limits? Do we need limits at all?

25

Art Without Death

Elena Shaposhnikova and Arseny Zhilyayev

process is always an attempt to overcome physical, mental, or temporal limits; it is an attempt that does not succeed most of the time, but always holds the potential of overcoming death.

This is not exactly the kind of immortality that Fedorov had in mind. But I think the potential for immortal life through art is precisely one of the reasons that art is so central to his thinking and why he refers to art so much in his writing—more than any other philosopher I know. Almost everything we know about the past is given to us through preserved artifacts: works of literature, poems, sculptures, drawings and paintings, decorative objects, architectural remnants, and so on. Inevitably this is what forms the contents of most museums. Fedorov's universal museum, where he thinks resurrection will take place, is simply a radicalized, expanded, and more inclusive version of the museums we have now.

As you say, the closest thing we have to a universal museum—a museum that preserves everything—is the internet, which also doubles as an enormous data collector used for anything from commerce to government surveillance. From this perspective, immortality or resurrection made possible through a vast surveillance mechanism sounds sinister. But I also think oppressive structures, like intelligence and security agencies, often don't really realize the long-term ramifications of what they are doing. The CIA thought they were resisting the Soviet Union by funding religious schools in Afghanistan, but instead they helped to create militant Islamism that later turned around and attacked the United States. So the NSA may think that they are collecting data to fight terrorism or control a population, but at a later time it may turn out that they were actually building an elaborate museum archive that will be used to resurrect people.

23

can also be a way of reactivating bodily energy, to slow the acceleration of panic, and find a syn-tonic correspondence between the organism and the cosmos. The Symbolist experience, both in France and in Russia, has been marked by the consciousness of this proximity of poetry and respiration, which is not only metaphorical, but is deeply inscribed in the psycho-physical rhythm of breathing. Baudelaire spoke of "correspondence," referring to this relation between poetic forms and rhythm and the natural sphere of the surrounding cosmos. And Mallarmé clearly conceives of the poetic word as a rhythmic transformer—a key to the immost tempo of the universe.

In Russian Symbolism, this correspondence is emphasized up to a point of mystical spiritualism, but in some cases (as in the case of Khlebnikov and Krucenich) it is grounded in scientific (or pseudo-scientific) imagination. The concept of Zaum, whimsical as it may be when considered in terms of semiotic science, is based on the consciousness that language amounts to a search for the correspondence between deep-rooted prelinguistic emotions and the sound of words. I think that the Russian vanguard is remarkably consistent at this level: Futurism and Symbolism may appear quite different from the point of view of their aesthetic choices, of their atmospheres if you want, but they start from the same philosophical concept of poetry as verbal matter whose vibration is essentially aimed at searching for meaning. Meaning comes from the oscillation of the poetic word that you may call ambiguousness, and actually is the polysemy of the poetic sign.

as spells or incantations. I agree with this in the sense of people like Khlebnikov and Krucenich. Khlebnikov was a mathematician by education, which is also quite magical in origin, and claimed to have devised a mathematical system for predicting the future. I've seen some of his drawings that illustrate this system, and they do look very much like modernist spells—they are really beautiful. I guess the closest we come to spells in rational language is hypnosis, particularly the type of clinical hypnotic scripts used to break harmful addictions like alcoholism, drugs, smoking, and so on. I once went to a hypnotist to try to quit smoking. It was a very small office in Miami recommended by an artist friend, for whom the treatment was successful. My friend warned me to try to suspend my disbelief, which was a bit hard to do at first because the office was full of stuffed-animal toys and all sorts of trinkets. So I was rather skeptical. Then suddenly the hypnotist said that she knows that I do not believe this will work, but it does not matter what I think or believe because she is not addressing my conscious mind, but is communicating with my unconscious, which I am not aware of at all. This was so blunt that it really took me by surprise. I did not smoke for about two weeks without any effort. So I can imagine a kind of hypnotic script for a film that could work in a therapeutic way: it does not matter if you find it interesting, if it produces any particular feelings or thoughts in your conscious mind, but it could communicate directly with your unconscious, which regulates many of your body's functions.

FB My present questioning is about the possibility of deciphering and navigating chaos. As you can understand it is a very political questioning, because the present landscape of the world is essentially

and energetic processes that go beyond what is currently understood as such. Is this a way to reemploy cosmism as an answer to current pressing problems?

By the way, did you know that “cosmos” also relates to women’s fashion? The Greek *kosmos*, meaning order or adornment, becomes the French *cosmetique*, which finally becomes cosmetics in the seventeenth century! This is wonderful! It connects all the dots! We have to think of cosmism (or strategic universalism) as consisting of advanced experiments in reproductive activities. By this I do not mean genetics, even though it could eventually form some part of it. I mean, for example, the whole range of reproductive labor, which recreates and rejuvenates humanity. It is the labor of life, of creating society and relations, in contrast to the labor of death of the soldier and banker. The labor of love, obviously. And of course these activities were domesticated, feminized, relegated to slaves, etc. So these are the high-end technologies we need to build on. Actually cooking is the only technology in human history that literally changed—or really created the human body as we know it. Cooking provided the calories needed to sustain the brain size of our present species. It precedes our current form. Humans are a by-product of cooking. And fashion, dressmaking, food preparation, childcare, etc., could be a huge part of another push to transform human existence into something way more pleasurable and sustainable; whether this involves bodily transformation or not. So, basically, cosmist fashion is a pleonasm. Fashion (as a shortcut term for all these activities) is a high-tech enterprise to recreate and reprogram the living, their relations and their shared minds. It is egalitarian and allows for everybody, including, if need be, winged ones.

I mean, fuck artificial intelligence when you can have artificial elegance!

AV Yes, “cosmos” means beauty in ancient Greek. It also means harmony. Fedorov and his circle were keenly aware of this and constantly referred to the *cosmos* in opposition to chaos. I guess the name for this movement could have been harmonism rather than cosmism ... Also, the Russian word for universe literally means “populated” or “settled”—the emphasis is on people rather than just place or space. “Universal” was also the title of the orthodox patriarch in Constantinople—a religious claim to the totality of the universe, to all people. The Russian Orthodox Church thinks that it inherited this claim after the fall of Constantinople. This is partly why some right-wingers, since the fall of communism and its particular universalism, have become interested in cosmism, like the Duginists and so forth. It seems to me that they are aware of the gaps in their belief system, which is no match for Marxism, so they try to borrow something to fill the holes, like the Nazis did with Nietzsche.

What you say about reproductive labor is extremely important. It is by far the most potent, powerful, existential force—more potent than anything else humanity, and possibly the whole planet, the biosphere, has. It is life, it is also love. Because of love, we must resurrect our ancestors: from cosmic particles, as minerals, as animated plants, solar, self-feeding, collectively conscious, immortal, transsexual, on Earth, on spaceships, on space stations, and on other planets. So, is your next film going to be *Biosphere 3*?

H3 Yessir! And it's going to have a long catwalk!

The majority of people associate this term with the Soviet project, or *real socialism*, and then mainly with its unification of everyday life, narrow political spectrum, unattractive cultural production, etc., that started with Stalin in the 1930s. But according to Marx, or even Lenin, socialism as a goal is associated with something else—with opportunities of unlimited plurality and playful creativity, wider than those offered by capitalism.³ Now consider Fedorov's concept of immortality, his idea of the universal museum producing eternal life and resurrection for all as the last necessary step for establishing social justice. What do we have in the twenty-first century? We have intelligence services and corporations that collect personal data to make money and perpetuate injustices. For some reason it seems that people associate immortality with real socialism, and capitalism with bright life and possible death, whereas really it's more the other way around.

Another important thinker who appeared in this context is Fyodor Dostoyevsky, who was strongly influenced by Nikolai Fedorov, and even wrote one of his most famous novels, *The Brothers Karamazov*, in order to test the Fedorovian notion that ancestors have an inherent value in a world without God. Dostoyevsky tried to depict the same situation that was problematic for the artist friend I mentioned earlier: "Why should I like the idea of resurrecting my father if he was not a good person?" In the novel the son kills his father after a discussion with his rational, atheist brother. The father was a very bad, controversial, even criminal person. Dostoyevsky does not just depict possible conclusions to resurrection, but also identifies an unconditional love for our creator that doesn't require any metaphysical guarantee or obligation. So resurrection itself is not a solution for Dostoyevsky. If we

take one step back, I think that it can be a very fruitful task for contemporary artists to test the possible consequences of real immortality and resurrection in the contemporary art scene. What scenario could that lead to? The first thing that comes to my mind is that we can imagine the final transformation of famous artists into brands, like in fashion when brand names live on after the death of their eponym. We have that exact situation in the film industry today, too, where it is more economically risky to try something new than to continue on with the same title or series. The popularity of TV or movie serials is comparable with the popularity of the novel in the nineteenth century (and actually Dostoyevsky, like a typical novelist of that time, often wrote his masterpieces for money as newspaper or journal serials). On the one hand, it is easy to imagine how most popular twentieth-century artists from the top 100 list, according to auction price indexes, would be very effective as franchises. On the other, a dead artist's legacy is probably more profitable for a speculative market than the unstable, perpetually unfinished career of an immortal artist.

If we consider immortality and resurrection as additional pieces of a social order based on equality, as Fedorov did, art and creativity will be transformed into the art of re-creation. Even the most radical Soviet Constructivists and Productivists thought that traditional artistic media would continue to exist in communist society, because traditional art is based on traumas and social contradictions (the inequality between rich and poor, gender, national identity, race, etc.), and that even after resolving all social contradictions, we would still have our bodies and their main properties, like sexual desire and death. In the case of the art of Russian cosmism, we are almost beyond death and

reduce to the kind of story one needs for a narrative film, yet they are narrative and communicate very interesting, complex, abstract ideas. Usually, they are not feature length, but short—twenty to thirty minutes. In this sense, the format of these films is actually very suitable for the kind of films that work well within art exhibitions.

AZ One last question about the future. If I understand correctly, you are planning to shoot the next film in this series in Moscow, and it will be about museums. Is that true?

AV Yes, the next film will be shot in Moscow, at the Museum of the Revolution, the Museum of Zoology, and the modern collection of the State Tretyakov Gallery. The film will be called *Immortality and Resurrection for All*, and it is based on passages from Fedorov's essay about museums. For Fedorov, the museum is a key institution in society, unique insofar as it's the only place that does not produce progress (which for him implies an erasure of the past), but rather cares for the past. He felt that museums needed to be radicalized such that they would not merely collect and preserve artifacts and images, but also preserve and recover life itself—resurrect the past. In this sense, museums should become factories of resurrection.

Anton Vidokle We could start our conversation on cosmism by talking about chaos, since chaos appears to be overtaking the world right now ... cosmism is actually a bit of a misnomer, in the sense that most people, particularly in the West, take it to refer to outer space—to be merely a territorial notion pointing away from this planet. So a lot of times when I speak about Russian cosmism, people expect me to talk about rockets and space travel, and are maybe slightly disappointed when this turns out to be more about immortality, resurrection, social organization—essentially biopolitics. I remember in your book *The Soul at Work* (2009) there is a very beautiful passage where you describe movement at very high speed, when everything—time, space, distinct objects and subjects—turns into an undifferentiated muddy blur, which is chaos. Chaos is death, war, decomposition, obliteration. The opposite of chaos is cosmos. Like cosmetics, cosmos means beauty and harmony. For Fedorov and many Russian cosmists that followed him, the project was to achieve cosmos on Earth through art, science, poetry, social organization, politics, and so forth: to build a harmonious society where there are no more wars and killing, no hunger, no disease, no aging, and no death. In this sense it strikes me as something as relevant now as it may have been at the end of the nineteenth century.

74

Chaos and Cosmos

CV

its violence and its brightness, always has to be compared with the background of natural evolution. In his poetry, Khlebnikov names himself "King of Time" and "President of the Planet Earth" because his trans-linguistic delirium is not only based on contemporaneity, but is also rooted in the deep stratifications of a thousand years of language evolution. Asia and Europe meet not only in the historical dimension of war and revolution, but also in the protohistorical dimension of the origins of language: this is the precondition of *Zaum*.¹ Russian Symbolism was more earthbound than French Symbolism, and Russian Futurism was more barbarian but also more farsighted than Italian Futurism of the same epoch.

This is why a cosmist sensibility is perceptible all over the Russian cultural and artistic landscape before and immediately after the revolution. The cosmist sensibility, however, has much larger and deeper implications than may appear at first glance.

Actually the (osmotic) relation between "Cosmic Breath" and "Historical Breath," scarcely observed by the political and philosophical thinkers of the century, surfaces in artistic and poetic awareness, particularly in Russia, and emerges in the philosophical discourse when Guattari, the philosopher who was also a mechanician and a pharmacist, sketches the concept of "chaosmose." Osmosis is the spontaneous movement of solvent molecules through a semipermeable membrane into a region of higher solute concentration, in the direction that tends to equalize the solute concentrations on the two sides. This is a vital process in biological systems, as biological membranes are semipermeable. Therefore osmosis refers to the process of recombination that chaotic fragments undergo when trying to overcome the painful

Franco "Bifo" Berardi The Russian vanguard, in all its forms, has a strange barbarian flavor if compared with the Italian or French vanguard of the beginning of the twentieth century. In the poetic works of Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky, but also in the artworks of Malevich, you always perceive a transhistorical sensibility. The history of men, in

57

and restore artifacts and images, they should be radicalized to preserve and restore life.

FB I agree on the idea that art may be intended as a therapeutic practice. Not only in the literal sense that you mention, light and sound helping to relieve symptoms of Alzheimer's or rejuvenate an organism, but in a broader sense. The problem of healing concerns the relation between the individual organism and the surrounding environment, and the cosmic respiration, which Indians call prana. The osmosis between atman (individual breathing) and prana (cosmic respiration) is the background of illness and suffering. Disease is in fact the effect of a disorder in the relation between one's atman and the cosmic prana—an asymmetry in the rhythm of the organism in relation to the cosmic rhythm. It's all a problem of breathing, and asthma is the template for every kind of physical disorder. Interestingly Guattari speaks of chaotic spasms in his last text, *Chaosmosis*—the 1992 book that precedes his death in the same year.

AV What you describe is similar to views held by Alexander Chizhevsky, a Soviet scientist who worshiped the sun. However, rather than breath in particular, he was concerned with blood circulation (which is connected to breathing of course), as well as the effect of solar and cosmic rays on the human psyche. He developed a rather elaborate theory around this research, and built specific therapeutic devices to improve circulation and breathing: these ionizers were like artificial suns—chandeliers that produced negatively charged ions of oxygen. He built them for miners in penal colonies, who were largely political prisoners in Stalin's camps and were constantly dying. He also wrote about the

effects of solar radiation on human history, which was triggered by his insight during the First World War that when sun spots, flares, and coronal eruptions appeared, fighting intensified on many fronts. He was a teenager when he first studied these correlations, but was already very friendly with Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, so he had a small telescope for astronomical observations. His father was an officer in the Russian army, so he also followed the war news very closely. In the thesis and papers he later wrote, he outlines certain psychosocial phases that appear to be in sync with the cyclical activity of the sun, one of which he thought caused "psychotic epidemics." Chizhevsky felt that these epidemics could be prevented by building a network of special sun shelters worldwide, and he also devised a kind of sensor that would alert us to psychologically harmful solar emanations. This sensor worked using milk: apparently milk goes sour immediately when harmful particles are on their way to Earth.

FB I would say that the common problem is the relation between matter and psychic energy—the influx that cosmic flows have on the history of humanity. In the media age that we inhabit, cosmic flows materialize into the electronic and digital fluxes that are currently reformatting the human mind. My starting point is here: the penetration of the media into the psychosphere is provoking a painful mutation, and our problem (as artists and as engineers) is how to heal the contemporary psychosphere—how to inject flows of harmonic rhythm into the social psychosphere.

The relationship between semiosis and rhythm has to be emphasized here. It's well known that music has an influence on the body. It can provoke unease, panic, mental disconnection. And it

Arseny Zhilyaev I would like to start our conversation with a question about the relationship of artists of the historical avant-garde to the museum—specifically the relationship laid out in Kazimir Malevich's famous text from 1919, "On the Museum." As we know, in this text the artist calls for museums to be burned down, leaving the right to judge whether this or that artwork from the past should be saved to life itself. The only possibility for the work of a dead artist, then, is to find some relevance within the current context—that is, to be compressed into a didactic pill of powdered ash, which can then be given out on request to active cultural workers. In his own work, Malevich himself took on the role of a kind of prophet-aronist, creating not only an image of the absence of an image, but also, as you have noted in your own writing on the artist, an image of the permanent destruction of the image. That is to say, an image that is able to survive any negation. While the artist's less radical colleagues may not have been calling for the total destruction of the art of the past, they were advocating for the creation of a museum that was maximally open to change. This is why Nikolai Punin, in the discussions leading up to the "First All-Russian Museological Conference," argued for the creation of a flexible "museum on hinges." Osip Brik suggested launching a series of exhibition halls, modeled after the libraries of scientific institutions, where each artwork could be checked out to use for research purposes, just like a book. Picking up on this, I wanted to ask your thoughts on the contemporary museum. It would seem that, with the advent of the internet and its assumption of the role of an international archive, or even, in some sense, of the dematerializing crematorium, the museum actually has increasingly positioned itself as a place for

organizing educational or discursive activities, all the more enshrining the status of the work of the past to how Malevich described it.

Boris Groys Here I need to say, first and foremost, that the project of the avant-garde—or, let's say, more specifically, of Futurism and Suprematism—would have been impossible without the tradition of historicism, which was given form in museum displays as they had evolved by the end of the nineteenth century. These museum displays were constructed on a simple principle: each historic epoch had its own persona, its own artistic style—antiquity, medieval art, the Renaissance, Baroque, and so on. This is where we get those famous formulations like "we are the face of our times" or "the future of the world is written on our hands." Malevich himself repeatedly described the genealogy of contemporary (to him) art and Suprematism as the result of a gradual transition from Cézanne through Cubism and Futurism. If all the art in museums had actually been cremated, then the historical originality of the avant-garde would have lost its visibility. The history of art, as it is shown in European museums, is precisely the history of breaks with the past. Without this history, the avant-garde is simply no longer able to be perceived as such. This is where artists, including artists from the radical avant-garde, get their fear that museums might disappear without a trace—the same way their own art might also disappear or, to a lesser degree, lose its ability to be understood. In this sense, Malevich's proposal to burn down all the art of the past should be thought of more as a kind of consolation. After all, Malevich even says that, in this scenario, the museum could be replaced with an installation from the ashes remaining after the art was cremated. It

is no accident that he compares this installation to a pharmacy. What we are talking about here is medication for the excessive despair brought on by the prospect of the total disappearance of art, and, if anything, of all culture in the future. But such a remedy seems most plausible only if you maintain a consistently materialist view of things.

If we are talking about the internet, then yes, today it plays the role of the main medium for the archiving of art. But the internet's ability to stabilize cultural memory remains problematic. On the one hand, it is an accepted idea that computers never forget anything, but on the other hand, recovering and restoring lost data is possible only in instances when the hardware is still relatively intact.

At the same time, museum objects preserve their value even after catastrophes—if they are lying in the ground, they will be excavated. With the internet, the only things left in this kind of situation are cables and other equipment. Future generations will treat these things the way we treat Roman aqueducts, where water no longer flows. But even if the belief in museum conservation as

a means of achieving this worldly, secular immortality is entirely eradicated, museums will retain their appeal as a place to visit. Museums today act as organizers for film screenings, poetry readings, lectures, performances, and so on. This transformation of the museum into a club echoes the transformation of the church into a club. In general, the trajectory of art is reminiscent of the trajectory of historical Christianity: the loss of hope for a soul's salvation (or art as a product of bodily creativity) leads to an interest in good deeds, care for one's neighbors, social responsibility, and political engagement.

AZ In one of your recent curatorial projects, "Specters of Communism," you propose the term "postconceptual realism" to describe Russian art of the first decade of the 2000s. Unlike the realism of the nineteenth century, which was structured more as passive reflection, the contemporary version suggests the possibility of active intervention, its subsequent documentation, and the representation of changes made in response to it. This kind of understanding of art comes close to the conceptual practices of artists from the 1970s to '80s, who started to use the space of the art installation to analyze the specific features of the production process of art, as well as the context of the social relations that make this process possible. Contemporary art does the same thing, but for the institutional boundaries assigned to it, which precipitate the use of the document as the primary material carrier of the artist's message; in turn making the documentary installation the most frequently applied medium of "post-conceptual realism." In my opinion, the prototype for this can be found in museums of a nonartistic focus or, in the post-Soviet artistic context, the Museum of Revolution.

The first time I encountered an attempt to find terminology to link conceptualism with realism was in Ekaterina Degot's text for her exhibition "Struggling for the Banner: Soviet Art between Trotsky and Stalin" (2008). By drawing on the concept of "conceptual realism," the curator was able to describe the self-reflexive practices of painters from the 1920s, the second wave of the Russian avant-garde, as well as their experience creating didactic exhibitions. As I see it, this term remains more suited to the description of the experimental Marxist museologists, particularly Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov and his "Experimental Complex Marxist Exhibition,"

series of ready-mades, the Moscow display—in a nod to the Soviet museology of the 1920s to '30s—made use of the theatrical effects of the dioramic staged scenes seen in Museums of the Revolution. Both examples can be understood as deviations, simultaneously drawing on both the sovereign freedom of the artwork and the legitimizing power of the curatorial installation, not to undermine the dominant ideological system, but, on the contrary, to reinforce it. In this context, what do you think: What kind of prospects are there for mutations of the curatorial and artistic positions in today's contemporary art?

BG It goes without saying that any curatorial project reduces individual artistic practices and individual artworks to mere examples illustrating the curator's own position. There's no way to get around this. But if the curator is working in the sphere of art, then he inevitably must assume that his exhibition has a distinct aesthetic value, relative to how that exhibition compares with other curatorial projects in terms of the organization of space, the viewing time, the use of various media, etc. But as for exhibitions like that Ukrainian one and Russian one you mentioned, then more likely than not, the curators weren't comparing their exhibitions with those of Harald Szeemann or their installations with those of Ilya Kabakov or Thomas Hirschhorn. What mattered to them was simply to say what they wanted to say. So the question here is: What did they want to say? Artistic space should not be used for the distribution of official propaganda, which has other options for reaching its audience. The political significance of art lies primarily in the fact that it provides the opportunity to formulate and present positions that have no chance of reaching mass-media outlets.

Affirmational art, in other words just repeating what

can already be seen and heard without any artistic intervention, does not make any sense.

Returning to the Kabakovs' *Alternative History of Art*, it is critical not so much in its approach to a type of artist exhibition, as in its approach to canonical art history. For the Kabakovs, it is fairly typical to shift the focus from artistic practices to the figure of the artist himself. It is this figure of the artist that is described and reflected in the Kabakovs' albums and installations. And it is this figure that always seems to be hiding, disappearing, or slipping away from description—to be, in fact, fictitious. The fictional quality of the figure of the artist reveals the problematic nature of traditional art history, which asserts that we know who the artists "really were," what they wanted, how they worked, etc.

AZ I was struck by your interpretation of Fedorov's idea of resurrection as a kind of curating. But if we were to go further, in this instance an interest in the cosmos—particularly in the creation of an observatory on the foundation of museums—could be understood as a reflection of the relationship to the artistic medium, similar to the practices of institutional critique or conceptualism. After all, the study of celestial bodies and their movements, which was developed for the purpose of selecting potential sites for the eventual relocation of the resurrected (i.e., the results of true creativity, according to Fedorov), gives way to speculation as the topic of a possible exhibition context and its features. In a certain sense, this type of naturalization of conceptual reflections can bring the contemporary tendency to its limits, subjecting the cultural aspect of contemporary art to a harsh critique—particularly for being too human, too paternalistic in its relation to the natural world. At the same time, Fedorov's

proposal undoubtedly preserves the role of man as an agent of the changes taking place in the universe.⁶⁰ It seems to me that there is a contradiction inherent in the very philosophy of the common task. On the one hand, Fedorov insists on mankind's leading role in the eventual transformation of the universe, thus preserving his place as the crown in creation, while still referring to the inevitability of continued evolution, which should eventually result in supplanting anthropocentrism. Complications also arise with resurrection itself, which, contrary to the promises of religion, should actually happen in the earthly world and should offer a restoration both of the soul and of the physical body. But what do we do with the claims regarding the necessity of overcoming the human body in the form that it exists today? That is, how will it feel for resurrected fathers to encounter the significantly different, upgraded bodies of their sons? This question can be put in the context of Fedorov's aesthetics as a question of future shock, the combination of works of art from extremely distant eras—for instance, the coexistence in one contemporaneity of paintings in the style of both Rococo and Conceptualism. What answer would you propose? Or what role, in your opinion, should the contemporary human play in the future universe's Museum of Russian Cosmism?

human civilization, it was either cyclical or linear. Living in cyclical time, as practically all of humanity did until the emergence of biblical linear time, was quite comfortable; a man knew that in his lifetime he would experience all that could be experienced in life, since everything in that life would be repeated. Nostalgia for those times was aptly described by Nietzsche in his myth of the eternal return. Biblical religions severed cyclical time, offering instead the promise of universal, transhistorical reunification of all living beings in the end times—life after and beyond time. Modern technological civilization held onto this concept of linear time, but discarded all of the promises related to it, including even the communist ones. What is left is an absurd, meaningless movement from nowhere to nowhere. In some ways, this resembles the Chinese principle of Tao, but without any chance of escaping it.

For acute minds like Fedorov or Malevich—if we are speaking about Russian traditions—the radical novelty of this situation was apparent quite early on. They also recognized early on that after the death of God, the museum remains the only place for transhistorical reunification beyond the grave—there the mummy of the Pharaoh can meet with Duchamp's urinal beyond the boundaries that separate their historical eras. In describing the novel as the ideal place for such encounters, Bakhtin finds a clever metaphor in Dostoevsky's "Bobok," which centers around conversations between different rotting corpses in a cemetery. Over the course of the tale, the syntactical structure of their dialogue also rots and decomposes. Of course, this comparison between the museum exhibition and the novel is not accidental. In his day, Friedrich Schlegel defined the novel as the genre of genres, dominating over all other genres precisely because it can accommodate

BG The main problem of art in the New Era is its inevitable role in the technological progress that determines the motion and rhythm of our time. The central feature of the contemporary understanding of progress is this: over the course of the twentieth century, it has lost all its purpose. I think we need to recognize how new the experience of progress without purpose is for mankind. If we look back at the understanding of time in different epochs of

all others within it. In our time, the museum installation plays the same role as the novel in the nineteenth century. An installation can accommodate all media: painting, sculpture, film, video, photography, interactive internet installations, etc. And at the same time, an installation can include a body in different phases of its historically conditioned decay—from ancient sculptures with their noses and arms broken off up to the rotting chocolate sculptures of Dieter Roth.

If we were to return to the medieval texts describing earthly resurrection following the end times, we would encounter the numerous paradoxes of corporeality in the afterlife that produced such great despair for the authors of these writings. Several of these paradoxes have been addressed by Giorgio Agamben in his book *The Open* (2004). For instance, he raises the question of how to resolve the problem of defecation in heaven; wouldn't heaven, over the course of eternity, become a repository of an infinite mass of feces, as one of the holy fathers wrote? Or what happens to children born after the end of history, if sexual organs are to be preserved in the resurrected bodies, and so on? It is not surprising that Fedorov, as well as his readers, would encounter similar problems. Here we are talking not so much about the realization of modern and contemporary obsessions, as about the site where they are projected. And at this point, yes, you could say that both in the New Era and in our time, the site of those projections has become the museum. In fact, contemporary art is the theology of the museum. And, with few exceptions, we mean a negative theology (or, to put it another way, institutional critique). But, of course, negative theology remains theology.

AV I agree with you to a large extent. But I think that maybe because I am an artist, for me the initial attraction to Russian cosmism was not so much a search for new theoretical or philosophical ideas, but rather something that specifically relates to art. There was always something oblique for me about the avant-garde and modern art, something that is not addressed by the canonical history of art—a history largely written by MoMA and other North American institutions and historians. For example this history contains very few references to the occult, spiritualism, and mysticism of the nineteenth century, all of which were extremely influential on the production of Western European artists. I am really unsure why this is. Some of this influence is extremely blatant, because arguably abstraction in art comes from a very specific set of influences directly related to theosophy and so forth. It's strange that while historically so much of art is deeply intertwined with religion, art historians and museum curators seem very reluctant to explore this dimension of modern and contemporary art. Similarly, there are no references to Russian cosmism in the analysis of the art of the Russian or Soviet avant-garde. So when I came across writings of Fedorov, Bogdanov, Svyatogor, and others, I felt like for the first time I could start to make sense of what could have possibly motivated some of the artists whose work I most care about.

The other thing I want to mention is a tendency to curate historical material in such a way that you pick and choose only that which relates to or reflects your present-day concerns. I think there is even a name for this tendency: presentism. With cosmism the temptation to do this is very strong, because in some ways it's so futuristic and progressive. One wants to overlook all the misogynistic and

anti-Semitic passages, or other reactionary views that are quite common for authors of that period. It's also very tempting to remove all the religious references and translate all this as simply a different, more inventive version of a secular, socialist line of thought. When I started making my films based on cosmist material, the first two scripts were more of a collage of passages from various authors, selected to present a particular side of cosmism—perhaps focusing more on its progressive implications. In the last film I used whole passages from Fedorov without as much filtering, and one of the immediate criticisms was an opinion that the film does not sufficiently translate Fedorov as a leftist critic of modernity. On the one hand I do not want to amplify the Slavic nationalism or monarchist leanings that Fedorov had, but on the other hand it would be a bit strange to present this complex figure as only a leftist critic of modernity. Marina, Arseny, how do you deal with this aspect of cosmism in your work?

Arseny Zhilyaev The contemporary reception of cosmism and its internal contradictions is a very important and rather sensitive question. I agree with Marina that ideally all of its complexity should be included and reflected on. An attempt to whitewash its "vices" will only lead to severing its connections to the present historical moment, which probably determines our contemporary interest in this peculiar part of the Russian philosophical heritage. It's very important to try to understand why cosmism is becoming visible again at this time after nearly disappearing for half a century or more. And it seems to me the reason for this renewed interest cannot be due only to "glocality" or a decolonial turn, because both interpretations are imposed by the point of view of Western epistemology.

discussion of the political complexity of our subject, it is difficult to avoid the kind of simplification, exoticism, or slide into a leftist techno-utopianism/religious mysticism that you worry about at the beginning of this conversation.

MS I like your comparison with Lifshitz, whose life and work present a unique example of thinking that has always been at odds with the repressive apparatus of the new Soviet canon, as well as with all sets of reactionary attitudes. This is what I personally like about cosmism, too: it seems to contain a serious antidote against dogmatism of any kind—a grain of potential cultural insurgency. But it did not work: despite the whole cast of authors united under the cosmist umbrella afterward, there is no such thing as cosmist theory in a strict sense (a Theory with a capital T, using Althusser's words). There has never been any method of cosmist speculation, or a cosmist movement. Even though some of Tsiolkovsky's ideas significantly influenced cosmonautics and space technologies, the latter rendered the cosmist project a space race resulting from a concept of progress conceived in a pragmatic, down-to-earth way and mixed with political technologies of the Cold War era. We have never been cosmists, to paraphrase Bruno Latour—although human subjects did manage to enter space. In fact, we do not usually define what is meant by "space" when someone uses this word—whether an artist, an astrophysicist, or a politician. I would dare claim that we have never even thought the way a cosmist should probably think—none of us, including those who are driven by the idea of space exploration or fully immersed in sci-fi culture.

So for me, there are three sets of questions to be posed here. The first set can be broadly defined

as cosmist thinking, or even cosmist epistemology. What does it mean to think as a cosmist? If it is just a speculative fiction, as you call it, can we reconstruct theoretical grounds behind it, or deduce a comprehensive theory from it—a theory that somehow explains, substantiates, or even sublates all of these contradictions? Or should we treat Russian cosmism as a collective art project as such, as different modes of utopian fiction, a grand fantasy deriving from different theoretical approaches and referring to practices of (quasi-)scientific research, artistic work, or political activism?

The second set of questions is related to our history in a very general sense—from social and political history to the trajectory of the development of our futuristic/memorial imagination taken in a historical perspective. For instance, I propose to shift the focus from the question of why cosmism failed, or was bound to fail, to the question "What does it mean for us that cosmism failed, and what was this failure exactly?" I believe this is a very productive way of approaching any kind of futurist culture, and I suppose that such an approach may be promising in the domain of contemporary art. I can give you an example: Let us take Pavel Zaltsman, an artist from Philonov's analytical school. Apart from being a painter, Zaltsman was also a writer; his prose and poems have been just recently discovered (they were never published during his lifetime). These literary writings are indeed remarkable: a unique combination of naivety and depth with a slight touch of cruel absurdity. In his exaggeratedly naturalistic manner, Zaltsman describes the world where cosmism failed: inhuman, full of mundane violence and rage. Yet, unlike other authors, he never seems to give a simple explanation for why life has gone through such a monstrous metamorphosis,

different ways of trying to increase life span, to slow aging, and so forth, through "white marriages" and abstinence from sex, through special diets, through blood transfusions, through irradiation by negatively charged ions of oxygen, and so on, but I doubt that anyone of the first or second generation of cosmists really expected to become immortal themselves or resurrect another human being. They merely tried to delay death and probably hoped to be resurrected by future generations. It's interesting that the secondary goal—space travel—was actually the one that was achieved. But look, I think technologically it's probably the easier one of the two.

I also always had an issue with formulations like "the failure of modernism." Who failed and how: Mondrian? Kandinsky? Malevich? Failed in what sense? (I am primarily speaking of modernism in art here.) I do not think that developing a whole new language for pictorial expression that makes the world look different is a failure in any sense. Similarly with cosmism: granted they did not literally raise the dead, but they produced amazing poetry, literature, art, cinema, scientific inventions, medical techniques, and a certain type of political imaginary—this is not a failure by any means ...

AZ I disagree with both of you. On the one hand, we can probably speak about cosmism as an unrealized project. I am not sure we can call it a failed project, at least not in the sense of a certain finality. We probably can't even say this about the project of communism ... However, there is a specific reason that makes me want to characterize cosmism as lacking a practical success, at least at this time: despite all of the poetic quality of his writings, Fedorov was adamant about a literal, urgent, and activist reading of his ideas about the fight against

death and a material resurrection for all. Art, in his opinion, is born from the reaction to the impossibility of returning a dead person to material form. Art is forced to make do with fictional likenesses or representations, until there is a technology that would enable it to transcend its mimetic status and became a creation of life: art should become a resurrection. This desire continues the tradition of life creation implicit in Russian religious philosophy, which later also entered the artistic production of the avant-garde.

So while artistic insights and inspiration are clearly of great importance, they must be followed by an actual realization. In this sense Fedorov is very close to Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

An example of this can be the criticism of a certain type of dilution in poetic images of a much more pragmatic, literal, and practical quality of the project of the Common Task that can be found in writings of the religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev, as is the case in his book *The Meaning of Love* (1893). Solov'ev, who considered himself a spiritual disciple of Fedorov, reiterates Fedorov's insight about the necessity to overcome distinct genders and sexual relations, which he thought narrowed the full potential of love. Instead, love as the foundation of the divine connection between people, transcending the egoism of individuated bodies, should develop into something greater: it should become the basis for brotherly and sisterly relations and finally lead to a collective, creative labor of resurrection. However, it is commonly held that while Solov'ev reiterates Fedorov's ideas, he strips them of their literal meaning and intent, and transforms them into a mystical providence. In this sense,

even pragmatic perspective of her own prospects. And I feel totally comfortable with such an attitude toward the common goal.

In my case, my interest in cosmism came from doing research on the museum and its role in the transformation of life. Originally, my projects were inspired, in particular, by Marxist museology and speculations on the future of this institution. At some point, I realized that in Russian cosmism the museum was the quintessence of the hopes

that the avant-garde pinned on the arts. What's more, Fedorov's project went drastically beyond the then-accepted limit of art's ambitions. Actually, the situation has not changed too much over these hundred-plus years. Anyway, by the day we met, I had been preparing a collection of works on avant-garde museology for publication and I had been already involved in a project on Fedorov's curatorship, which I was connected to by the funny twist of his life with my home city of Voronezh.

Then we had a lengthy collaboration on the book, and it took off from there. I think we are both positively disposed by our nature to engage in collaborative projects, and a deep interest in Russian cosmism bolstered this disposition with a lot of energy. I watch Esther's creative intuition with a keen interest. We have initiated a number of joint projects so far, and I do hope this is just the beginning.

BB An unexpected question that emerged from the 6th Moscow Biennial in 2015—at which your work on cosmism was very present—was the notion of the dual. Some of the most fruitful gatherings were gatherings of two people. Europeans have a tendency to approach dualism negatively, in a Manichaean way. A basic operation of European culture is the use of polarizing antagonism as a

productive combustion engine, through the thesis/antithesis/synthesis triad. Several languages/though, such as Arabic or Slovenian, have two plural forms with one expressing “us, the two of us.” And cultures may, as apparently many Amazonian cultures do, think of “two (man and woman)” as the basis from which to address the world, rather than the individual. Do you feel the dual to be preferable over the singular? If so, why?

AZ Yes, indeed, the prevailing Western model of bourgeois democracy based on rivalry and competition is probably at odds with Russian democratic traditions and individual philosophical ideas, which aim to eliminate oppositions and establish unity. For instance, the theory of “rational egoism” is elaborated in Nikolay Chernyshevsky’s 1863 novel *What Is to Be Done?*, a pivotal book for Leninism and free thinking in Russia. The theory implies that people inherently act in their own self-interest, but at some point their personal well-being begins to depend on common interests. This principle lies behind the famous “prisoner’s dilemma” used by Jacques Lacan, among others. That is, we cannot maximize our profit without regard to common interests, even if we are mathematically guided solely by our own self-interest. Rational egoism is an egoism that considers and supports others.

Interestingly and unexpectedly, this story gets an American spinoff. Ayn Rand (Russian national Alisa Rosenbaum, before her immigration to the United States), one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century, who contributed a lot to the ideology of the American dream, developed her theory largely using Chernyshevsky as a negative example. She refused to agree that rational egoism should consider common interests, and described a

or is it rather the “human world,” as Hannah Arendt calls it, that should be empowered again?

EZ Yes. This is precisely the eschatology of cosmism. Once we achieve immortality, resurrect all who ever lived, and learn to live in the cosmos, our activity will consist in making all the matter that makes up the universe conscious; teaching it ways to feel, think, perceive, etc. For Fedorov this is also the main role and function of art, so as immortal beings we will all be artists with the cosmos as our artwork. And when the entirety of the universe becomes conscious, we will be selfsame with God. It's a very ambitious project that he came up with ...

BB In his book *After Nature* (2015), Jedediah Purdy argues that visions of nature and political set-ups have been strongly linked for a long time. Which political preferences does cosmism suggest? And may an orientation toward the future prefer certain political forms over others?

EZ Cosmism is a materialist philosophy that is essentially anticapitalist, primarily because of the wasteful nature of market economy, the unfairness of uneven distribution of resources, the triviality of consumer commodity production, and so forth. In this sense it echoes the Marxist critique of capitalism. On the other hand, Fedorov was expressly critical of socialism, primarily because he saw it as godless and not based on love. It can be argued that despite this, Fedorov is a true socialist because he deeply believes in radical social equality that extends even to the dead.

AZ There is an opinion that Fedorov was “a Marx for the poor,” expressing ideas similar to what was

later advocated in liberation theology. However, as Esther has already mentioned, Fedorov did not accept Marxism because of its revolutionary violence, despite his anticapitalist orientation. The philosopher believed that real social transformation could only be achieved through love, respect for the ancestors, enlightenment, and hard work toward the common goal. Fedorov's ideas held plenty of contradictions with what concerned the authorities of his time, whether religious or secular. I have no doubt that if he lived today, he would soon find himself in Snowden's position. The father of cosmism advocated for freedom of knowledge and the distribution of information. There would be nothing more appalling for him than to see present-day big data being used to make money and hold power instead of pursuing the common goal of resurrection and social development.

¹ The term *Wahlverwandtschaft* translates as “elective affinity.” —Ed.

Chus Martinez MONSTER
The Octopus in Love

= ART = altres llenguatges
per interpretar el món

Institution / organisms

no hierarchy
no academic prejudices of style...
no didactic form of organization

heteroclite: irregular or abnormal
aromatic
having infected forms
of belonging to more
than one class of plants

cevall/intel.ligència
a la pell
intel.ligència/
conexió
/pensament
més enllà
del llenguatge

01/13

The octopus is the only animal that has a portion of its brain (three quarters, to be exact) located in its (eight) arms. Without a central nervous system, every arm "thinks" as well as "senses" the surrounding world with total autonomy, and yet, each arm is part of the animal. For us, art is what allows us to imagine this form of decentralized perception. It enables us to sense the world in ways beyond language. Art is the octopus in love. It transforms our way of conceiving the social as well as its institutions, and also transforms the hope we all have for the possibility of perceptive inventiveness.

1. Parts Being Totals

Let us now imagine an institution composed entirely of well-functioning parts of other institutions – a strange new form of urbanism that take the shape of a gigantic museum. Parts, as well as departments, would coalesce into a gigantic yet identifiable choreography, recognizable as an "institution" – defined as a behavioral pattern so powerful that the viewer could easily embody the sense of interiority such institutions create. The image I am trying to convey here is not that of an institutional "quilt" – of several well-functioning parts spread over a territory and dependent on a larger bureaucratic container centralizing all assorted activities. Rather, this is an image of a formation, a system that unravels multiple codes simultaneously. All these systematics would be invisible at first. We would not be able to name any of these parts as such; to us, they would appear and function as totalities. The simultaneity of these multiple meanings – forms of understanding art and practice – and the simultaneity of languages that present the heterocline nature of art both today and in the past, would render the structure that holds them together innocent or even absent. And so, these different institutions – or better yet, organisms – in their natural way of inhabiting a coordination and even successfully broadcasting it, would render insignificant the prototypical academic prejudices of level, character, or style. None of these organisms – our former museums, art centers, art projects, art societies, kunsthalls, and so forth – would be arranged in a hierarchical formation. At the same time, it would be difficult to claim that the equality of these organisms is determined by any standardization of working codes. None of these parts or totalities would be embedded in a didactic form of organization.

Daniel Stegman
Basic Inundat

2. The Rainforest

To present a rainforest inside a white cube is impossible. A rainforest is the radical other of a white cube: the opposite of culture, the opposite of an exhibit, the contrary of scale, the opposite

of legibility, the opposite of ideology, order without subject matter – or rather, without any subject matter other than life in itself.

In a conversation we once had, the artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz, who founded El Museo del Barrio, said that when the Museo was conceived, he thought that all its exhibitions should start with a rainforest. Or rather, that the preamble of any form of art presentation should pass through a rainforest. He did, in fact, collaborate with the American Museum of Natural History to this end, by creating a rainforest room with their help. Unfortunately, no images of it have survived. After telling me about his idea of the rainforest, he stared at me and asked: “Do you understand?” I did not – or at least, I did not at that moment.

For a long time, I have been wondering what he meant – surely not that one should reproduce nature or a representation of nature inside the gallery. I remembered the title of his two-volume dissertation, *Towards an Authenticating Art*, published in 1982. The book is an exhaustive account of his growing interest, from the late sixties on, in psychic healing therapies and rebirth. He coined the term “Physio-Psycho-Alchemy,” a physical reversal that can be carried out by means of the mind and its alchemic

power. A rainforest at the core of an institution is also a reversal – an alchemic reversal of the institution, turned first into an organism so that later, a “room” can host art, artworks, and artifacts.

Claude Lévi-Strauss was also fascinated by the potentiality of reversal. He often wrote about chiasmus, a rhetorical figure used masterfully by Shakespeare. A chiasmus is a reversal that produces a total confusion of identity that aims, later on, to reestablish that identity under a renewed contract, so to speak. The Museo del Barrio – invented, created, and developed by Ortiz under the special circumstances of diaspora and the civil rights struggle for equality – may have been disguised as a rainforest before it was able to emerge as an institution at all. How else could a museum for a still-forthcoming community be possible? Disguised as a rainforest, the new organism could convey both the monumental importance of the project and the futility of presenting itself as “alternative.” The transformative language that is required in order to change the art historical canon demands a radical metamorphosis – like that of becoming-nature – and not only a modulation in the narrative, or new additions to that canon. This museum of a certain future, which still needs to

02/13



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Fashionable Octopus Games (Ryūkō tako no asobi)*, 1840-1842.

flourish under a yet-unknown relation between modern aspirations and vernacular language, was forced to appear as a rainforest first, before becoming an institution. The rainforest is the beggar that will become the sovereign. What, then, is the question? How will this presentiment of radical transformation find its fulfillment, or, at the very least, its mode of performance?

I then recalled the distinction between game and ritual in Lévi-Strauss. As Boris Weisman explains, Lévi-Strauss defines a game as a structure that produces symmetry among the players through its rules:

An essential principle of every game is that the rules are the same for everyone; the starting point of every game is symmetry. The end result of a game is intended to engender asymmetry by producing a winner. This asymmetry is the product of non-structural factors: individual skill or talent, chance, or accident – in other words, an “event.”¹

Another kind of event – namely, death – is what gives rise to rituals:

→ Death ... brings about an asymmetrical relationship between the living and the dead, the sacred and the profane ... The purpose of the ritual is to perform a series of pre-ordained “actions” (which are different from the “actions” or events that make up a game; since they are pre-determined they constitute an integral part of its structure), and thereby ensure that all the participants to the ritual end up being “winners.”²

In the historical horizon of the museum-as-artwork that Raphael Montañez Ortiz proposed, it makes sense to believe that the rainforest provokes the institution to take ritual as its structure. The logic of the ritual may remedy or otherwise compensate for the social imbalance – disruption – that gave rise to the ritual (the rainforest/Museo). If the modern institution is one whose structure is closer to the logic of the game, in 1968 the emerging Museo embraced the ritual.

This play of inversion between game and ritual – the chiastic logic – is intended here as a means of reconciling the vernacular and the modern: both can be used as models-for-thinking to address social and aesthetic paradigms. The former should no longer be regarded as belonging to an earlier, pre-scientific stage in an evolutionary process that invariably leads to the latter. Rather, both models must find a way – through art – to reflect one another in

such a way that the vernacular provides a kind of inverted mirror image of the modern way of structuring and interpreting the real. The Lévi-Straussian message – channeled here through Ortiz's rainforest/Museo – is that the force separating vernacular from modern worlds is not time, or history, but rather, as Weisman puts it, “a synchronic system of symmetrical relationships of correlation and opposition.”³



Dominique Gonzalez Foester, *Chronotypes and Dioramas*, 2010. Dia Art Foundation, New York.

There are many ways to interpret Ortiz's vision of the rainforest as the preface to every exhibition. To put it simply, I think his rainforest introduces a very novel element into the existing discussion around the politics of the white cube. The debate has been a notably hard one, either taking architectural perspectives (as related to modernity) or flowing freely and responding to active discursivity and project-oriented energy (as in the late-nineties and the first decade of this century). Amidst all this, what the white cube discussion has lacked is precisely a rainforest: a principle that, in its radical otherness, defies the container, since the life force represented by a rainforest cannot be contained.

I still do not know exactly what to do about this incredibly beautiful image of a rainforest installed at the core of an art institution. It embodies all the difference in the world separated from human agency and ideology, yet it also encapsulates the source of all that. It differs from the conventions of neutrality, and through its scale and its very nature it escapes from any formal canons. It compels a form of intelligence without consciousness to erupt into the white cube. “The rainforest,” as Ortiz has said, “is an element that really helps us to think about class and labor and autonomy and dependency, just introducing a radically different

COGNITIVE CAPITALISM → KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

encounters with different social groups can take place, different forms of knowledge can be combined, unusual connections can be drawn, paradigms, categories and taxonomies can be questioned or re-established, and sensual and affective discursive undercurrents can be explored without having to be evaluated according to established criteria or hierarchies and by established knowledge communities.

However, this is only possible if one avoids the trap of a reductive understanding of "artistic research" in which—by entering the realm of research—art and cultural projects become yet another "operative member of the knowledge society [...]" of cognitive capitalism.⁶ While advocating an institutionalization and public funding of artistic and curatorial research, Tom Holert in his essay on the emergence of artistic research and artistic "knowledge production" (such as PhD programs for artists or curators) also voices concerns: When "the artistic must be read no longer as the unproductive and resistant counterpart of Fordist discipline," art is in danger of being appropriated for a knowledge economy that is based on the accumulation of facts. Artistic and curatorial research in his view should not be evaluated according to "the rules of repeatability and falsifiability,"⁷ but should be allowed to employ "any form of speculation, reflection, reasoning, and supporting argument that does not comply with the protocols of an alleged value-neutrality of science because it is informed by political and moral projects."⁸

As Holert declares, the goal of the institutionalization of artistic and curatorial research with the help of public funding must be to "avoid contributing to the implementation of a logic that subjects even resistant, de-colonial, or strategically and poetically 'weak' approaches to the regimes of controlling,

⁶ Tom Holert, "Artistic Research: A Theory of an Asset," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 82 (June 2011), 48.

⁷ Ibid. Holert is quoting Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and

⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in

visibility, and representation."⁹ The prerequisite for enabling such processes—which are by no means "weak" in argument or importance but only in the sense that they do not yet have a large lobby—is a wider understanding of knowledge and expertise. Knowledge can be gained beyond the frames of academic disciplines, as it comes in artistic, aesthetic, cultural, sensual, subconscious and practical forms as well.

Furthermore, this emerging field of research outside of academia might hold the potential to moderate between partial or vernacular and universal languages. The concept of situated knowledges might prove helpful in this context. To situate knowledge, as Donna Haraway proposed in her 1988 essay, does not mean to create a new localizable universal perspective, but to embed the creation of knowledge in lived realities, and to make one's partial viewpoint transparent.¹⁰ Dealing with such contemporary knowledge in this way could mean to responsibly moderate processes of negotiation and to bring together positions from politics, research, the arts, and other fields. Such moderation would leave room for affective dimensions of knowledge, for invisible anxieties and hopes, or for the anticipation of lost futures. One of the projects that took place under the frame of "100 Years of Now" might explain what such a process could look like.

The Housing Question

How can the question of housing that Engels posed in his famous polemic "Zur Wohnungsfrage," be updated—not under the conditions of a "new" time we live in, but in a way in which the modern paradigm of newness is broken so that the question can be asked again? With the increasing financialization of living space in the form of privatization of property, globalized real estate speculation and the

Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988): 575–599.

ethnological museum. While only around 5% of them were prepared for eventual display at the Humboldt Forum and were already wrapped up to be transported there, the rest would have an invisible future in the depots. The aim of the Dictionary event was not to contribute another theoretical position to the theory of things but rather to provide a complex case study in which the modern notion of “the thing” could be re-imagined by assembling different actors and cultural practices in regard to a very specific current debate about the recontextualization of colonial museum objects in the newly built Humboldt Forum. In museums, objects are often embedded in fixed classification and sign systems that situate them in narratives of specific regional and temporal origins. It feels as if there is no way out of the categories and mechanisms, in which the institutions hold their things captured. Thus, in this edition of the “Dictionary of Now,” the question was: How can the thing speak as actor within its contemporary collectivity, as one historical reference point in a net of relations between colonizer and colonized, between museum and visitor, and between people today and the historical time the object was made, shipped and classified in? In his talk on “mutable immutable mobiles,” Bennett showed that museum “things” are always in a state of transition. They can be seen as active agents in processes that set time and historical categories in motion if one tries to find ways to let them tell their own stories. The object from the collection of the Berlin Ethnological Museum that Bennett chose to talk about at the event was a cloak made of woven bark, purchased in 1819 by the Royal Prussian Art Chamber when Captain James Cook’s collections were auctioned off (Fig. 11). The cloak had been retrieved by Cook from Vancouver Island in 1788. From this collected item in the Berlin Museum, Bennett then drew a connection to the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas, who worked as Assistant Curator of Ethnology and Somatology at the

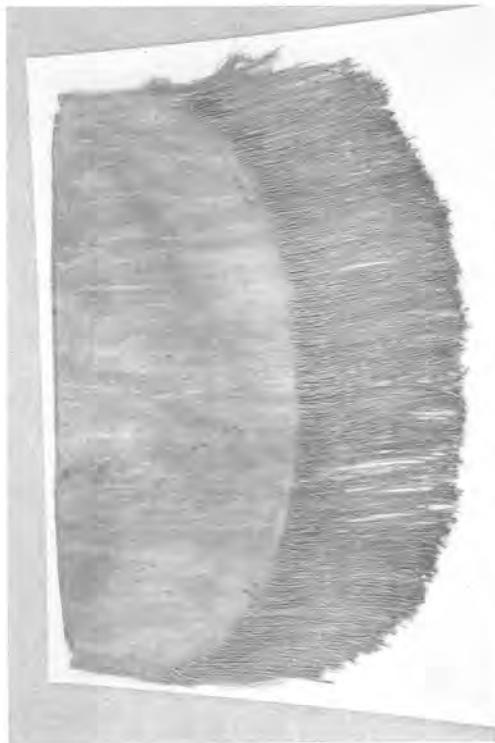


Fig. 11: A cloak made of woven bark from Vancouver Island, acquired by the Royal Prussian Art Chamber in 1819 when Captain James Cook’s collections were auctioned. Photo: Dana Freyberg. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum.

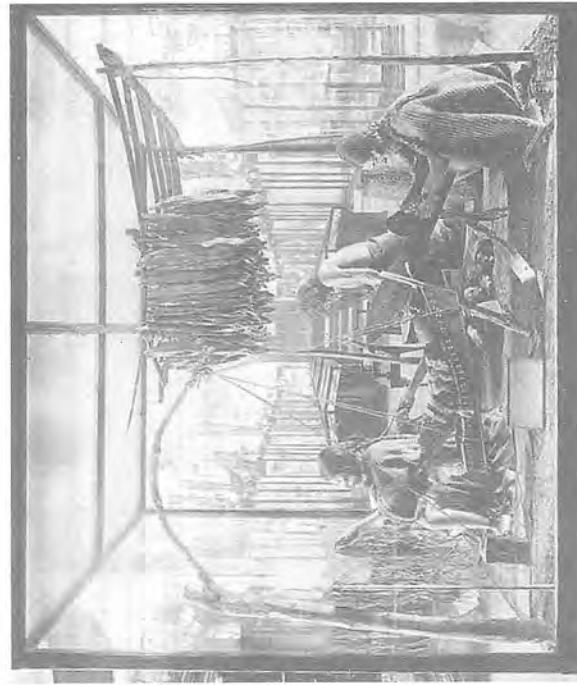


Fig. 12: Life-group display of so-called North West Coast Indians at the American Museum of Natural History, ca. 1902. © American Museum of Natural History Library.

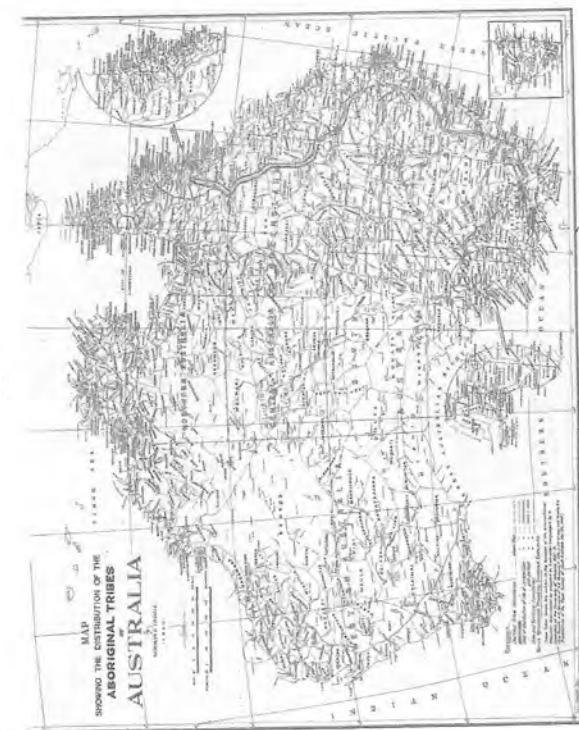


Fig. 13. Map showing "the distribution of the Aboriginal tribes of Australia" by the anthropologist Norman B. Tindale, 1940. © National Library of Australia.

American Museum of Natural History from 1896 to 1900, where he included similar cloaks in his life-group diorama of North West Coast Indians (Fig. 12). Here, the cloaks were integrated into a depiction of a territorially grounded way of life, organized around the processes of weaving red cedar bark into clothing. Boas did not invent these kind of displays, but he supported them as a critique of the earlier typological method in which artefacts (tools, weapons, works of art) were displayed as universal selections of anthropological craftwork, disconnected from their originating social contexts. Boas's displays sought to evoke the distinctive qualities of ways of life that were specific to particular cultural areas. However, it is precisely this concept of cultural areas which produced the notion of ethnic groups mapped out for instance as the original aboriginal tribes in Australia in a map from 1940 (Fig. 13), which for a long time prevented the objects from telling their stories of migration, economic exchange and encounter and reduced them to representations of historically and spatially distinct cultures.

The "Dictionary of Now" entry on the term "Thing" thus tried to investigate alternative perspectives in order to find out about the stories these things might tell. As witnesses of historical events, they can tell stories of cultural encounters between those who bought or stole them, and those who owned them before. This becomes especially poignant in the example of spears in the depots of the Dahlem Ethnological Collection used to defend local communities against the colonial intruders (Fig. 14). Rather than serving as representations of specimen of human armory, talked about in light of the history of their acquisition, the spears become resistant actors within a history of colonial violence. These objects can no longer be regarded as traces of authentic indigenous cultures but are clearly witnesses of modern conflicts about market areas and object accumulation. Looking at such ethnographic objects from a contemporary



Fig. 14. Spears in the depots of the Ethnological Museum Berlin in Berlin-Dahlem, 2016.
© Laura Fiorio / HKW.

Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, in which he states that "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other."²³ How alliances are possible even if such relations are asymmetrical might then be considered the essential question of contemporary investigations, especially in a situation of a long common history of actors, often described in binary oppositions of colonizers and colonized, of upper and lower classes, of masters and servants, of men and women. Glissant looks at the history of colonization and tries to overcome the concept of identity by stating that each position is linked "to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures," and "is produced in the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiation."²⁴ Moreover such a relational perspective might be called contemporary—given however that one is aware of the fact that often enough contemporaneity is attributed to very exclusive and elitist phenomena such as contemporary art. What, however, are these other critical perspectives on the temporality-of-contemporaneity? What can ideally be imagined with the term as a counter-concept to the linear notion of modernism preceding postmodernity? The question this essay is trying to follow is: which formats of curating or writing might enable such a relational perspective on different phenomena?

The theorist of contemporaneity, Boris Groys, outlined—with reference to the German word "Zeitgenossenschaft" which literally means "comradeship of time,"—that "to be con-temporary — zeitgenössisch—can be understood as being a 'comrade of time'—as collaborating with time, helping time when it has problems, when it has difficulties,"²⁵ and thus be a comrade of everything that resides within time together with oneself and show solidarity with it. Furthermore, when

time is not understood as a linear line, but as a set of layers and relations, this solidarity can hold true for people from remote, past, and future times. For Groys, the analysis of phenomena entangled in global infrastructures and manifold layers of temporality makes it harder to decide who is part of this contemporary perspective. If one attempts to make an argument of historical complexity and frames a question with respect to humanity as a whole, everybody is a possible contemporary, even those who are already dead—as becomes most apparent in Groys's exhibition on Russian Cosmism, "Art Without Death" (2017)—which was also on show in the frame of "100 Years of Now" and which he curated together with Anton Vidokle. The 1920s Russian Avant-Garde movement of the Cosmists that the exhibition was dedicated to, wanted to revive the dead, and abolish death as a consequence of their egalitarian socialist vision. They believed that "private property cannot truly be eliminated if every human being owns a private piece of time." Thus "time will be collectivized."²⁶ Before the Cosmists were going to be able to realize this vision with biotechnological means, it was important for them to at first establish modes of thinking history and humankind as sharing the same time. The Cosmism movement can hence be considered a radically contemporary movement because it developed models to think the coevalness of all humankind, where every person who has ever lived can be considered the contemporary of every person to come. Contemporaneity in this radical form becomes a utopian vision of equality and diversity. Even if this biotechnological vision has not come true, the exhibition suggests that such a perspective might prove fruitful for establishing historical frames and rethinking the idea of humanity as a multitude of relations.

23. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11.

24. Ibid., 144.

25. Boris Groys, "Comrades of Time," in *What Is Contemporary Art?*, ed. Julietta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), 32.

26. Boris Groys, "Becoming Cosmic," (Lecture held at the conference "Art Without Death: Russian Cosmism," HKW, Berlin, September 1, 2017, <https://www.hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/audio/60840/>)

Déborah Danowski, Eduardo
Viveiros de Castro

Is There Any World to Come?

01/07

e-flux journal #65 SUPERCOMMUNITY — may–august 2015 Déborah Danowski, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro
Is There Any World to Come?

The problem of the end of the world is always formulated as a separation or divergence, a divorce or orphaning resulting from the disappearance of one pole in the duality of world and inhabitant – the beings whose world it is. In our metaphysical tradition, this being tends to be the “human,” whether called *Homo sapiens* or *Dasein*. The disappearance may be due to either physical extinction or one pole’s absorption by the other, which leads to a change in the persisting one. We could schematically present this as an opposition between a “world without us,” that is, a world after the end of the human species, and an “us without world,” a humanity bereft of world or environment, a persistence of some form of humanity or subjectivity after the end of the world.

But to think the future disjunction of world and inhabitant inevitably evokes the origin of its present, precarious conjunction. The end of the world projects backward a beginning of the world; the future fate of humankind transports us to its emergence. The existence of a world before us, although regarded as a philosophical challenge by some (if Meillassoux’s subtle argument is to be believed¹), seems easy enough for the average person to imagine. The possibility of an us before the world, on the other hand, is less familiar to the West’s mythological repertoire.

Yet it is a hypothesis explored in several Amerindian cosmogonies. It finds itself conveniently summarized in the commentary that opens a myth of the Yawanawa, a people of Pano-speakers from the western Amazon: “The myth’s action takes place in a time in which ‘nothing yet was, but people already existed.’”² The variation of the Aikewara, a Tupian-speaking people who live at the other end of the Amazon, adds a curious exception: “When the sky was still very close to the Earth, there was nothing in the world except people – and tortoises!”³

At first, then, everything was originally human, or rather, nothing was not human (except for tortoises, of course, according to the Aikewara). A considerable number of Amerindian myths – as well as some from other ethnographic regions – imagine the existence of a primordial humankind, whether fabricated by a demiurge or simply presupposed as the only substance or matter out of which the world could have come to be formed.

These are narratives about a time before the beginning of time, an era or eon that we could call “pre-cosmological.”⁴ These primordial people were not fully human in the sense that we are, since, despite having the same mental faculties as us, they possessed great anatomic plasticity and a certain penchant for immoral

conduct (incest, cannibalism). After a series of exploits, some groups of this primordial humankind progressively morphed – either spontaneously or due to the action of a demiurge – into the biological species, geographical features, meteorological phenomena, and celestial bodies that comprise the present cosmos. The part that did not change is the historical, or contemporary, humankind.⁵

One of the best illustrations of this general type of cosmology is described in great detail in the autobiography of Yanomami shaman and political leader Davi Kopenawa.⁶ We could also recall ideas from the Ashaninka (Campa), an Arawak people both geographically and culturally distant from the Yanomami:

Campa mythology is largely the story of how, one by one, the primal Campa became irreversibly transformed into the first representatives of various species of animals and plants, as well as astronomical bodies or features of the terrain ... The development of the universe, then, has been primarily a process of diversification, with mankind as the primal substance out of which many if not all of the categories of beings and things in the universe arose, the Campa of today being the descendants of those ancestral Campa who escaped being transformed.⁷

We could also mention the cosmogony of the Luiseño from California, evoked in *The Jealous Potter* by Claude Lévi-Strauss, in which the cultural hero Wyiot differentiates the originary human community into the various species of currently existing beings.⁸ The theme is also found in some non-Amerindian cultures: for example, the Kaluli from Papua New Guinea recount that “at that [pre-cosmological] time, according to the prevailing story, there were no trees or animals or streams or sago or food. The Earth was covered entirely by people.”⁹ A man of authority (a *big man*) then decided to transform the different groups of people into different species and other natural phenomena: “those who were left aside became the ancestors of human beings.”

We can see how, in Amerindian thought (and some others), humankind or personhood is both the seed and the primordial ground, or background, of the world.¹⁰ *Homo sapiens* is not the character who comes to crown the Great Chain of Being by adding a new ontological layer (spiritual or “cognitive,” in modern parlance) on top of a previously existing organic layer that would, in turn, have emerged out of a substrate of “dead” matter. In the West’s mythophilosophical tradition, we tend to

conceive animality and nature in general as referring essentially to the past. Animals are living arche-fossils, not only because beasts roamed the Earth long before we did (and because these archaic beasts were like magnified versions of present animals), but because the human species has its origin in species that are closer to pure animality the more we recede in time.¹¹

By virtue of a felicitous innovation – bipedalism, neoteny, cooperation – the Great Watchmaker, whether blindly or omnisciently, conferred upon us a capacity that made us into more-than-organic beings (in the sense of Alfred Kroeber’s “superorganic”), endowed with that spiritual supplement that is “proper to man”: the species’ precious *private property*. Human exceptionalism, in short: language, labor, law, desire; time, world, death. Culture. History. Future. Humans belong to the future like animals belong to the past – our past, since animals themselves are, as far as we are concerned, trapped inside an exiguous world within an immobile present.

Yet that is not, as we can see, how things go as far as these *other humans* who are the Amerindians and other non-modern humankinds are concerned. One of the things that make them other consists precisely in the fact that their concepts of the human are other to our own. The world as we know it, or rather the world as the indigenous knew it, is the present world that “exists” (or existed) in the interval between the time of origins and the end of times – the intercalary time that we could call the “ethnographic present” or the present of *ethnos*, as opposed to the “historical present” of the nation-state. Our present world that exists is conceived in some Amerindian cosmologies as the epoch that began when pre-cosmological beings suspended their ceaseless becoming-other (erratic metamorphoses, anatomic plasticity, “unorganized” corporeality) in favor of greater ontological univocality.¹²

Putting an end to the “time of transformations” – a common expression among Amazonian cultures – those unstable anthropomorphs who lived at the origins took on the forms and bodily dispositions of those animals, plants, rivers, and mountains that they would eventually come to be. This was, in fact, already prefigured in the names they bore in the absolute past; thus, for example, the Peccary Yanomami – the tribe of originary people who had the name “Peccary” [*queixada*] – became the term “peccary,” that is, the wild pigs that we hunt and eat today (*Yanomani* means “people” in their language). The whole world (though again, perhaps not the tortoise or some other oddity) is virtually included in this originary proto-

ENTREVISTA

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro: “Gostaria que o Museu Nacional permanecesse como ruína, memória das coisas mortas”

A tragédia do incêndio do Museu Nacional não deverá ser suficiente para abrir um debate sério no Brasil sobre o “descaso” a que tem sido votada a cultura, diz o antropólogo Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Este é “um país onde governar é criar desertos”.



ALEXANDRA PRADO COELHO · 4 de Setembro de 2018, 21:04



Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 67 anos, é um dos mais conhecidos antropólogos brasileiros, autor de vários livros e do conceito de perspectivismo ameríndio [teoria a partir da visão ameríndia do mundo], e professor do Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, a

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50% desconto



instituição que na noite de domingo para segunda-feira foi destruída pelo fogo, que arrasou quase totalmente uma coleção de mais de 20 milhões de peças, com um valor incalculável. Falou ao PÚBLICO por telefone a partir do Rio.

Qual é a dimensão da perda do Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro para o Brasil e para o mundo?

O Museu Nacional talvez fosse o lugar mais importante do Brasil em termos do seu valor como património cultural e histórico, não só brasileiro como mundial. Trata-se da destruição do ground zero, o lugar central que era o símbolo da génesis do país como nação independente e continha um acervo inestimável, não só do ponto de vista da história da cultura e da natureza brasileiras mas com peças de significado mundial. Foi destruída toda a coleção de etnologia indígena, inclusive de vários povos desaparecidos, foi destruída toda a biblioteca do sector de Antropologia, e foi destruído o Luzia, o fóssil humano mais importante e antigo das Américas. É uma perda que não tem como reverter, não há nada que se possa fazer que mitigue, que amenize essa situação. Só se pode chorar em cima do leite derramado, que não adianta nada.

As causas últimas desse incêndio, todo o mundo sabe quais são. É o descaso absoluto desse Governo, e dos anteriores, para com a cultura. O Brasil é um país onde governar é errar desertos. Deserto

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naturais, no espaço, com a devastação do cerrado, da Amazónia. Destrói-se a natureza e agora está-se destruindo a cultura, criando-se desertos no tempo. Estamos perdendo com isso parte da história do Brasil e do mundo, porque se trata de testemunhos com significado para toda a civilização.

É portanto uma perda com impacto a nível mundial.

Com certeza, tem impacto brasileiro, português, porque boa parte da história de Portugal estava nesse museu também, visto que foi a residência de D. João VI, e também da história mundial – a coleção de etnologia não tinha significado apenas para o Brasil pelo facto de os povos aqui representados habitarem essa parte do planeta, esses povos têm significado para a história da humanidade. Além disso, havia peças muito valiosas que não eram apenas de povos indígenas no território brasileiro, peças africanas, egípcias, etruscas.

É uma perda incalculável que se explica – não se justifica, mas explica-se – pelo descaso absoluto que todos os Governos, e esse Governo ilegítimo em particular, votam à cultura, com cortes dramáticos nos orçamentos da cultura e da educação, ameaças grave de desmontagem das universidades públicas [o Museu Nacional está ligado à Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro]. É um projecto de devastação, de criação de desertos, desertos no espaço

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e no tempo. A destruição do museu é um deserto no tempo, é destruir a memória, destruir a História.

E para si, em particular, o que é representa?

O Museu Nacional abrigava vários departamentos da Universidade. Era um museu de exposição, mas também de pesquisa, eu fazia parte do sector de pesquisa, de um programa de doutoramento em Antropologia. A minha relação com a parte física do museu, com os objectos, era bem menor do que a de vários colegas meus. A perda pessoal, imediata, para mim é a da Biblioteca de Antropologia, que devia ter uns 200 mil títulos e que era um instrumento de trabalho fundamental para a minha actividade como docente.

Essa perda atingiu-me de maneira directa, perdemos toda uma biblioteca construída ao longo de 50 anos. Como etnólogo, relativamente à coleção do Museu Nacional, significou para mim a perda de toda a memória material desses povos que foram destroçados pelo colonialismo europeu e que estavam ali como testemunhas mudas da história sinistra que foi a invasão da América pelas potências europeias.

A biblioteca de Antropologia tinha manuscritos, volumes insubstituíveis

Manuscritos, menos, porque a biblioteca central do Museu Nacional já não estava no



edifício que foi destruído, estava num anexo, e é essa que contém as obras raras. A do programa de doutoramento era muito moderna, tinha toda a produção antropológica, sociológica, histórica, dos últimos 50 anos. Embora teoricamente possa ser refeita, não há dinheiro para o fazer. De resto, os fósseis, as borboletas, os insectos, as coleções de estudo, isso é insubstituível.

O que é que se deve fazer agora, perante este edifício queimado?

A minha vontade, com a raiva que todos estamos sentindo, é deixar aquela ruína como memento mori, como memória dos mortos, das coisas mortas, dos povos mortos, dos arquivos mortos, destruídos nesse incêndio.

Eu não construiria nada naquele lugar. E, sobretudo, não tentaria esconder, apagar esse evento, fingindo que nada aconteceu e tentando colocar ali um prédio moderno, um museu digital, um museu da Internet – não duvido nada que surjam com essa ideia. Gostaria que aquilo permanecesse em cinzas, em ruínas, apenas com a fachada de pé, para que todos vissem e se lembressem. Um memorial.

Esta tragédia pode abrir um debate sério no Brasil sobre esse desinvestimento na cultura?

Não, não vai abrir. Já houve incêndios gravíssimos no Brasil em museus, no de Arte Moderna em 1978, no Museu da ASSINE JÁ



Língua Portuguesa em São Paulo, ontem mesmo houve um incêndio numa mansão histórica no centro de Salvador. Acho que não vai haver reflexão nenhuma, até porque o país está mergulhado numa crise política, moral, cultural e económica gigantesca. Vai haver gritaria durante algum tempo, choro, ranger de dentes, e em seguida vai-se voltar ao que sempre foi, planos para o futuro que não se concretizam, verbas que se prometem e não se entregam. Tenho muito medo que se tente vender o canto de sereia da privatização dos museus, retirá-lo da universidade, transformá-lo numa fundação privada. Enfim, essa panaceia de estilo americano que nunca dá certo no Brasil.

Há quem diga que para além do descaso do poder político há um desinteresse geral das pessoas, que acham que a cultura não é a prioridade e que se deve gastar dinheiro em coisas mais urgentes. Vê isso assim?

O Museu Nacional era altamente frequentado, em parte porque a entrada era muito barata, situava-se numa zona popular da cidade, no centro de um parque muito conhecido. Curiosamente, este ano no Carnaval uma das escolas de samba do Rio teve como tema os 200 anos do Museu, com alegorias e fantasias que evocavam as múmias, os dinossauros. Ele fazia parte da cultura popular brasileira, da cultura popular carioca e pernambucana.

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Mesmo com essa ligação afectiva, o impacto do que aconteceu não será suficiente para mudar alguma coisa?

Não sei dizer. Na segunda-feira à noite, houve uma manifestação no centro do Rio, na Cinelândia, bastante grande, umas 20 mil pessoas, essencialmente estudantes universitários jovens, protestando, a partir do incêndio do museu, mas generalizando para todo o descaso desse Governo com a educação e a cultura.

Certamente as pessoas que estão passando fome e estão desempregadas não diriam que a cultura é a coisa mais importante mas a ideia de que o povo despreza a cultura não é verdadeira. Quem despreza a cultura é a burguesia, o agro-negócio, os deputados ruralistas, os que estão interessados em devastar o país para produzir soja para vender para a China.

Desvalorizando certamente ainda mais os símbolos da cultura indígena.

Os índios são a pedra no sapato da classe dominante, porque as terras indígenas são públicas, não podem ser privatizadas, e o projecto da classe dominante é privatizar 100% das terras brasileiras. Para eles, os índios são um tropeço, um obstáculo, um escândalo inclusive, um símbolo do atraso do país, quando na verdade deviam ser vistos como símbolo de um futuro possível de um país que está num planeta que está sendo destruído pelo chamado progresso.

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Os índios são aqueles que conseguiram sobreviver mantendo um modo de vida menos suicida e são vistos como um povo do passado. Uma maneira de refazer esse museu talvez fosse pedir aos povos indígenas brasileiros que contribuíssem com a sua cultura material para refazer pelo menos o acervo de etnologia.

Falou-se muito na forma como o incêndio afectou a imagem do Brasil no mundo. Isso terá influência nas próximas eleições de Outubro?

O facto de ter havido uma repercussão mundial muito grande talvez tenha sacudido um pouco a consciência dos políticos brasileiros e sobretudo dos candidatos à eleição. Certamente, agora que começou a fase de debates entre os candidatos à Presidência, o tema vai entrar na agenda. Não tenho dúvida de que todos vão falar do Museu Nacional, agora como vão falar e o que vão falar, é algo que é muito difícil de estimar.

Com as sondagens a dar vantagem a Jair Bolsonaro caso Lula, que se encontra na prisão, não participe, estamos perante a possibilidade de vitória de um candidato ainda mais preocupante para uma política cultural.

Aí é a catástrofe absoluta. Eu sou uma pessoa muito pessimista em geral, mas não sou ao ponto de achar que Bolsonaro vai ser eleito. Acho que ele não consegue se eleger Presidente do Brasil. Mas representa



uma parte grande da população e o problema é que há pessoas que votam nele e que vão continuar aí e isso é muito triste.

O Brasil está passando por um processo de polarização política muito grande, existe uma camada subterrânea fascista que era melhor ter deixado quieta e que está se movimentando. Não é só no Brasil, há no mundo inteiro um renascer de sentimentos fascistas, autocráticos, e isso aqui é representado por esse candidato repugnante que é o Jair Bolsonaro, que defende a tortura, elogia a ditadura, quer armar a população, e que se inspira naquele louco patético que é o Donald Trump nos Estados Unidos. Se ele for eleito, é o fim. Pego o avião e vou embora – não sei para onde, mas para algum lugar.



Els dibuixos tenen boques però no parlen

Caterina Almirall

Conferència i visita guiada en el marc del projecte *Impasse*, una intervenció artística de Julia Calvo al Castell de Montjuïc.

25 de gener de 2019. 18-19'30h.

Castell de Montjuïc



Aquesta és una fotografia obra de l'artista d'origen hongarès conegut pel nom de Brassaï, qui va fotografiar i catalogar entre els anys 1930 i 1950 centenars de graffiti pels carrers de París. Els buscava en els seus passejos nocturns, els fotografiava a la llum dels fanals de gas, i anotava les localitzacions al seu quadern. Vinculat al moviment surrealista, Brassaï associava aquestes imatges al món dels somnis, el fascinaven com a d'altres ho feien les màscares africanes o totes aquelles creacions que es podrien vincular a la mà amateur, al pensament naïf, a la creació més impulsiva, intuïtiva o irracional.

Li recordaven les pintures prehistòriques de les cavernes, a les que no podem donar una explicació precisa, però a les que sovint s'atribueix un sentit místic i màgic. Imaginem les pintures «rupestres» fetes per mans de xamans que tenen la capacitat de comunicar amb el «més enllà», i que en un trànsit o estat alterat de la consciència es poden traslladar a una altra realitat, la dels somnis, les divinitats o al món dels morts. Hi ha autors que busquen precisament en aquestes imatges anteriors al concepte actual d'art, un possible origen de la pràctica artística, construint una genealogia que ens portaria a pensar l'art no com una forma de representació de la realitat sinó de construcció d'un imaginari col·lectiu i mitològic.

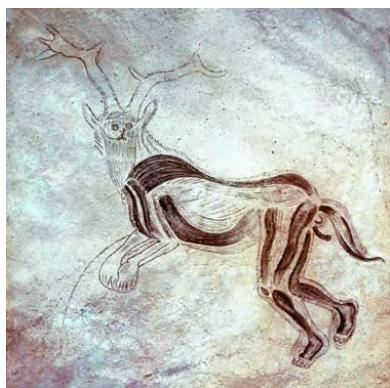


Figura de la gruta de Trois Frères, prop de Montesquiou, al Sud de França, anomenada "el deu xamán". Data de fa uns 15.000 anys (original emfatitzat pel calc).

En aquest art anterior a l'art, els objectes fabricats com les estatuetes o les pintures, compleixen múltiples funcions però mai una funció *representativa*, ja que no substitueixen la imatge dels déus, sinó que són la relació entre la divinitat i les persones. Aquestes imatges no són fetes per ser vistes, són en sí mateixes la plegaria, són el pacte i la garantia d'un acord entre l'home i el món. (Resnais/Marker, "Les statues meurent aussi" 1953). Els mites no poden reduir-se a un únic sentit, han de presentar múltiples aspectes entrelaçats i utilitzar la forma simbòlica i polisèmica per explicar-se. De fet, ens diuen els entesos, son els mites els que pensen els éssers humans, que en són el seu producte. "Abans de la cultura, el món va somiar molt, i els mites sorgien de la terra..."¹ Els surrealistes

buscaven en aquestes imatges "altres" el llenguatge simbòlic, es referien a elles com el "llenguatge dels murs", desidentificant-les de les possibles mans anònimes que les havien executat. En assenyalar-les se les apropiaven en aquest gest tant característic de l'art contemporani deutor del concepte del «ready-made».

Brassaï veia en els graffiti una espècie d'essència de la realitat amagada. En certa manera, aquestes imatges sense autor podrien configurar una mena d'inconscient col·lectiu enunciat als murs urbans, com si fossin les mateixes parets que parlessin, testimonis silenciosos que alcen una veu, potser la veu de la cara oculta de la ciutat.

És interessant veure com Brassaï, que diuen que era un home més aviat caòtic i desendreçat, es va dedicar a catalogar els graffiti que havia fotografiat en categories que li permeteren donar un sentit al conjunt d'imatges: *Rostres, Animals, Amor, Mort, Màgia, Primitius...* La majoria dels graffiti són imatges i hi ha molt pocs textos en el conjunt, que una vegada endreçat, conforma un corpus de treball considerable. Va tenir molt d'èxit i aviat es van exposar en institucions importants com el MOMA de Nova York, i avui en dia formen part de col·leccions de museus d'art contemporani com el MACBA. Aquests dies se'n poden veure algunes a l'exposició "Un segle breu" en aquest darrer, al costat d'unes ceràmiques de Picasso que hi estan molt en sintonia. Els graffiti «originals», en canvi, es deuen haver perdut la gran majoria, destruïts per les inclemències del temps i els canvis urbanístics de les grans ciutats.

Hi ha altres exemples de graffiti que s'han fet molt famosos, i que han sobreviscut al pas dels anys de forma quasi miraculosa. És el cas dels graffiti de les parets de la ciutat de Pompeia, que, com tota la resta, cases, persones, animals, estris, mobles, menjar..., van quedar sepultats per la lava i les cendres del volcà Vesuvi en l'espectacular erupció del 24 d'agost de l'any 79 del s.I d.c. No em vull estar de senyalar, per evident o per truculent que pugui semblar, el fet que en aquest cas va ser la destrucció i la mort que va provocar la catàstrofe, el que va preservar la ciutat del pas del temps, deixant-la com "congelada" i aturada en un moment precís.

Hi ha en aquesta catàstrofe de la ciutat de Pompeia, conservada «gràcies» al seu final, un paral·lelisme que ens remet a la funció pròpia dels museus: aturar el temps, preservar i conservar les coses allunyat-les de la vida. Em refereixo així al museu -qualsevol tipus de museu: d'art, de ciència, de història...-, com un espai de negociació entre la vida i la mort, contradictori en els seus propis termes, essent precisament aquesta

contradicció el que el caracteritza. Podem dir que és per mitjà d'aquesta funció del museu que **aprenem la vida: per mitjà de la mort.**



Una paret d'una casa a Pompeia plena de pintades tipus graffiti. Foto del blog online "Feito Peixe Fora d'Água".



imatge d'un graffiti de Pompeia on es veuen dos gladiadors. Foto de Pinterest.

Quand les hommes sont morts, ils entrent dans l'histoire. Quand les statues sont mortes, elles entrent dans l'art. Cette botanique de la mort, c'est ce que nous appelons la culture.²

En concret, els graffitis de les parets de Pompeia, com els graffiti que veurem avui, *ens han explicat* moltes coses de la vida dels habitants de Pompeia, o del castell, en el cas que ens ha portat avui aquí. Més concretament de la vida de les persones de les quals en sabem menys coses perquè quasi no en queda constància en els relats històrics hegémònics que ens han arribat. Els graffiti ens parlen d'aquells que els van fer, ens parlen de la gent corrent, de les classes populars, de les persones que escrivien amb faltes d'ortografia insults, grolleries i obscenitats, que dibuixaven escenes pornogràfiques i desitjos sexuals, es llançaven amenaces, consignes, *piropos*, i exclamaven proclames polítiques, victorejaven als seus esportistes preferits o maleïen als polítics corruptes.

Com deien els surrealistes, les parets parlen, parlen, si les escoltem, de les persones que van viure entre elles.

D'una banda parlàvem de la funció dels museus, pel que fa a **la funció de l'art**, podríem dir que d'alguna manera aquests dibuixos a les parets de Pompeia, a les parets de París, a les parets de les coves, o de les cel·les dels subterraris del Castell, han complert una funció que és anàloga a la funció de l'art: la **d'enviar missatges a través del temps**, (potser també de l'espai).

Abans de començar a fotografiar els graffiti, Brassaï va provar de dibuixar-los als quaderns on n'anotava les localitzacions. El dibuix té la capacitat de transportar-nos directament al gest, al traç, que, en el passat, va fer una altra persona. Ens podem imaginar la mà d'aquesta persona traçant amb línies negres de carbonet o de grafit sobre la superfície blanca. Podem imaginar que el dibuix és el canal de comunicació més directe entre nosaltres i la mà que dibuixa. Quan mirem el dibuix som exactament al mateix lloc on va ser la persona que el va fer, -davant del paper o del mur-, en certa manera ens possem al seu lloc, en un procés d'interpretació que és tant intuïtiu com emocional, per uns segons, nosaltres som l'altre.

Potser per aquest motiu, Brassaï va desestimar el dibuix per captar els graffiti de París i va preferir la càmera fotogràfica, així podia conservar en certa mesura, el traç o el gest original. De fet, de fotografiar en diem sovint



"Tete de mort", escultura de Picasso fotografiada per Brassaï, 1943.

“immortalitzar”. Brassaï va col·laborar amb Picasso qui li va encomanar que fotografiés algunes de les seves escultures perquè deia que el fotògraf era capaç de donar vida les escultures. És el cas de "Cap de mort".

Immortalitzar i portar a la vida, no és ben bé el mateix, de fet, són el mateix camí en la direcció contrària. La voluntat de la creació artística, seguint aquest camí, podria ser la de deixar una empremta del pas pel món una vegada l'artista ja no hi és, una **voluntat de permanència**. L'impuls de dibuixar, de ratllar el paper, la paret, podria ser el de deixar constància d'una determinada existència. D'aquesta manera la pràctica artística seria un espai de negociació entre el passat i el present, o bé entre el present i el futur, si ens fixem en el moment d'executar l'obra. En certa manera, un diàleg entre la vida i la mort. El lloc de l'art en la societat podria ser aleshores -i segons alguns autors-, el de parlar amb els morts, els del passat i també els del futur.

*Un objet est mort quand le regard vivant qui s'est posé sur lui a disparu, et quand nous aurons disparu, nos objets iront là où nous envoyons ceux des nègres: au musée.*²

Alain Resnais i Chris Marker a la pel·lícula “Les estàtues també moren” es pregunten perquè unes obres, (l'art africà o art negre que en deien) eren al Musée de l'Homme, el museu d'antropologia, i en canvi unes altres, (les obres d'art clàssic gregues i romanes), eren al Musée du Louvre, el museu d'art. Diferenciaven entre unes i altres en tant que el sentit que els hi donava cada context era diferent, i de fet cada museu les insereix en un context i una genealogia diferent: la història de l'art occidental, o la història de la humanitat i en conseqüència de l'alteritat.

Tancar els objectes als museus és separar-los de la voluntat de comunicar-se amb el més enllà tot inscrivint-les en un nou context de sentit. El museu, el lloc de les categories. A priori tant se val a quin museu hagin d'anar a morir si hi van per extingir la seva vida, però podem trobar en la pregunta de partida la intuïció de que en un museu i en l'altre els efectes i les conseqüències d'aquesta mort són diferents.

Els dibuixos no parlen per sí sols, parlen quan els hi dirigim la mirada, quan els contextualitzem. Parlen quan els fem parlar, i ens poden dir coses diferents depèn des d'on els mirem i amb quines intencions. Les narratives es construeixen, les construïm, la història -la història del planeta, de la humanitat, d'un país, o d'una persona- no és una única i lineal, sinó que depèn de qui quan i com l'explica. En l'art d'explicar històries tant la ciència com les altres disciplines del coneixement

empren una bona mesura d'imaginació. Això ens permet pensar que existeixen narratives que encara que ocultes, podem explicar per generar un altre relat.

I aquesta és, al meu parer, una de les funcions fonamentals de l'art contemporani, contradir les tradicions artístiques aferrades a conceptes com la Originalitat, la Individualitat, la Singularitat, i partir de narratives invisibilitzades capaces de qüestionar les categories establertes en les formes hegemòniques. Assenyalar imatges creades per persones anònimes, identitats col·lectives i que narren la història en un altre ordre.

Ara ens trobem dins un monument, un museu de fet, ja que el Castell de Montjuïc és des de 2007 un equipament més de la ciutat de Barcelona. Des de l'inici de la dictadura fins aleshores havia estat propietat de Defensa, primer utilitzat encara com a presó, i des dels anys '60 va ser més aviat un espai simbòlic on es celebraren actes de commemoració i va albergar també un museu militar. Com les estàtues negres, una vegada desmantellada la seva funció original s'ha museïtzat completament i actualment tracta d'explicar una història, que és més aviat traumàtica per a la ciutat. Si us apunten a una de les visites guiades que ofereixen us explicaran l'origen de la construcció remuntant-se a temps de la Guerra dels Segadors l'any 1649, quan es va construir una fortificació al voltant d'una petita torre de vigilància anterior. Us explicaran que tal i com la coneixem ara, l'edificació data de mitjans s. XVIII, quan es va construir l'actual fortalesa sobre les ruïnes que havien deixat els enfrontaments de la Guerra de Successió. Es va construir una fortificació adaptada a totes les estratègies i tecnologies militars disponibles en aquella època, que es coordinava amb La Ciutadella per entre totes dues controlar la ciutat de Barcelona i la seva gent. És per això que als barcelonins no els hi agrada gaire el castell i la seva història que sempre s'ha vist com un lloc de control i repressió.

El primer que us preguntaran si aneu a la visita és qui va viure en aquest castell. Sembla que sovint associem a la idea de castell príncipes, reis i fins i tot dracs. En aquest castell no hi va viure cap príncep ni cap princesa, dracs no ho sé, només hi van viure soldats. Soldats preparats per atacar i maniobrar, i també soldats prisoners en les èpoques en que va servir de presó militar, en alguns moments també hi va haver presos per motius polítics. Sabem els noms dels arquitectes que van construir el castell, dels dictadors que hi van hissar banderes, dels presidents que hi van morir assassinats, però de la *vida* al castell, quasi no en sabem res. Per això hem de baixar al soterrani.



Tres exemples de graffiti de les cel·les de la presó del castell.
Fotos: Júlia Calvo.

A les cel·les que van ser dormitoris i també presó, els arqueòlegs, restauradores i conservadores han restaurat centenars de graffiti amagats sota capes de pintura, en dues de les cinc cel·les que hi ha. Els dibuixos comprenen una gran varietat de registres: calendaris, horaris de l'activitat a la presó, anuncis de la sentència a mort, confessions de innocència, poemes, cançons, retrats, molta pornografia, proclames ideològiques de bàndols contraris (les inicials de la FAI conviuen a cinc centímetres de una esvàstica, i un retrat de Hitler amb un graffiti de la V Internacional anarkista, amb la curiositat de que els que els van fer, van conviure al mateix temps en aquest espai, dibuixos de batalles de vaixells), traduccions de paraules, mantras budistes... Els han identificat i registrat organitzats en fitxes i classificacions. La Júlia Calvo però els ha dispersat de nou.

El projecte IMPASSE que ha desenvolupat la Júlia Calvo aquí al castell tracta precisament de fer aflorar unes narratives quasi invisibles, per explicar la història des d'un altre punt de vista, i a partir d'un ordre diferent de la informació. El desplaçament de les cel·les del soterrani del castell a l'exterior, a la plaça d'armes, és un gest que subverteix l'ordre preestablert de les coses: el que era al fons, ara és a la superfície.

Ha construït dues estructures transparents que reprodueixen a escala dues cel·les del castell i s'han emplaçat a la plaça d'armes, el lloc on s'afusellaren a molts presos, i també el lloc on el seu moment hi va haver la primera estàtua de Franco que el dictador va posar a la ciutat de Barcelona l'any 1963. Segurament la recordeu perquè és la mateixa que fa dos anys en el marc d'una més que polèmica exposició al Museu d'Història del Born, van col·locar a la plaça de davant del museu. Aquesta, però estava massa viva per resistir la intempèrie de les mirades dels habitants de Barcelona, la van decapitar, llençar ous, pintura i insults, fins que poc després va ser retirada.³



Estàtua eqüestre de Franco al centre del pati d'armes ©AFB
(extreta de la web del Castell)



L'intervenció de Julia Calvo Impasse, al pati d'armes del castell, 2019. Foto de l'autora.

Gravats a les parets transparents de les estructures de IMPASSE, hi ha reproduïts alguns dels dibuixos de les parets de les cel·les fosques. Els dibuixos miren al cel, i tenen una posició quasi espiritual, la superfície transparent que els sosté els dóna una forma d'estar al món en la que semblen més tancats en sí mateixos. És com si no necessitessin ser mirats, sinó que tenen una entitat pròpia, com si finalment s'haguessin alliberat.

Els graffiti originals són a baix, al soterrani del castell, s'han conservat sota capes de pintura antigues i més noves, quan les cel·les servien com a escenaris de pel·lícules. Fins que fa tres o quatre anys van aparèixer i després els han restaurats. Ens estan esperant!

Els morts viuen en la memòria dels vius; però els vius també viuen -vivim- de la memòria dels morts.⁴

¹ Bachelor citat per Roger Ferret a: Ferret, R. (2018) Los orígenes chamánicos del arte. En: Ed. Marta Pinyol (ed.) *Relaciones Ocultas. Símbolos, Alquímia y Esoterismo en el arte.* (p. 84/85) Estíbalitz: Sans Soleil Ediciones.

² Resnais, A. i Marker, C. (1953) *Les statues meurent aussi* [pel·lícula]

³ <http://elbornculturaimemoria.barcelona.cat/activitat/franco-victoria-republica/>

⁴ Almirall, J. (2018) *Alguns epigrames macedonis.* Ponència presentada a les Jornades Internacionals sobre el Món Clàssic en honor de Carles Miralles, Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

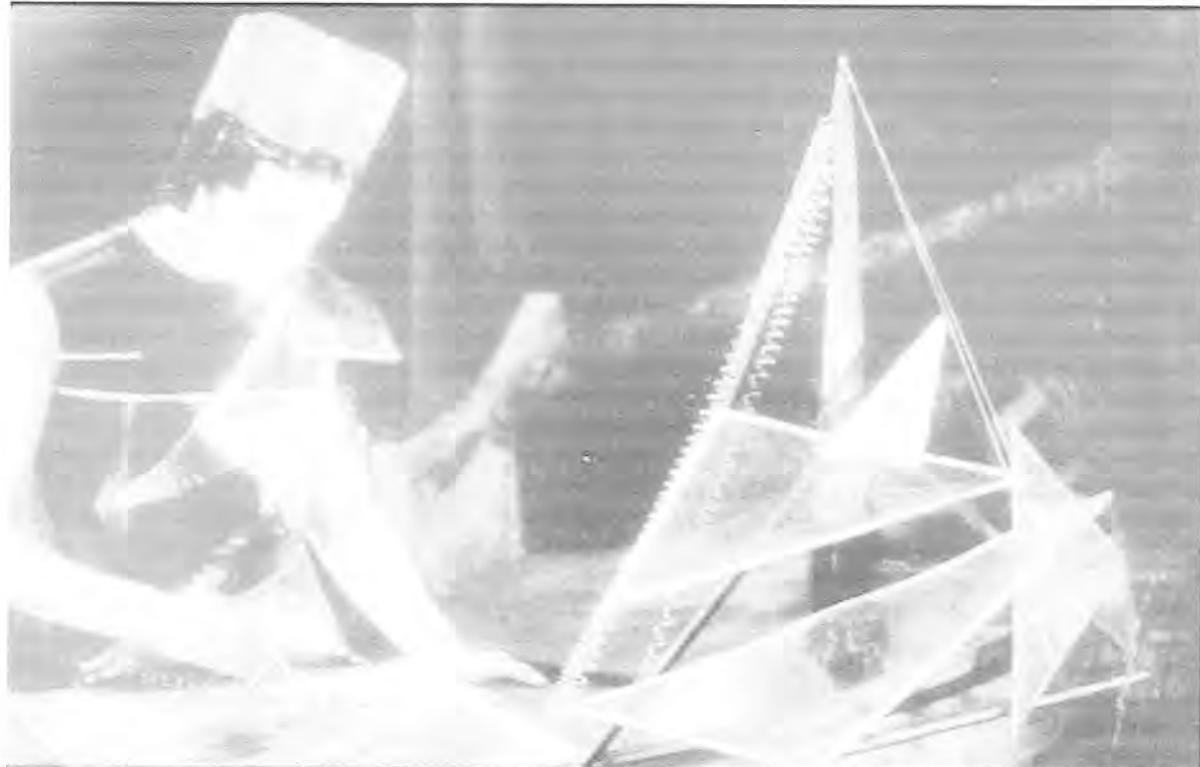
com es faria la producció/destrucció
en un món cosmista/immortal?

after the October Revolution and the end of the civil war – and was supported and controlled by this state. Thus, one cannot speak of the Russian avant-garde of the Soviet period as being revolutionary in the usual sense of the word, since the Russian avant-garde art was not directed against the status quo, against the dominant political and economic power structures.

The Russian avant-garde of the Soviet period was not critical but affirmative in its attitude towards the post-revolutionary Soviet state. It was basically a conformist art. Thus, only the pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde can be regarded today as being relevant to our contemporary situation – because the contemporary situation is obviously not the situation that existed after the Socialist revolution. So, in speaking about the revolutionary character of the Russian avant-garde, let us concentrate on the figure of Kazimir Malevich, the most radical representative of the pre-revolutionary phase of the Russian avant-garde.

As I have already mentioned, one does not find in the art of the pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde, including the art of Malevich, the characteristics that we tend to look for when

speaking about critical, politically engaged art that is able to mobilize the masses for the revolution – art that can help change the world. Thus, the suspicion arises that Malevich's famous *Black Square* is unrelated to any political and social revolution – that it is an artistic gesture that ultimately has relevance only inside artistic space. However, I would argue that if Malevich's *Black Square* was not an active revolutionary gesture in the sense that it criticized the political status quo or advertised a coming revolution, it was revolutionary in a much deeper sense. After all, what is revolution? It is not the process of building a new society – this is the goal of the post-revolutionary period. Rather, revolution is the radical destruction of the existing society. However, to accept this revolutionary destruction is not an easy psychological operation. We tend to resist the radical forces of destruction, we tend to be compassionate and nostalgic toward our past – and maybe even more so toward our endangered present. The Russian avant-garde – and the early European avant-garde in general – was the strongest possible medicine against any kind of compassion or nostalgia. It accepted the total destruction of all the traditions of European and Russian culture – traditions that were dear not



Film still from Yakov Protazanov's *Aelita*, 1924.

only to the educated classes but also to the general population.

Malevich's *Black Square* was the most radical gesture of this acceptance. It announced the death of any cultural nostalgia, of any sentimental attachment to the culture of the past. *Black Square* was like an open window through which the revolutionary spirits of radical destruction could enter the space of culture and reduce it to ashes. Indeed, a good example of Malevich's own anti-nostalgic attitude can be found in his short but important text "On the Museum," from 1919. At that time, the new Soviet government feared that the old Russian museums and art collections would be destroyed by civil war and the general collapse of state institutions and the economy. The Communist Party responded by trying to save these collections. In his text, Malevich protested against this pro-museum policy by calling on the state to not intervene on behalf of the old art collections, since their destruction could open the path to true, living art. He wrote:

Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us. In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder: accordingly, thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on a single chemist's shelf. We can make a concession to conservatives by offering that they burn all past epochs, since they are dead, and set up one pharmacy.

Later, Malevich gives a concrete example of what he means:

The aim [of this pharmacy] will be the same, even if people will examine the powder from Rubens and all his art – a mass of ideas will arise in people, and will be often more alive than actual representation (and take up less room).¹

Thus, Malevich proposes not to keep, not to save things that have to go, but to let them go without sentimentality or remorse. To let the dead bury their dead. At first glance, this radical acceptance of the destructive work of time seems to be nihilistic. Malevich himself described his art as being based on nothingness.

But, in fact, at the core of this unsentimental attitude toward the art of the past lies faith in the indestructible character of art. The avant-garde of the first wave allowed things – including the things of art – to fade away because it believed that something always

remained. And it looked for the things that remain beyond any human attempt at conservation.

The avant-garde is often associated with the notion of progress – especially technological progress. However, the avant-garde posed the following question: How can art continue amidst the permanent destruction of cultural tradition and the known world – conditions that are characteristic of the modern age, with its technological, political, and social revolutions? Or, to put it in different terms: How does one resist the destructiveness of progress? How does one make art that can escape permanent change – art that is atemporal, transhistorical? The avant-garde did not want to create the art of the future – it wanted to create transtemporal art for all time. Again and again one hears and reads that we need change, that our goal as a society – also our goal in art – should be to change the status quo. But change is our status quo. Permanent change is our only reality. We live in the prison of permanent change. To change the status quo, we have to change the change – to escape from the prison of change. True faith in the revolution paradoxically presupposes the belief that the revolution does not have the capacity for total destruction, that something always survives even the most radical historical catastrophe. Such a belief makes possible the unreserved acceptance of the revolution that was so characteristic of the Russian avant-garde.

Malevich often speaks in his writings about materialism as the ultimate horizon of his thinking and art. For Malevich, materialism means the impossibility of stabilizing any image against historical change. Time and again Malevich contends that there is no isolated, secure, metaphysical or spiritual space that could serve as a repository of images immunized from the destructive forces of the material world. The fate of art cannot be different from the fate of anything else. Their common reality is disfiguration, dissolution, and disappearance in the flow of material forces and uncontrollable material processes. Malevich frames the history of new art from Cezanne, Cubism, and Futurism up to his own Suprematism as a history of the progressive disfiguration and destruction of the traditional image as it was born in Ancient Greece and developed through religious art and the Renaissance. Thus, the question arises: What can survive this work of permanent destruction?

Malevich's answer to this question is immediately plausible: the image that survives the work of destruction is the image of destruction. Malevich undertakes the most radical reduction of the image (to a black square), thus anticipating the most radical



Malevich's grave underneath the black square, 1935.

Introduction: Russian Cosmism and the Technology of Immortality

Boris Groys

We have grown accustomed to understanding human beings as determined by the social milieu in which they live. Modernity taught us that we are organisms dependent on our environment, mere knots in networks of information. Globalization has only made us more self-conscious of our dependence on events taking place around the world—politically, economically, ecologically. But our planet is not an island in the galaxy. It depends on processes taking place in interstellar space—dark matter, waves and particles, stars exploding, and galaxies collapsing. The fate of humanity also depends on these cosmic processes because all of these cosmic waves and particles pass through human bodies. The survival of living organisms on the surface of the Earth depends on conditions determined by the position of the Earth within the cosmic whole.

A specifically modern anxiety arises from our dependence on uncontrollable and even unknown cosmic events. Cosmic anxiety is the anxiety that results from being part of a cosmos that we cannot control. Periodically, contemporary mass culture becomes obsessed with explicit visions of this anxiety: we see depictions of asteroids coming from deep cosmic space to destroy the Earth, or an invasion by a rapacious alien species. But this anxiety also takes subtler forms. Georges Bataille, for instance, built his theory of the "accursed share" on the fact that the Sun sends more energy to the Earth than the organisms living on its surface can immediately absorb:

Solar radiation results in a superabundance of energy on the surface of the globe. ... Living matter receives this energy and accumulates it within the limits given by the space that is available to it. ... Vegetation quickly occupies the available space. Animals make it a field of slaughter and extend its possibilities this way. ... In this respect, the wild beast is at the summit: its continual depredation of predators represents an immense squandering of energy.¹

This excess of solar energy makes a necessity of waste—if the surplus is not consumed through ecstatic festivals and sexual orgies, it will be spent on violence and war. Cosmic energies are the reason human culture and politics are eternally shifting between order and disorder.

Bataille's solar myth is strongly reminiscent of the interpretation of world history as defined by the activity of the Sun—an interpretation that was formulated by Russian historian and biologist Alexander Chizhevsky in the 1920s and '30s. During this time, Chizhevsky's ideas also spread to the West, especially to France and the United States, and some of his texts were published in English and French—meaning his ideas could easily reach Bataille.² However, Chizhevsky's central text, in which his theory is extensively formulated and supported by empirical data, was published only relatively recently in Russian.³ Chizhevsky collected a huge amount of empirical data—ranging from ancient Roman and early Chinese sources up to information from the 1930s—to show a close correlation between periods of higher activity of the Sun and mass revolutionary movements. It is, of course, the Russian Revolution in 1917 that gave the decisive impulse to his research. Chizhevsky asks: Why, under similar social, economic, and political constellations, do masses in some cases become mobilized and revolutionized, but in other cases remain passive and indifferent? The answer he offers is this: to be able to start a revolutionary movement, human beings must be mobilized not only on the level of the spirit but also on the level of the body. The human spirit can be mobilized through an ideology but, according to Chizhevsky, the degree of mobilization of the human body, like of all organisms living on Earth, is dependent on the cycles of solar activity. Through astronomical and historical data, Chizhevsky shows that the greatest revolutions coincided with the greatest activity of the Sun. His findings also suggest that the historical process is characterized by a succession of active and passive periods corresponding to eleven-year cycles of solar activity (the highest degree of activity follows a twenty-two-year cycle). But it seems the most interesting part of his results, for our time, concerns the relationship between the activity of the Sun and British parliamentary elections. These results show that the influence of the Sun dictates not only the choice between revolution and the status quo, but also between left-wing and right-wing politics in the framework of regular parliamentary processes. Moments of change in solar activity are correlated precisely with changes in the English government. Chizhevsky

shows that for the period between 1830 and 1924, the summary activity of the Sun during the rule of liberal governments was 155.6 percent higher than during the rule of conservative governments. Conservative governments never held power when the number of sunspots was over ninety-three.

Chizhevsky suggests that knowing the correlation between the activity of the Sun and the political activity of the masses can prepare the political classes for seemingly unexpected changes in public mood. During the financial crisis in 2008, some specialists remembered the so-called Kondratiev waves—Nikolai Kondratiev, a student of Chizhevsky, applied his theory to economic cycles to predict further cycles, including the 2008 crisis. On a political level, one is reminded of the years 1968, 1989, and 2010–11. However, the political effects of larger numbers of sunspots are often ambiguous. Chizhevsky specifically warns that growth in solar activity can lead not only to the adoption of a progressive agenda by the masses, but also to the rise of irrational and reactionary populist movements. Here, shifts from periods of political calm to those of collective ecstasy and violence and vice versa are explained by the dependence of political processes on the interplay of cosmic forces.

Friedrich Nietzsche described human culture as being dependent on the eternal battle between Apollonian and Dionysian forces, or in other words, between cosmos and chaos, order and anarchy, stability and revolution. Only two ways of reacting to the battle between cosmos and chaos are possible: the ecstatic embrace of chaos or an attempt to control the cosmos and secure its victory over chaos. The first option inspired many avant-garde writers and artists during the first decades of the twentieth century, especially the artists of the Russian avant-garde. In 1913, some of the most prominent members of that movement at the time, including Kazimir Malevich, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexei Kruchenykh, and Mikhail Matyushin, participated in the creation and premiere of the futurist mystery-opera *Victory Over the Sun*.⁴ The work celebrated the extinction of the Sun and the descent of cosmos into chaos—symbolized by the black square that Malevich painted for the first time as part of the opera's scenography. By the beginning of the twentieth century the embrace of chaos seemed imminent, as no one could be expected to believe any longer in the stability of divine or natural order. The very idea of a stable order, be it religious or materialist, appeared to lose its ontological guarantee. New technology seemed

to permanently replace, make obsolete, and ultimately destroy old things, old traditions, and familiar ways of life, thus undermining lingering faith in the "traditional world order." Technological development, subjected to the logic of progress, presented itself as a force of chaos that would not tolerate any stable order. The future came to be seen as the enemy of both past and present. Precisely because of that view, the futurists celebrated the future, as it held the promise that everything that had been—and still was—would disappear.

One can say that Russian Cosmism proposed a counterproject to the futuristic project of the Russian avant-garde—even if both projects started from the same basic presupposition, namely the decisive role of technology. Russian futurists saw in technology the force that would destroy the "old world" and open the way for building the new world from point zero. In contrast, Russian Cosmists hoped that technology would become a truly strong messianic force that could fulfill the expectations already transmitted from one past generation to the next.

Russian Cosmism found its initial philosophical conceptualization in the "Philosophy of the Common Task" that Nikolai Fedorov developed in the late nineteenth century.⁵ Fedorov's writings may have been met with little public attention during his lifetime, but they nevertheless reached illustrious readers like Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Vladimir Solovyov, who were fascinated and influenced by Fedorov's project. After the philosopher's death in 1903, his work gained ever-increasing currency, although in essence it remained limited to a Russian readership. In brief, the project of the common task consists in the creation of the technological, social, and political conditions under which it would be possible to resurrect by technological and artificial means all people who have ever lived.

In a sense, Fedorov developed his project of the resurrection of

past generations as an attempt to "materialize" Hegelian philosophy. Hegel understood the historical process as a work of negation: we should negate the past and present to let the historical new emerge. According to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the goal of history consists, however, in the spiritual reconstruction of all its past epochs.⁶ Thus, Hegel believed that through his *Phenomenology* he had achieved the ultimate reconciliation and even synthesis between past and future. However, for Fedorov this synthesis was insufficient because it took place merely inside the limited realm

of the "spiritual"—in other words, through memory and imagination. Instead, Fedorov wanted a true synthesis of past and future that could only mean the material resurrection of all the dead. The Christian promise to overcome death is reinterpreted here as a promise of the victory of cosmos over chaos, achieved by means of secular politics and technology. One could say that Fedorov, like later Russian Cosmists, inherited and radicalized the Marxist shift from divine grace to secular technology. The reaction of the Russian Cosmists to Nietzschean radical atheism was in many ways similar to Marx's reaction to the atheism of the French Enlightenment, or that of Feuerbach.⁷ Traditional atheism rejected Christianity as a false promise to secure the survival and even immortality of humankind. The enlightened individual was understood as one who accepts his finiteness, mortality, and dependence on the materiality of the world, especially on cosmic forces, economic needs, and sexual drives. Of course, Marx was also a child of the Enlightenment, but he did not want to reject the Christian promise of happiness and harmony at the end of times. Rather, he wanted to realize this promise by means of a communist society that could take the fate of the Earth in its hands instead of relying on divine grace. Fedorov goes even further than Marx in his project of achieving immortality and resurrection of the dead through technology and rational social organization.

Indeed, Fedorov no longer believed in the immortality of the soul existing independently of the body. In his view, physical, material existence was the only possible form of existence. And Fedorov believed just as firmly in technology: because everything is material, physical, everything is technically manipulable. Above all, however, Fedorov believed in the power of social organization; in that sense he was a socialist through and through.

However, there is one essential difference between the Marxist project and the Cosmist project. The communist "paradise on Earth" that is supposed to be achieved through the combination of revolutionary struggle and creative work is understood as a realization of harmony between humanity and nature, to which also belongs the inevitability of so-called natural death. Fedorov interpreted this acceptance of natural death as an internal contradiction in the socialist theories of the nineteenth century. Future generations were supposed to enjoy socialist justice only at the price of the cynical acceptance of an outrageous historical injustice: the exclusion of all previous generations from the realm of socialist utopia. Socialism

the accidents to which the natural supply of resources is inevitably related. A person becomes increasingly independent from the Sun by storing its energy in different forms, and in general over time we have become increasingly independent of annual seasons and the instability of the weather.¹⁰ Heidegger does not say so explicitly, but technology is for him primarily the interruption of the flow of time, the production of reservoirs of time in which time ceases to flow toward the future—so that a return to previous moments of time becomes possible. Thus, one can leave a museum and then return and find again the same artwork one contemplated on a previous visit. According to Heidegger, the goal of technology is precisely to immunize us against change, to liberate us from dependency on physics, on fate, on circumstance. Heidegger sees this development as extremely dangerous. But why?

Heidegger explains this danger in the following way: if everything becomes a resource that is stored and made available, then the human being also begins to be considered a resource—as human capital, we would say now, as a collection of possibilities, capabilities, and skills.¹¹ In this way humanity becomes degraded—through a search for stability and security the individual turns him- or herself into a thing. The reason for Heidegger's dislike of technology becomes clear. Technology is able to change its direction and turn the individual from its subject into its object. Becoming objectified means for Heidegger becoming usable and used. But is this equation between *thing* and *tool* valid? Certainly it is not valid in the case of art. Artworks are not used, but rather are exhibited or looked at. And, if a museum is doing its job well, they are kept in good condition, restored, and so forth. The use of the artworks is their contemplation—and contemplation leaves the artworks undamaged. Thus, turning a human being into a thing does not necessarily diminish his or her dignity. Technological self-reflection does not annul human rights but, in fact, radicalizes them by treating the human being as an artwork.

However, art serves not only to conserve objects but also to improve them. As previously noted, Fedorov spoke of the resurrection of the dead in a way that could suggest that they should be awakened as, so to speak, *readymades*—as they truly were before dying. But resurrection also means, of course, a transformation. To become immortal is not to remain as one was before, while still mortal. The world of the mortal is not the same as the world of the immortal. In the Christian tradition, immortality was

associated with a profound transformation of body and soul.¹² So it is not surprising that the generation of Fedorov's followers who entered the scene after the October Revolution combined the project of the technological resurrection of the dead with the project of improving human nature.

In their first manifesto (1922), representatives of the Biocosmists—immortalists, a political party that had its roots in Russian anarchism, wrote: “We take the essential and real rights of man to be the right to exist (immortality, resurrection, rejuvenation) and the freedom to move in cosmic space (and not the supposed rights announced when the bourgeois revolution was declared in 1789).”¹³ Hence Alexander Svyatogor, one of the leading Biocosmist theoreticians, subjected the classical doctrine of anarchism to a fundamental criticism by pointing out that there must be a central power to ensure these new basic rights. Svyatogor took immortality to be at once the goal and the prerequisite for a future communist society, since true social solidarity could only reign among immortals: death separates people; private property cannot truly be eliminated if every human being owns a private piece of time. Total biopower, by contrast, signifies the collectivization not only of space but also of time. In eternity, conflicts between the individual and society are eliminated; those same conflicts could not be eliminated in any finite span of time. The achievement of immortality is the highest goal for every individual. For that reason, the individual will always remain faithful to society if society makes immortality its goal. At the same time, not only does this total sort of society make it possible for people to experience life without temporal or spatial limits; the communist society of immortals will also be “interplanetary,” that is, it will occupy the entire space of the cosmos. Svyatogor tries to distinguish himself from Fedorov by characterizing the latter thinker as old-fashioned, even archaic, because of Fedorov's emphasis on the fact that all human beings are related and fraternal. Even so, the family resemblance between Fedorov and the Biocosmists is all too obvious.

To put it in sociopolitical terms, both writers tried to combine capitalist and socialist utopias. The capitalist utopia is, obviously, a utopia of self-preservation that allows for the accumulation of capital.¹⁴ The bourgeois subject was traditionally criticized for not being able to sacrifice or self-sacrifice. And, indeed, in bourgeois society, life is regarded as the highest value. Even if natural death is accepted as inevitable, the conscious sacrifice of human life is seen as morally reprehensible. In fact, natural death

often becomes politicized and interpreted as an effect of criminal action or neglect. For example, if people die from natural catastrophes, governmental administrations are criticized for not organizing efforts at early prevention. And if people die from illness or old age, one blames the medical system, and so forth. That is why the revolutionary movements of romanticism and anarchism embraced and celebrated destructive cosmic energies as undermining the bourgeois order by demonstrating to the bourgeois individual the futility of its strategy of self-preservation. Such was the Nietzschean strategy shared, as I already mentioned, by members of the Russian avant-garde and later by Bataille and Deleuze. Here the bourgeois individual was required to—voluntarily or involuntarily—sacrifice his or her will to self-preservation to be able to enter the totality of cosmic life, and to dissolve her- or himself in this totality.

According to the teachings of Russian Cosmism, the modern, bourgeois subject also had to sacrifice her or his will to self-preservation by subjecting it to the general plan governing society, which was organized on the principles of collectivist socialism. But this relinquishment of self-preservation had to be compensated by society because it had to make immortality, that is, the eternal preservation of every individual, its highest goal. Here the capitalist subject enters the cosmic whole without losing her or his main values—individual life and the will to self-preservation.

The path from radical anarchism to the acceptance of Soviet power as one (possible) authority of a total biopower is characteristic not only of the Biocosmists, but also of many other fellow travelers of the October Revolution. For example, Valerian Muravyev converted from being a fierce opponent of the Bolshevik Revolution to being its advocate. This transformation occurred the moment he discovered in Soviet power a promise of "mastery over time," that is, the artificial production of eternity. He too saw art as a model for politics—as the only technology that could overcome time. He too called for a departure from a purely "symbolic" art in favor of using art to make society as a whole, and indeed the entire cosmos, into an object of human design. Far more radically than most authors of his time, Muravyev was prepared to view the human being as an artwork. Muravyev understood resurrection as following logically from the process of copying, and even earlier than Walter Benjamin, Muravyev observed that there could be no difference between the "original human being" and his or her copy under conditions of technological reproducibility.¹⁹ Muravyev thus sought

to purify the concept of the human being of the metaphysical and religious remnants to which Fedorov and the Biocosmists still clung. For Muravyev the human being was simply a specific combination of particular chemical elements, just like every other thing in the world. For that reason, Muravyev hoped to eliminate gender difference in the future and to create a nongendered, purely artificial method for producing human beings. The human beings of the future would thus have no guilt with respect to their dead ancestors: they would owe their existence to the same technologically organized state that guaranteed the duration of their existence, their immortality.

The technologically and politically guaranteed resurrection of dead ancestors is thus the last step in the secularization of Christianity, for secularization remains partial if it merely negates, censors, and prohibits the hopes, desires, and demands for eternal life that religion articulates. It is not enough to say that there is no immortality and to prohibit people from seeking it. For if people are told that they cannot hope for immortality because they lack souls and are simply things, they can rightly ask why these things cannot be preserved. Indeed, after the death of the soul it is the corpse that remains. Is not this purely material corpse an object that can be treated technologically, like any other material object? If the transition from the "animate" body to the "inanimate" corpse is a purely material process, then this process can also be technologically reverted. What makes such a reversal impossible? The answer usually given to this question is that a human being is indeed somehow different from a mere thing and thus cannot be preserved, produced, and reproduced like a mere thing. But what is this "something else" if not a soul? That is why the thinkers of Russian Cosmism wanted to thoroughly purify society of "idealism," replacing the immortality of the soul guaranteed by God with an immortality of the body guaranteed by the state—thereby bringing to a close the transition to a new era and a new, total biopower.

¹⁹ These biopolitical projects may have been utopian to the extent that they were not based on already-existing scientific knowledge or technology. But at the same time, as is so often true of such cases, they stimulated the development of purely scientific and technological programs. In the 1920s, such programs inspired by radical biopolitical projects were both numerous and varied. One of the most spectacular and influential of them was doubtless the rocket research that Konstantin Tsiolkovsky conducted with the goal of

transporting the resurrected ancestors discussed by Fedorov to other planets; this became the starting point of later Soviet space travel. Tsiolkovsky himself was a follower of cosmic biopolitics who wanted to fulfill in practice what Fedorov called the "patrification of the heavens" (the transformation of the planets into habitable places for our resurrected ancestors). Tsiolkovsky's many writings were, apart from delving into strictly technical problems, devoted to the social organization of the universe. Tsiolkovsky still believed strongly in human creativity, even though in the best biopolitical tradition he saw the human being as a mere body, a thing, which, by definition, could not be creative. Most of his texts are devoted to solving this philosophical problem. Tsiolkovsky's solution consisted in seeing the human brain as merely a specific and purely material part of the universe. Thus all of the processes that take place in the human brain are ultimately processes that have their origin in the whole universe: according to this logic, the will of an individual human being is at the same time the will of the universe. Human creativity is an expression of the creativity of the universe. If the human brain is a part of the cosmos and transmits cosmic energies, then the human being becomes cosmic. Of course, natural selection must, argued Tsiolkovsky, decide whose brain best expresses the will of the universe. Tsiolkovsky was relatively skeptical about the human race's chances of winning this competition. Tsiolkovsky believed that "higher beings" have the right and even the duty to destroy "lower beings," just as gardeners do when they tend their gardens, and he did not preclude the possibility that, among all the other beings populating cosmic space, humans are on the lower end.¹⁶ However, he hoped that the human race could reach perfection and happiness and, thus, allow all the individual atoms and molecules that constitute the human body to be happy, too. Tsiolkovsky believed that the smallest material elements can experience happiness and pain, and thus the creation of a society of happy, satisfied people would also be a cosmic event. The individual atoms would be either without any feeling (being elements of stones, water, etc.) or happy (being elements of happy human bodies). This vision of the future left out plants and animals—and, indeed, Tsiolkovsky believed that they should be exterminated because they would never be able to reach true happiness, which could only be the work of reason.

Another fascinating biopolitical experiment, although not as influential, was the Institute for Blood Transfusion that Alexander Bogdanov founded

and directed in the 1920s. Bogdanov had been a close ally of Lenin's when they were young and was a cofounder of the intellectual and political movement within the Russian Social Democratic Party that led to Bolshevism. Later, however, he increasingly distanced himself from contemporary politics and was sharply criticized by Lenin for his favorable view of Ernst Mach and his positivist philosophy.¹⁷ After the revolution, Bogdanov directed the famous Proletkult movement, in which he promoted "non-professional" writing and art produced by ordinary workers. Later, Bogdanov became enthusiastic about experiments with blood transfusion, which he hoped would slow the aging process, if not stop it completely. Blood transfusions from younger generations to older ones were supposed to rejuvenate the elderly and establish a solidarity and balance among the generations that Bogdanov considered essential to establishing a just socialist society.¹⁸ As it happened, Bogdanov died from such a blood transfusion: he intentionally exchanged his blood with the blood of a young female student who was so ill that the doctors had given up hope for her recovery. After receiving the other end of the blood transfusion that killed Bogdanov, the student recovered. Retrospectively, it is difficult to say if this was a mistake on Bogdanov's part or an "irrational" act of self-sacrifice. In his theoretical treatises, Bogdanov preaches rationality and scientific knowledge. However, in his fiction he thematizes irrationality and self-destruction. Thus, in one of his novels, *Red Star*, Bogdanov describes a fantastic, ideal "communist" society on Mars based on pure rationality. The human hero of his novel identifies with the values of this society. However, he suddenly becomes carried away by a wave of irrational, blind hatred against a Martian scientist and tries to kill him because this scientist, in the style of Tsiolkovsky, has proposed to destroy the human race, since it is incapable of achieving true rational order.¹⁹ And in the short story "Immortality Day," included in this volume, Bogdanov describes a happy and satisfied scientist who sacrifices his immortality in order to experience suffering and death.²⁰

For the present-day reader, Bogdanov's reports on the Institute for Blood Transfusion evoke above all Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. This analogy is by no means coincidental. The society of vampires—that is, of immortal bodies—over which Dracula reigns is a society of total biopower par excellence. The novel—which was written in 1897, around the same time as Fedorov's project of the common task was formulated—describes the reign of total

biopower not as a utopia, however, but rather as a dystopia. The "human" heroes of the novel bitterly defend their right to a natural death. The idea of a struggle against a society of vampires that produces and guarantees the immortality of the body has continued ever since in the mass culture of the West—even if a certain seduction by vampiric forces is not denied. Aversion to corporeal immortality is certainly not new, as the stories of Faust, Frankenstein, and the Golem all demonstrate. Those stories, however, were written at a time in which faith in the immortality of the soul had not yet been completely abandoned. And, thus, it seemed better to die and preserve one's immortal soul than to become a soulless body. However, in our time we have lost faith in the possibility of the soul to exist separately from the body. And so corporeal immortality remains the only chance of life after death. The promise of technology substitutes for the promise of divine grace. Russian Cosmism was one of the earliest and most radical manifestations of this substitution.

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Notes

1. Georges Bataille, *Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 29, 34.

2. For example: A. L. Chizhevsky, *Les Épidémies et les perturbations électromagnétiques* (Paris: Hippocrate, 1938).

3. A. I. Chizhevsky, "Zemlya v ob'yat'yrakh solntsa" [The Earth in the Sun's embrace], 1931, in Chizhevsky, *Kosmicheskiy puls zhizni* [Cosmic pulse of life] (Moscow: Mysl, 1995). See also Vincent Barnett, *Kondratiev and the Dynamics of Economic Development* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

4. *Victory Over the Sun*, ed. Patricia Railing, trans. Evgeny Steiner (London: Artists Bookworks, 2009), 2 vols.

5. Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov, *What Is Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task*, trans. and ed. Elisabeth Koutaisoff and Marilyn Minto (Lausanne: Honeyglen Publishing/L'Age d'Homme, 1990). See also George M. Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 490–493.

7. See George M. Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

8. Nikolai Fedorov, "The Museum, Its Meaning and Mission," trans. Stephen P. Van Trees, in *Avant-Garde Museology*, ed. Arseny Zhilyaev (New York: e-flux classics, distributed by the University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

9. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 241–247.

10. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 320–342.

11. Ibid., 323.

12. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 17–39.

13. Kreatori Rossiiskikh i Moskovskikh Anarchistov-Biokosmitov, "Deklarativnaia revolyutsia," *Biokosmist*, no. 1 (1922): 1–3.

14. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunther Schmidt Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 35ff.

15. Valerian Muravьев, "A Universal Productive Mathematics" [in Russian], *Vselenskoye Delo* [The deed of the universe], no. 22 (1934): 116–140. Translated by Thomas Campbell and published in this volume.

16. Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, "Volja Vselennoi," in *Gnii stadi ihuei* (Moscow: Mysl, 2002), 224–231, at 227.

LA VIDA MILAGROSA DE IRA VOLCAN. CAPÍTULO 2: EL TÚNEL

7

- Él: Nombre.
Ella: Ira Volcán.
Él: ¿Cómo dice?
Ella: Ira como *ira* y Volcan como *volcán* pero llana.
Él: ¿Cómo?
Ella: No *volcán* sino *vooooooooooolcan*. ¿Entiende?
Él: Sí. Fecha de nacimiento.
Ella: Seis de abril de 1903.
Él: ... ¿Tiene usted ciento quince años?
Ella: Aquí sí. Para ciento dieciséis.
Él: ...
Ella: ...
Él: Nacionalidad.
Ella: Sin.
Él: ¿Cómo *sin*?
Ella: Como los rusos blancos, ¿sabe usted?
Él: ¿Qué rusos blancos?
Ella: A los que la URSS privó de ciudadanía
por contrarrevolucionarios.
Él: ¿Es usted rusa?
Ella: No señor, le digo que soy apátrida.
Él: ...
Ella: Mire usted. Nací en Nuevo Jardín cuando
Nuevo Jardín era Transleitania, que es toda la
región preciosa que queda al este del Leita, un
afluyente del Danubio que atraviesa el Imperio
de norte a sur. El Danubio se lleva toda la
fama pero sin el Leita no sería ni la mitad de
río. Lo que pasó es que después de la guerra
Transleitania se convirtió en Serbia pero en
Serbia la nacionalidad ya no pasaba de padres
a hijos como en el Imperio sino que serbios
eran solo los nacidos en Serbia. Entonces
como el Imperio ya no existía y Transleitania
tampoco y nosotros no habíamos nacido en
Serbia, nos quedamos sin nacionalidad.
Él: ...
Ella: ¿Entiende?
Él: ¿Entonces, lugar de nacimiento, Nuevo Jardín?
Ella: Novi Sad lo llaman ustedes. Segundo mi
analista, por eso me hice paleontóloga, para
calmar la ansiedad del desarraigado. Porque
los estados van y vienen, sabe usted, pero

la geografía permanece. Ella dice que el pasado remoto, que es lo que yo estudio, las edades de la Tierra, fósiles, cosas así, todo eso es un lugar seguro. Lo dice con esas palabras: un lugar seguro, porque allí todo está petrificado y tranquilo.

- Él: ...
Ella: ...
Él: ¿Dice que es usted paleontóloga, Señora Volcan?
Ella: Sí. La primera de la Universidad de Novi Sad. Diplomada en el 26.
Él: ¿En 1926?
Ella: Sí.
Él: ... Bien, sigamos. Usted, Señora Volcan, apareció inconsciente en la gruta de Santa Benedetta hace dos días. ¿Lo sabe, verdad?
Ella: Sí.
Él: ¿Qué hacía allí?
Ella: Buscaba la salida.
Él: Estaba usted en la salida.
Ella: Pero yo buscaba la salida del otro lado.
Él: ¿Qué otro lado?
Ella: Por Nepal.
Él: ¿Por Nepal?
Ella: ¿Nepal ya no es Nepal? ¿Hubo otra guerra? Quiero decir por el Himalaya.
Él: Nepal sigue siendo Nepal pero vamos a ver. ¿Usted pensaba que la gruta de Santa Benedetta era una gruta del Himalaya?
Ella: No. Es que entramos por el Himalaya, por la cueva de Maratika.
Él: ¿A dónde entraron? ¿Quiénes?
Ella: Mi amigo Dhirlerzy montó una expedición para buscar Agartha.
Él: ¿Para buscar qué?
Ella: Agartha. ¿Sabe, el reino subterráneo que dirige el destino de la humanidad?
Él: ...
Ella: Es una ciudad que está debajo del Himalaya, aunque yo pienso que está un poco más al suroeste pero da igual. El caso es que, según los lamas, la gobierna un sacerdote soberano que llaman el Rey del Mundo, que es quien dominará todo después del Kali Yuga.
Él: ¡¿El Kali qué?!
Ella: El Kali Yuga, la Edad de Sombra, el final del final. Según los libros sagrados, ahora.
Él: ¿Cómo ahora?
Ella: En escalas de tiempo sagrado, ya me entiende. Para ellos toda la historia de Occidente es Edad de Sombra. Y ahora llegamos al final. En algún momento

entre el vigésimo y el vigesimosegundo milenario, la decadencia de Occidente implosiona y se lleva todo por delante.

Él: ¿Que se lleva todo por delante?

¿Como una bomba atómica?

Ella: ¿Una bomba qué?

Él: Da igual, siga.

Ella: Dhirlerzy quería encontrar Agartha para entablar conversaciones con el Rey del Mundo y así evitar el Kali Yuga. En mi opinión el Kali Yuga no se puede evitar pero él cree que sí. Es que, como los libros sagrados están en sánscrito, hay pasajes que no entendemos bien.

Él: Ahá. Ahora vuelvo, beba un poco de agua.

Él: Desorientada, sí.

No.

Serbia... No sé, del Este.

Sí.

Unos cincuenta.

No. Pero la sigo interrogando por si acaso.

De acuerdo, abro ficha.

9

Ella: ¿Puedo salir a la ventana a fumar un cigarrillo?

Él: Enseguida. Hábaleme de su amigo, el que montó la expedición.

Ella: ¿Dhirlerzy? Nos conocimos en Nuevo Jardín durante la guerra. Luego marchó a Francia y fue cuando se obsesionó con Agartha, con pintarla*. Hacía un cuadro tras otro. Los túneles, los palacios, los puentes, los mares interiores, era su manera de entenderla. Me escribía para hacerme preguntas. Quería saber si era posible que una ciudad primitiva pudiera seguir en pie, allí, enterrada bajo el Himalaya.

Él: ¿Y usted...?

Ella: Yo trataba de convencerlo de que desde el punto de vista científico Agartha no podía ser más que un mito. Ahora sé que no. Es igual que como dicen las fuentes.

Él: ¿Las fuentes?

Ella: Los libros sagrados del saber oriental. Aquí los llaman ciencias ocultas pero no son más que filosofía esotérica.

Él: Hmh. Cuénteme otra vez cómo llegó a la cueva de Santa Benedetta.

Ella: Entramos por Maratika, ya se lo he dicho. El 11 de junio.

Él: ¿El 11 de junio de... qué año?

Ella: 1929.

*DU MUSÉE **

Le centre de la vie politique s'est transféré en Russie. Ici s'est formé le poitrail contre lequel se brise toute la puissance des Etats bâtis sur les anciens principes.

D'ici part et rayonne aux quatre coins du monde la nouvelle connaissance de l'être, et les représentants de l'ancienne culture surgis de toutes les fissures y portent leurs dents rongées pour grignoter un morceau de l'ourlet du manteau neuf.

Un centre analogue doit être formé dans le domaine de l'art et de la création.

Ici sont l'axe et la course créateurs et rotatoires, ici doit naître la nouvelle civilisation de l'époque contemporaine, ici n'ont pas leur place les aumônes de la vieille civilisation.

Ici, vers les pôles de la vie palpitante, doivent affluer tous les novateurs, afin de prendre part à la création à l'échelle mondiale.

Les novateurs d'aujourd'hui doivent créer une nouvelle époque. Une époque dont aucune des arêtes ne touchera l'ancienne.

Nous devons reconnaître que la frontière bien nette qui différencie notre époque du passé est la brièveté, la fugacité de la course créatrice, la mutation rapide des formes.

Plus de stagnation, nous avons le mouvement impétueux!

Voilà pourquoi les valeurs établies n'existent pas à notre époque et que rien ne se crée sur les fondations de la forteresse séculaire.

Plus le cerveau est solide, plus acharnée est notre volonté qui, aux côtés du temps, aspire à briser ce que la raison a, pendant de nombreuses années, entravé.

Nous ne pouvons toujours pas vaincre les pyramides égyptiennes. Les bagages de l'Antiquité pointent en chacun de nous comme les échardes de la vieille sagesse et le souci de préserver leur intégrité est une perte de temps ridicule pour ceux qui voguent dans le tourbillon des vents, au-dessus des nuages, dans l'abat-jour bleu du ciel.

* Titre russe *O mouzee*, publié dans la revue *Iskousstvo Kommuny* (*L'Art de la commune*), n° 12 du 23 janvier 1919.

Notre sagesse s'empresse et se cherche un gîte dans ses gouffres.

Le corps souple de l'hélice s'arrache avec peine des bras de la vieille terre et le poids des bagages de nos grands-mères et grands-pères alourdit les épaules de ses ailes.

Le Pilote a-t-il besoin de Rubens ou de la Pyramide de Chéops, de la Vénus lascive, dans les cimes de nos nouvelles connaissances?

A-t-on besoin des moules des villes de terre cuite qu'étaient les bâquilles des colonnes grecques?

A-t-on besoin de la signature de validation tracée par cette vieille morte qu'est l'architecture gréco-romaine afin de transformer en lourds hospices l'acier et le béton d'aujourd'hui?

A-t-on besoin de temples au nom du Christ, alors que depuis longtemps la vie a quitté l'écho des voûtes et le noir de fumée des cierges et que la coupole de l'église est insignifiante comparée à n'importe quel dépôt où sont entreposées des millions de poutres de béton armé?

A-t-il besoin de la sagesse de notre époque actuelle, celui qui transpercera l'abat-jour bleu et disparaîtra à jamais dans le chemin sans cesse nouveau?

A-t-elle besoin du bonnet du pape de Rome, la locomotive à douze roues désireuse de décoller et qui vole comme l'éclair par tout le globe terrestre?

A-t-on besoin d'une garde-robe avec les galons des costumes antiques, alors que les nouveaux tailleur confectionnent les vêtements métalliques de l'époque contemporaine?

Ai-je besoin des lumignons graisseux du passé, alors que je porte sur ma tête des ampoules électriques et des télescopes?

L'époque contemporaine n'a besoin que de ce qui lui appartient; seule lui appartient ce qui pousse sur ses épaules.

Le grand et sage Art, qui représente les épisodes de la vie et les faces des grands sages, gît aujourd'hui enseveli par l'époque contemporaine.

Notre époque contemporaine n'a besoin que de l'énergie vitale, elle a besoin de poutres de fer volantes et de sémaphores de couleur sur sa nouvelle voie.

Il est indispensable de construire la création sur ces bases en brûlant tout sur notre passage.

Suffit de ramper dans les couloirs du temps périmé, suffit de gaspiller son temps à dresser l'inventaire de ses biens, suffit d'organiser les monts-de-piété des cimetières de la Toussaint, suffit de célébrer des offices funèbres, tout ceci ne ressuscitera plus.

La vie sait ce qu'elle fait et si elle aspire à la destruction, il ne faut pas l'en empêcher, car en lui faisant obstacle, nous barrons le chemin à la nouvelle conception de la vie qu'elle a engendrée.

L'époque contemporaine a inventé les crématoires pour les morts; tout mort est plus vivant qu'un portrait médiocre.

En brûlant un cadavre, nous obtenons un gramme de poudre, donc, des milliers de cimetières peuvent trouver place sur un rayon de pharmacie.

Nous pouvons faire une seule concession aux conservateurs : laisser brûler toutes les époques, comme un corps mort, et monter une pharmacie unique.

Le but sera identique, même si l'on examine la poudre de Rubens et de tout son art; une foule d'idées naîtra dans le cerveau de l'homme, plus vivantes sans doute que la véritable représentation.

L'époque contemporaine doit aussi avoir son mot d'ordre : « tout ce que nous avons fait a été fait pour le crématoire ».

L'organisation du Musée Contemporain, c'est le rassemblement des projets de l'époque contemporaine, et seuls ceux qui pourront être appliqués à l'ossature de la vie, ou ceux dont naîtra l'ossature de ses nouvelles formes, pourront être provisoirement conservés.

Si nous apportons dans un village perdu des tracteurs et des automobiles, si nous apportons les écoles correspondantes, l'organisation parallèle de cours pour charretiers ne sera sûrement pas indispensable.

Si nous sommes capables de mettre sur pied en une semaine une technique moderne à la campagne, et d'équiper un immeuble de deux étages, nous n'aurons sûrement pas besoin d'utiliser la vieille méthode de construction.

Et les villages iront acheter des maisons préfabriquées, plutôt que d'abattre des arbres dans la forêt.

Par conséquent, il est indispensable de lier indissolublement le vivant à la vie et au musée qui renfermera ce genre d'art.

Il est une forme vivante de la vie qui en s'usant se réincarne en une autre forme ou remplace la pièce usée par une pièce vivante.

Nous n'avons pas pu conserver les anciens bâtiments de Moscou sous une cloche de verre, nous avons esquissé de petits dessins, mais la vie n'en a pas voulu, elle construit des gratte-ciel sans cesse nouveaux et continuera à en construire jusqu'à ce que leurs toits aient rejoint la lune.

Que représentent alors la petite isba de Godounov ou les appartements de Marfa?

On doit déplorer qu'un écrou ait sauté plutôt que la dégradation de la cathédrale Saint-Basile.

Cela vaut-il la peine de se soucier d'un mort?

A notre époque, il y a les vivants et les conservateurs. Ce sont les deux pôles opposés et bien que, dans la nature, les pôles se tiennent mutuellement, cette loi n'est pas valable pour nous.

Les vivants doivent renier cette amitié, agir comme le veut notre vie créatrice, et être aussi impitoyables que le temps et la vie mêmes.

La vie a arraché des mains des muséologues l'époque contemporaine ainsi que ce qu'ils ne conservaient pas. Nous pouvons les réunir, comme des choses vivantes, les rattacher directement à la vie et empêcher de les mettre en conserve.

Quel besoin avons-nous de la manufacture Baranov, alors que nous avons le Textile qui a englouti, tel un crématoire, tous les mérites et tous les avantages des vieilles manufactures?

Je ne sais pas si la génération va répandre des larmes sur la vieille manufacture.

Le chemin de la Section des Arts Plastiques passe par le volume et la couleur, par le matériel et le non-matériel, et les deux réunis constituent la vie de la forme.

Dans la rue et à la maison, en nous et sur nous : voilà où est ce qui vit, où est notre musée vivant.

Je ne pense pas qu'il faille aménager des sarcophages d'objets précieux, des Mecques où ces objets seront accumulés.

Il nous faut la création, la fabrique, la fabrication de pièces que nous colporterons dans le monde entier comme des rails.

Toute collection de vieilleries est néfaste. Je suis convaincu que si le style russe avait été détruit en temps utile, à la place de l'hospice de la gare de Kazan se serait dressée une construction véritablement moderne.

Les conservateurs se soucient du passé et ne voient aucun inconvénient à adapter à l'époque contemporaine n'importe quelle harde; en d'autres termes de coller à un étranger le dos de notre temps.

Nous ne devons pas tolérer que nos dos soient les plates-formes des temps anciens.

Notre tâche est d'avancer toujours vers la nouveauté. Nous n'allons pas vivre dans les musées. Notre chemin est tracé dans l'espace et non dans la valise de ce qui a déjà vécu.

Sans collections, nous nous élancerons plus facilement dans le tourbillon de la vie.

Nous n'avons pas pour tâche de photographier les traces, c'est le travail des photographes.

Au lieu de ramasser n'importe quelles vieilleries, il faut fonder les laboratoires de l'appareil créateur de construction mondiale : de ses axes sortiront les peintres des formes nouvelles et non des représentations objectales mortes.

Que les conservateurs voyagent en province avec leurs bagages morts, avec les chérubins lascifs des anciennes maisons corrompues de Rubens et des Grecs.

Nous, nous transporterons des poutres en double T, l'électricité et les feux des couleurs.

primitive."^[28] As Ruth Phillips has pointed out, the very introduction "reveals the continuity of the modernist display paradigms of art and artifacts, which seem to have only gained a rhetorical strength."^[29] In this introduction, contemporary art helped to reproduce old relations of art towards artifacts, inspired by their primitivism, which is intended to represent the prehistoric or pre-oedipal background of these cultures.^[30]

Fabian would explain the way the structuralist-functional current "encapsulated time" in order to focus on the dynamics typical/within the own culture and its compression of time. When cultures compare among themselves they do it "to establish the contrast between, say, Western linear time and cyclical primitive time, or between a modern temporal centrality and archaic intertemporality."^[31] This comes close to the effect intended in Room 25, but despite that it was about the creation of a dialogue with the present in this case, it did not succeed, because that present remained as a proper/autonomous time outside of the history of Western civilization. Hence, the certain thing here is that there is no joint time with West that may allow us to have an interlocution and face the "requirements of coevalness."^[32]

Contemporary Art also Dies: The Utterance

However, as we all know, contemporary art also dies—there is extensive debate on how museums of contemporary art neutralize the political aspect of art. The challenge is the following: How can politically engaged art be exhibited in a museum without turning it into the acquisition of a collector or institution at best, or into an object for market speculation at worst? Since the 1960s, institutional critique has reflected upon the role of museums and their complicity with the capitalist market system through the work of artists as diverse as Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher. In the eighties, a second wave of artists, such as Renée Green, Christian Philipp Müller, Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson,^[33] and Lothar Baumgarten, constituted the "institutionalization of critique,"^[34] drawing attention to silenced museological narratives.

At this point, I would like to put forward a specific example of how display endangers the political potential of art and its capacity for the enunciation of utterance. *Cruzeiro do Sul* (1969) is a piece by Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles. The title alludes to an imaginary, mythical place, though it also refers to the extermination of the indigenous population during the Portuguese and Spanish colonization, as well as to the current time. It consists of a minute cube of 9 x 9 x 9 mm made out of oak and pine wood, which are the two types of wood that contain the sacred genesis of fire, according to the Tupi cosmology, because they produce fire when rubbed together. The cube should be shown in a large area of the museum in order to remain generally unnoticed. The smallness of the cube is amplified by the immense space in which it is placed, representing "the idea of the dimension of energy contained in a tiny body,"^[35] as Meireles puts it.

With this piece, the artist underlines the potential of another form of knowledge in order to call ours into question, since this object represents the origin of fire and holds the potential to cause the building that contains it to burn to the ground. From its virtual invisibility, this precarious cube represents a threat to one of our most efficient epistemological machines—one which seeks to tell our story and, therefore, one that decides what the present is about. National museums fulfill the dual function of showing and hiding, representing and historically legitimizing our power/knowledge discourses. All in all, what the Tupi cosmology calls into question is the very structure of our disciplines, not merely their contents.

to see how those places of utterance are able to interrogate the hegemonic ones and propose new strategies for them. The artists we are dealing with in this paper speak from those utterance spaces: Cildo Meireles works on Afro-Brazilianity, and Daniela Ortiz on African immigration in Spain, while Fred Wilson sets out from his condition as an Afro-American to convey activation tactics for a political agency that had been neutralized by science and its museographical forms through the very process of displaying those objects. In all three study cases, that activation is brought in through the introduction of *time*. In Wilson's case, this is achieved by introducing the colonial history (past time), while for Meireles and Ortiz it is achieved by introducing *present time* in the display of the objects. In all three cases, Time necessarily interconnects several contexts, thus promoting South-South dialogues.

Statues also die: Time



Fig 1. "Film poster Les Statues meurent aussi" Film by Chris Marker & Alain Resnais. Copyright unknown.

The paradigmatic film *Statues Also Die*, by Resnais and Marker (1953), openly dealt with the



To become immortal, and then die.



To become immortal, and then die.



The Guardian



Project to salvage images of collection lost in fire as Brazil mourns museum

An appeal by Rio de Janeiro students received thousands of replies amid soul-searching over the neglect of cultural heritage

Dom Phillips in Rio de Janeiro

Wed 12 Sep 2018 08.00 BST

While most Brazilians were still reeling from the devastating fire at the country's National Museum last week, Luana Santos and fellow museum studies students in Rio de Janeiro had started gathering photos and videos of missing items, and even selfies taken by visitors to the vast archive.

Among the 20m items lost in the blaze were Egyptian mummies, the oldest skeleton ever found in Latin America and an irreplaceable collection of indigenous artefacts and research.

But at least something could be salvaged for future generations, Santos and her friends reasoned. Within hours, their appeal went worldwide; so far, it has received 14,000 replies – including videos, photos, written recollections and even drawings of favourite exhibits.

"[The response] shows the importance of the archive – not just a place of research and history, but as part of people's lives," said Santos, 28, who studies at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

The group is now in discussions with the same university - which ran the museum - about how to use the material "to show the affection that people had for the museum", she said.

The impact of the fire - and the scale of the loss - reverberated globally. Unesco technicians have arrived in Rio to help recover what is left of the archive, and museums around the world have offered financial assistance.

But in Brazil, it has prompted a bout of soul-searching: amid reports of museum budget cuts under successive governments and repeated warnings of fire risks at the collection, Brazilians have been asking what the tragedy said about their country - and its attitude to its history.

At least four important public buildings have been hit by fires since 2010. São Paulo's innovative Museum of the Portuguese Language was destroyed in a 2015 blaze.

"It is part of a process of institutional neglect in a country that does not take care of its history," said Djamila Ribeiro, a leading academic and commentator.

She said the loss of the museum's collection of African art and Amerindian artefacts and research reflected Brazil's ignorance of its African and indigenous heritage, and its indifference to an ignoble history of slavery and oppression.

"The country looks towards Europe. The governing class and middle class think other countries are wonderful," Ribeiro said.



A computer displays the 3D scan of the bones of an Egyptian cat mummy at the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro.

About 300 scanned pieces from Brazil's National Museum could

help to rebuild part of the heritage lost in the fire. Photograph:

Silvia Izquierdo/AP

Long before the fire at the National Museum, historians were dismayed at the neglect of the institution, housed in a mansion given to the Portuguese royal family after they fled Napoleon's army and moved to Rio in 1808.

"It is a strong metaphor for the moment we are going through in Brazil," said historian Lilia Schwarcz, co-author of the acclaimed *Brazil - A Biography*, noting that Brazil found billions of dollars to host the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games. "How much does the Brazilian government value education and research?"

The Quinta da Boa Vista park, where the museum is located, is a rare open space in Rio's crowded North Zone suburbs, which helped make it a destination for people from low-income families, said curator Thainá de Medeiros, who helped found a museum highlighting favela evictions.

He asked how Rio found \$54m (£41m) to build its futuristic Museum of Tomorrow but couldn't even pay for a sprinkler system at the National Museum.

Laurentino Gomes, author of the history bestseller 1808, about the arrival of the imperial court, said more people lamented the fire than ever visited the museum.

According to the BBC, 289,000 Brazilians visited the Louvre in 2017, while 192,000 went to the National Museum.

But Gomez argued that the museum's loss has hit Brazil hard as it lurches through one of the most difficult periods in its recent history, amid soaring violent crime, political disenchantment, recession and calls for a return to military dictatorship.

The fire provoked a discussion about national identity at a difficult moment in the country's history "as if it was a moment of psychoanalysis", he said. "The museum is a symbol of all of this - of who we were."

"There is a big discussion on social networks, in all areas, about what it really means to be Brazilian. It is in the crises that we grow."

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Suey Rolnik - Lygia Clark y el híbrido Arte/Clínica

¿Cuántos seres soy yo para buscar siempre en el otro ser que me habita las realidades de las contradicciones? ¿A cuántas alegrías y dolores se abre mi cuerpo como un gigantesco coliflor ofreció al otro ser que está secretamente dentro de mí? Dentro de mí viente habita un pájaro, dentro de mi pecho un león. Éste pasea de aquí para allá incesantemente. El ave grazna, patalea y es sacrificada. El huevo sigue envolviéndola, como una mortaja. Es el festín de la vida y de la muerte entrelazadas.

Lygia Clark, carta a Mário Pedrosa. 1967. [1]

Pájaros y leones nos habitan, dice Lygia -son nuestro cuerpo bicho. Cuerpo vibrátil, sensible a los efectos del agitado movimiento de flujos ambientales que nos atraviesan. Cuerpo-huevo, en el cual germinan estados intensivos desconocidos provocados por las nuevas composiciones que los flujos -paseando de aquí para allá- van haciendo y deshaciendo. De tanto en tanto, la germinación crece a tal punto que, el cuerpo ya no logra más expresarse en su actual figura. Es el desasosiego: el bicho grazna, patalea y termina siendo sacrificado; su forma se tornó mortaja. Si nos dejamos invadir, es el comienzo de otro cuerpo que nace inmediatamente después de la muerte.

Pero ¿exactamente por cuál tendríamos que dejarnos invadir? Por la tensión entre la figura actual del cuerpo bicho que insiste a fuerza del hábito y los estados intensivos que en él se producen irreversiblemente, exigiendo la creación de una nueva figura. Dejarnos invadir por el festín de la vida y de la muerte entrelazadas -lo trágico. Cuánto se logra habitar esa tensión [2], puede ser un criterio para distinguir modos de subjetivación. Un criterio ético, porque está basado en la expansión de la vida, ya que ésta se da en la producción de diferencias y su afirmación en nuevas formas de existencia.

El arte es el campo privilegiado para el enfrentamiento de lo trágico. Un modo artista de subjetivación se reconoce por su especial intimidad con el entrecruzamiento de la vida y de la muerte. El artista logra escuchar las diferencias intensivas que vibran en su cuerpo-bicho y, dejándose invadir por la agonía de su pataleo, se entrega al festín del sacrificio. Entonces, como un gigantesco coliflor, abre su cuerpo-huevo, donde otro yo -hasta entonces larva- nacerá junto con su obra.

Artista y obra surgen simultáneamente, en una inagotable heterogénesis. Es a través de la creación, que el artista enfrenta el malestar por la muerte de su actual yo, causada por la presión de sus yoes larva que se agitan en su cuerpo. Tal enfrentamiento, el artista lo opera en la materialidad de su trabajo: se inscriben ahí, las marcas de su encuentro singular con el trágico festín. Marcas de esta experiencia, portadoras de la posibilidad de transmisión: se amplían en la subjetividad del receptor, las chances de realizar a su modo ese encuentro, aproximarse a su cuerpo-vibrátil y exponerse a sus exigencias de creación.

Así, el arte es una reserva ecológica de especies invisibles que pueblan nuestro cuerpo-bicho en su generosa vida germinativa; manantial de coraje para enfrentar lo trágico. De acuerdo a los contextos históricos, varía el grado de permeabilidad entre esta reserva de heterogénesis y el resto del planeta, y cuánto el planeta respira sus aires.

En el mundo contemporáneo nos encontramos con una situación paradójica. Por un lado, el arte es un dominio bien delimitado, el cual produce en el resto del planeta la impresión de cierto desvanecimiento del cuerpo-vibrátil. Se instaura un tipo de subjetividad que tiende a desconocer los estados intensivos y a orientarse únicamente por la dimensión formal. El hecho de que el mercado se haya convertido hoy en el principal -si no único- dispositivo de reconocimiento social, contribuye a ello. Las subjetividades tienden a orientarse cada vez más en función de este reconocimiento y, por lo tanto, de las formas que supone valorizables, y cada vez menos, en función de la eficacia de las formas en cuanto vehículos para las diferencias que se presentan. En la constitución de este modo menos experimental y más marketinero de subjetivación, participan especialmente los monopolios mediáticos. En sus arterias electrónicas, navegan por todo el planeta imágenes de formas de existencia glamorizadas, que parecen oscilar inalterables sobre las turbulencias de lo vivo. La seducción de estas figuras, moviliza una búsqueda frenética de identificación. Siempre fracasada y recomenzada, ya que se trata de montajes imaginarios.

Sin embargo, por otro lado, nuestro cuerpo-bicho ha pataleado más que nunca: con las nuevas tecnologías de comunicación e información, cada individuo es permanentemente habitado por flujos del planeta entero, lo cual multiplica las hibridaciones, aguzando consecuentemente el engendramiento de diferencias

Le vibra en el cuerpo y lo hacen graznar. Así, la disparidad entre la infinitud de la producción de diferencias y la finitud de las formas se ha exacerbado cada vez más: entre el huevo y la mortaja no existe casi intervalo, tal como ya nos lo alertaba Lygia en los '60, hoy las formas son más efímeras que nunca. En otras palabras: muchos flujos, mucha hibridación, producción de diferencia intensificada; pero paradójicamente poca escucha para este torbellino, poca fluidez, potencia de experimentación debilitada. En este mundo de subjetividades marketineras, tiende a ser mínima la permeabilidad entre el arte -donde y sólo donde, el graznido es escuchado como pedido para la creación- y el resto del planeta. Fuera del arte y del artista, cada graznido del bicho, cada muerte de una figura de lo humano, tiende a ser vivido como aniquilamiento total. Esta sensación puede llevar a reacciones patológicas, y ahí ya caemos en otro dominio: el de la clínica.

Entre la reserva ecológica del cuerpo-bicho en el arte y su asilo en la clínica cuando, por transitar inadvertidamente fuera de la reserva, él se patologiza, se esteriliza el poder disruptivo de la disparidad entre el bicho y el hombre. Al no encontrar vías de existencialización, las diferencias terminan siendo abortadas. Ética y estética se disocian: se desactiva el proceso de creación experimental de la existencia; mengua la vida.

A mi entender, es en este contexto donde se ubica la cuestión que mueve el trabajo de Lygia Clark: incitar en el receptor el coraje de exponerse al graznido del bicho; el artista es quien "propone" condiciones para este enfrentamiento. Lo que Lygia quiere es, que el festín del entrecruzamiento de la vida con la muerte extrapolé la frontera del arte y se expanda fuera de la existencia. Y la búsqueda de soluciones para que el objeto mismo tenga el poder de promover este desconfinamiento.

→ Aunque presente a lo largo de toda su obra, tal propuesta puede ser más fácilmente circunscripta a partir de la fase que se inicia con Caminhando (1964), cuando Lygia va más lejos en el investimiento del polo experimental del arte, en detrimento del polo narcisístico/marketinero. En esta fase, ella escribe cosas como: Aunque esa nueva proposición deje de ser considerada una obra de arte, es necesario llevarla adelante (¿nueva moda del arte?). [3] Su pregunta se radicaliza y se explicita con mayor vigor. El sentido del objeto pasa a depender íntegramente de la experimentación, lo cual impide que el objeto sea simplemente expuesto, y que el receptor lo consuma, sin que esto lo afecte. El objeto pierde su autonomía, "es apenas una potencialidad" actualizada o no por el receptor. Lygia quiere llegar al punto mínimo de la materialidad del objeto, donde él no es sino la encarnación de la transmutación que se opera en su subjetividad, punto en el cual -justamente por eso- el objeto alcanza la máxima potencia de contagio del receptor.

Con los Objetos Relacionais, su última obra, Lygia se aproxima lo más que puede a ese punto. Bolsitas de plástico o de paño, llenas de aire, agua, arena o telgopor; tubos de goma, rollos de papel, lienzos, medias, caracoles, miel y otros tantos objetos inesperados se desparraman por el espacio poético que ella creó en una de las habitaciones de su departamento, al cual bautizó: "consultorio". Son los elementos de un ritual iniciático, que ella desarrolla a lo largo de "sesiones" regulares con cada receptor.

Pero ¿exactamente en qué somos iniciados en este consultorio experimental? En la vivencia de desintegración de nuestro contorno, de nuestra imagen corporal, para aventurarnos en la procesualidad ferviente de nuestro cuerpo-vibrátil sin imagen. Un viaje tan intenso hacia él, más allá de la representación que, por una cuestión de prudencia Lygia depositaba una piedrita en la mano del receptor/paciente durante toda la sesión para que pudiese -como en el caso de Juanito y María- encontrar el camino de vuelta. Vuelta hacia lo familiar, lo conocido, lo doméstico; vuelta hacia la forma, la imagen, lo humano -la "prueba de la realidad" tal como se refería Lygia a este aspecto de su ritual.

De este modo, la iniciación que se da en el consultorio experimental de Lygia no tiene rigurosamente nada que ver con expresión o recuperación de sí, ni con el descubrimiento de alguna supuesta unidad o interioridad, en cuyos escondites se ocultarían fantasías -primordiales o no- que se trataría de traer a la conciencia. Por el contrario, es hacia el cuerpo-huevo que los Objetos Relacionais nos llevan. Estos extraños objetos creados por Lygia tienen el poder de hacernos diferir de nosotros mismos.

La radicalización de la propuesta de Lygia, ya se anunciaba en O Trepante, último ejemplar de su prestigiada familia de Bichos, ganando visibilidad con el puntapié que le dio Mário Pedrosa al verlo por vez primera, con su alegría por poder patear una obra de arte. El gesto memorable del crítico y amigo

Al ubicarse también en el margen de la clínica de su tiempo, Lygia nos señala a los psicoterapeutas nuevos caminos a explorar. Si nos disponemos a ir a su encuentro en la frontera, somos llevados a encarar el cuerpo-bicho fibra por fibra y a descubrirlo en su riqueza y complejidad propia. Nos distingue cuenta que, si es verdad que el trabajo clínico es el de la relación con el cuerpo-bicho que se trata, no es menos cierto que asustumbreamos a rebatirlo a sus humanas formas tan pronto lo presentimos. Frente a esta constatación, no podemos dejar de pensar en la necesidad de reorientar nuestras prácticas. Pero ¿hacia adónde aguzan estas nuevas direcciones?

La hibridación con el arte puede ayudarnos a percibir que toda patología se refiere a la relación con lo trágico, más precisamente a la dificultad de hacer el pasaje entre el cuerpo-bicho y sus humanas formas. Hemos visto que son innumerables las versiones de esta dificultad -por ejemplo: quedar enredado en las intensidades del cuerpo. Lacerado por el dolor del graznido, como en la psicosis, o adicto a las estrategias existenciales montadas para anestesiarlo, como en la neurosis. Sea cual fuere la modalidad de interrupción del proceso [14], el efecto es siempre el de minar la potencia creadora, entorpecer el estado de arte, llevando a las subjetividades a zozobrar en un estado de clínica.

Nuestras prácticas entonces, consistirían en crear condiciones para una despatologización de la relación con lo trágico. Esto, básicamente pasa por la conquista de una intimidad con el punto inclasificable de donde emergen las formas.

No es abandonar el arte lo que Lygia propone, ni eventualmente cambiarlo por la clínica, sino habitar la tensión de sus bordes. Al ubicarse en esta zona fronteriza su obra tiene virtualmente la fuerza de "tratar tanto el arte cuanto la clínica, para que estos recuperen su potencia de crítica al modo de subjetivación ambiente; potencia de revitalización del estado de arte, del cual depende la invención de la existencia". ¿Sería ésta su utopía? Le dejo a Lygia la última palabra: "Si la pérdida de la individualidad es de cualquier modo impuesta al hombre moderno, el artista ofrece una venganza y la oportunidad de encontrarse. Al mismo tiempo en que él se disuelve en el mundo, en el que él se fusiona con lo colectivo, el artista pierde su singularidad, su poder expresivo. El se contenta en proponer a los otros ser ellos mismos y alcanzar el singular estado de arte sin arte". [15]

REFERENCIAS

- [1] Esta carta es citada por Sonia Lins, ARTES 1994, inédito.
- [2] Cf. Paulo César Lopes. Pragmática do Desejo. Aproximações a uma teoria da clínica em Félix Guattari & Gilles Deleuze. Disertación de maestría. Posgrado de Psicología Clínica de la PUC/SP. São Paulo, 1996.
- [3] "A magia do objeto sem função"- Inédito, 1965.
- [4] "1964: Caminhando", in Lygia Clark, Colec. Arte Brasileira Contemporânea. FUNARTE. Rio De Janeiro, 1980; p. 26.
- [5] "La mémoire du corps". París U.E.R. de Sciences Humaines Cliniques, Sorbonne, Université París VII, 1978.
- [6] "A radical Lygia Clark", entrevista de Wilson Coutinho para O jornal do Brasil. Rio de Janeiro, 15/12/1980.
- [7] Cf. Nota 2.
- [8] Carta a Hélio Oiticica, del 26/10/1968, in Lygia Clark & Hélio Oiticica. FUNARTE. Rio de Janeiro, 1987 (?).
- [9] Cf. Nota 2.
- [10] Carta del 31/8/1984
- [11] En 1963, exposición en New York; en la Louis Alexandre Gallery y Sala Especial en la 7^a Bienal de Sao Paulo; en 1965, exposición en Londres en la Galería Signals; en 1968, sala especial en la 34^a Bienal

MUSEU

Hi ha plats, però manca la gana.
Hi ha aliances, però no hi ha mutualitat
des de fa, si més no, tres-cents anys.

Hi ha un vano, però ¿on és la rubor?
Hi ha espases, però ¿on és la càlera?
I el llaüt tampoc sona a l'hora baixa.

Per la manca d'eternitat, hom ha reunit
deu mil estris antics.
Un bidell ple de verdet dormita dolçament
amb els bigotis penjant damunt d'una vitrina.

Metalls, argila, plomes d'ocell
triomfen en silenci sobre el temps.
Rialleja solament la puada d'una còmica egípcia.

La corona ha resultat més duradora que el cap.
La mà ha perdut la partida contra el guant.
La sabata ha vençut en la lluita amb el peu.

Quant a mi, estic ben viva, em podeu creure.
La cursa contra el meu vestit encara continua.
I que n'és ell, d'obstinat!
I com voldria sobreviure'm!

Days on end have passed without her giving him the chance to see her. Instead, they had numerous phone conversations. She told him in the last of these that she had dreamt of him the previous night. She could find time to be with him in her dreams but not in her wakefulness!

At long last, he was with her again, this time in his apartment. They watched Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, which early on shows images of a Paris devastated by a third world war. Los Angeles and the world seemed very remote during the viewing of the film, and continued to do so after he turned on the light at the end of the film. Two of the greatest cinematic love stories, Resnais/Duras' *Hiroshima mon amour* and Marker's *La Jetée*, take place against the backdrop of the destruction of the city and possibly of the world. Every love of a man and a woman takes place in seclusion from the world; every love of a man and a woman has for a horizon the destruction of the world since they can restart the human race (this is one of the ways love is linked to death). Noah must be a great lover (a subject yet to be explored).

Soon after she left, having given him an appointment for the next day, the night seemed to extend inordinately: it was no longer his night, but a vast night, one that uncharacteristically included not only daylight—since it now extended to the entirety of the Earth with its different time zones—but moreover, the experiences of all the others, including his beloved. Since the single possible event that could happen to him was to meet her again, it was going to be an eventless night; nonetheless, he intensely felt that so much had to take place for this night to pass at all and therefore for him to meet her again the next day: around 360,000 people would have to be born, and around 150,000

persons would have to die; so many people would have to write desperate letters then tear them up; so many people would have to commit suicide, etc. In waiting, time is for the most part not mine but others', and consequently my ability to reduce the time of genuine waiting is minimal. From a situation of being secluded together away from the world, suddenly the world was there between him and her.

With the current world population estimated at six billion, I would think that it is much more difficult to wait in the twenty-first century than a millennium ago—so many more experiences have to take place before the appointed time of the meeting. What happens if we all wait at the same time? If there were no other sentient beings, time would no longer progress at all; it would be the end of time. Since the messiah will come at the end of time, the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Mahdi and of the Jewish messiah will happen when all mankind starts to wait genuinely.

Love brings about a stark alternation of the couple's seclusion from the world (the place where the two lovers are secluded turning into some sort of Noah's ark), and the yearning lover's implicit connection with everybody else, without whom time would not advance to the date of the next appointment.

While writing this tonight, am I not serving to advance some other person's desperate waiting for his beloved?

"I love you." "You sometimes correct me. If you really loved me, you should, or rather you would accept me as I am." How can he accept her as she is if she did not fully accept herself, as evidenced by the circumstance that she had an unconscious? He was unsure whether she was asking him to love her more

than she loved herself or to love her as only alive and awake. If it was the latter, he could not satisfy her demand, for he was quite aware that he and she were mortal.

The real demand of love: Love me more than I, who has an unconscious, love myself; or else: Love me as a mortal, love me to death, therefore as other than myself [*je est un autre* [Rimbaud]]. In the case of the jealous, the latter demand would take the following form: "Since I am jealous, you should love no other one; but since love should continue even beyond death, not be a mere one-life stand, you should also accept me as I am not, for when dead, I am not."²

"Spoil me: Say, 'I will love only you.'" "I cannot say this to a mortal." //

"Don't rush me." "I won't rush you beyond the manner in which the 'I love you' hurries you so that it would not be a redundant description, but a performative. It may take you years to say it, but when you do, it will be in an untimely manner, too early, at least the first time. Since the 'I love you' is not just a description, but part of love, love is untimely."

Fri 10/26 - L.A. - N.G.A. - m.s.a

There are joyous events that are totally part of the present. But there are others, memorable, instantly detached like images, that give one the sensation that they will be among the ones with which one has to deal during the work of mourning—if it ever happens. There is thus a presentiment of suffering from the time that they happen. A relation is innocent and felicitous not necessarily till a misfortune or a squabble occurs but till such a memorable joyous event.

She was pleased that his love for her did not make him bored by everything else, since such boredom would have implied that he was still invested enough in people and things to interpret them as the usual.

He wanted to be secluded with her temporally, from the other moments. "What time is it now?" He would have liked to be able to answer, in a Dōgen-like manner: "It is Jennifer and Jalal on Los Feliz Avenue, Los Angeles."³ While spacetime itself starts at the Big Bang and comes to an end at the singularities of black holes and, if there is one, at the Big Crunch, what takes place in it never comes to an end, does not pass. "Say that time and space will come to end, but never say that our time together on Los Feliz Avenue, LA, will cease." The more he felt that such temporal seclusion was eluding him, the more he wanted to be secluded with her spatially, from the rest of the world—such spatial seclusion being largely a meager compensation for the temporal seclusion's failure.

"You are falling in love merely to escape your solitude." "One loves and marries to counter one's solitude, but not so much in life—a plebeian endeavor—as in death."⁴

Human love implies death, not only through sexual reproduction, which introduced and programmed organic demise, but also because it implies either resurrecting the beloved or following the spouse into the death realm. When deciding whether or not to marry the woman I love, I have to ask myself not only: "Do I desire 'to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health'⁵ this woman; but also:

"Am I willing to both no longer expect her to resurrect me and desist from trying to resurrect her, opting instead to be parted from her by death?" The extra attachment in life that marriage enacts ("they will become one flesh" [Genesis 2:24]; "the two will become one flesh" [Mark 10:8]) is countered by a no less intense parting in death. It is fitting that *the loss* one is a synonym for *the dead one* (*Lose*: from Middle English *læsen*, from Old English *losian*, to perish), since one is lost to others and to oneself in death's labyrinthine realm. *Being lost together*, which was one of the main reasons why they traveled together, is one sort of experience they certainly could not have in undeath. While as long as one limits oneself to life, love is a closer state to erring than marriage, the opposite is the case when it comes to death, since marriage requires the spouse to follow his wife into the labyrinthine realm of death.⁶

At 36, I, an Iraqi whose records, like those of his father and his siblings, were erased in the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, continue to travel with a Lebanese laissez-passer.⁷ Will marriage to the American woman I love provide me with some security? Yes, through the eventuality of acquiring a Green Card. But it also will add the mortal threat of *till death do us part*.

Undying Love, or Love Dies

324

whom every missive is a dead letter. To others, above all the beloved, one should write letters.

Are betrothals outdated at this stage in history? Certainly not, at least not one of their predilections: letter-writing. Is it surprising that two of the great epistolary writers, Kierkegaard and Kafka, did not "go beyond" the betrothal stage to marriage? Is your colleague Raymond writing letters to his fiancée, and vice versa? Judging from the case of Kafka, who used protracted correspondence with his fiancée Felice Bauer as a way to delay the marriage and eschew the stage of living together, the appropriate time to write letters, and thus of betrothal, is not before marriage but sometime during it: spouses have entered the betrothal stage when they start writing letters to each other. In my future letters to you, I will type everything except your name, using a speech recognition program to add it. My letters will thus be signed with my pronunciation of your name.

Yours,
Jalal

PS: Driving with "eyes wide shut," like a somnambulist, to San Francisco.

Jalal Toufic, Los Angeles
7/9/1999

Jennifer, Los Angeles:
Other than to one's untimely collaborators, to whom does one write books? Is it not to those who have no address? To the homeless; and to the dead: the worldless, who have no forwarding address, thus to

325

Jalal Toufic, San Francisco
7/16/1999

Jennifer, Los Angeles:
They journeyed together when happy (to Copenhagen [?]). They traveled alone when unhappy, in order to write letters to each other. That has always been one of the major reasons to travel, at least for me: to write letters. Basically, one does not write letters