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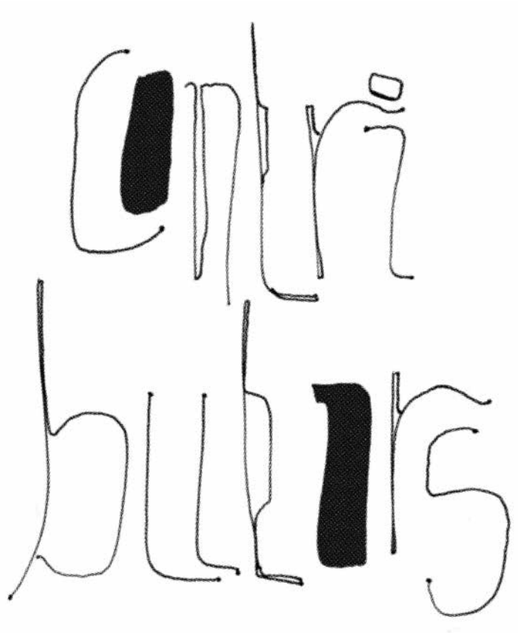

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Mierle Laderman Ukeles is an artist. In 1977 she became the official, unsalaried Artist-in-Residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation—a position she still holds. Her most recent exhibition was a fifty-year career survey at the Queens Museum, NYC.

Pablo Lafuente is an editor and educator based in Rio de Janeiro. He works as coordinator of the education programme for the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil. He has worked in publishing, notably as a writer and editor for *Afterall* as well as formal and informal teaching, among other positions as a reader at Central St. Martins and visiting professor at the Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia, Porto Seguro.

Las Nietas de Nonó is comprised of sisters Lydela and Michel from Puerto Rico. They work at the intersection of theatre, performance, dance, visual art, activism, ecology, and emancipatory education. Practices found in their neighbourhood such as the expansion of ancestral know-ledge, the exchange of produce grown locally and the re-use of found materials for artistic projects led to the creation Patio Taller in their paternal grandparents' former house.

Lucy R. Lippard is a writer/activist/sometime curator, and author of 24 books on contemporary art activism, feminism, and place. She lives off the grid in rural New Mexico, where for twenty years she has edited the monthly community newsletter, *El Puente de Galisteo.*

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, PhD, is an independent art curator and biotechnologist. Founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin and editor-in-chief of *SAVVY Journal for Critical Texts on Contemporary African Art*, he was recently curator-at-large for documenta 14 and is now guest curator of the 2018 Dak'Art Biennale as well as guest professor in curatorial studies at the Städelschule Frankfurt.

Ana Pato is a Brazilian curator and researcher, who holdsa PhD in Architecture and Urbanism from the University of São Paulo and now dedicates her research to the relations between contemporary art, archives and memory. She was chief-curator of the 3rd Bahia Biennale (2014) and associate researcher at the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia (2015).

Koleka Putuma is an award-winning poet and theatre practitioner living in Cape Town, South Africa. In both her theatrical and poetic work Putuma insists on modes of visibility and offers a space for healing. Her writing explores the idea of authority in various spaces —academia, religion, politics, relationships—to ask what has been learnt and what must be unlearnt. She is the author of the bestselling collection of poems, *Collective Amnesia* (uHlanga, 2017).

Megha Ralapati manages the Jackman Goldwasser Residency at Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago which supports artists across the city and internationally. She has initiated key collaborations with community-focused organizations like Project Row Houses in Houston, CRP in France and ARTPORT Tel Aviv.

Suely Rolnik is a Brazilian psychoanalyst, author of more than 200 essays and many books and translations, curator and professor at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). While exiled in Paris in the 1970s, she obtained bachelor and master degrees in Sociology and Philosophy (Sorbonne Paris 8) and a master and PhD (D.E.S.S.) in Clinical Human Sciences (Sorbonne - Paris 7). She also obtained a PhD in Social Psychology from PUC-SP after her return.

Wisława Szymborska (2 July 1923 – 1 February 2012) was a Polish poet, essayist, translator and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. Born in Prowent, she later resided in Kraków where she became involved in the local literary scene. Her work has been translated into English and many European languages, as well as into Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, Farsi and Chinese.

Juergen Teller studied at the Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Photographie in Munich, before moving to London in 1986. He has since successfully navigated both the art world and commercial photography, shooting high profile fashion campaigns for brands such as Céline, Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs and Vivienne Westwood. He currently holds a professorship of photography at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg.

Yorgos Tzirtzilakis is an architect, theorist and curator. He is an associate professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly and artistic advisor at DESTE Foundation of Contemporary Art. His work focuses on the intersections between architecture and the visual arts, as well as the relationships between artistic practices, territoriality and psychoanalytic assumptions.

Marina Vishmidt is a writer and editor. She teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London and at the Dutch Art Institute. Her work has appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly, Ephemera, Afterall, Journal of Cultural Economy, Australian Feminist Studies* and *Radical Philosophy*, and she is currently completing the monograph *Speculation as a Mode of Production* (forthcoming in 2018).

Editors' Note
Open for Maintenance

Marina Fokidis, Monika Szewczyk

Welcome back to *South as a State of Mind.* It seems like yesterday when we began in 2012, in Athens, "possessed by a spirit of absurd authority" guided by ideas that derive from southern mythologies. These proved powerful for facing down an image of our future—an image presented to us as bleak and closed, after much rational calculation.

We never thought of the 'South' in purely geographical terms. For us, it stood and still stands as a parable upon which we build our endless quest for imaginary territories where intellectual freedom, as well as new/old methodologies, new/old ways, new/old pasts and new/old presents, even new/old words, can flourish beyond any sense of compromise and any tactics of crypto-colonisation.

Within history (and the realms of theory, political science, and contemporary art practice), the notion of the 'Global South' has provided a strong defensive mobilisation against the hegemony of the North. At times, however, efforts to forge a counter-discourse to hegemony can become hegemonic themselves. Models of inclusion and exclusion, even if profoundly necessary when formed and adopted, can eventually defeat their own purpose. So, we have continued to ask ourselves: How can the very ideas of liberation and self-determination escape the subjective viewpoint of the 'author' that brings them together? Rather than articulating, re-articulating and otherwise fixating on a series of presupposed cultural and historical traits, we have tended to question time and place as they are perpetually shaped. South stands for direction and movement and questioning. How is the notion of "common post-colonial heritage" upheld in times of this thriving neo-colonialism, triggered by the global economy?

During the course of making our first five issues, *South* became a gathering place for shared intensities, for placing sovereignties in relation, for a growing affective network. The axiom of "South as a State of Mind" has always cohered for us more as a space of resistance than an affirmation. Then, in 2015, the magazine became the journal of documenta 14 for its sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth issues under the editorship of Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk. The idea that a small independent magazine would temporarily 'host'—metaphorically speaking of course—a large establishment such as documenta expressed the urge to further the debate around Institutional Critique. This has proven crucial to our being. The results are forever part of our evolving history and we will remain welcoming to all the ideas, attitudes and characters that sustained and transformed *South as a State of Mind*, putting us in contact with many new readers and collective ways of learning.

But where do we go from here?

How can we re-emerge from the glorious and beautiful ruins of the four documenta 14 issues, and forge an economy for our future? The future of an independent and moderately sized magazine that continues to come out of Athens today?

"There should be as many magazines as there are valid states of mind" notes Antonin Artaud in his text *There Aren't Enough Magazines*, which Quinn and Adam so pertinently invoked in their farewell letter in *South as a State of Mind* #9. May there also be as many magazines as there are valid economies. But how few of those exist today …

What if, momentarily, we render economy as *a state of mind*? And 'self-possessed' once more, against all pragmatic odds, open *South as a State of Mind* (magazine) for maintenance? It is in this state—of mind, of economy—that we found many 'fellow travellers' whom you will meet in this issue. Sharing ideas and ways of knowing as well as institutional platforms, editorship, contributions, design, financial support, advertisements, advice and pure bonding, we gather together in order to imagine a genuine possibility for 'democracy' which puts the citizen, the privileged city-less cosmopolitan, the refugee, the immigrant, the proletarian, the peasant, and myriad marginalised subjects into vital, changeable (not hierarchical) association.

Now, a new cycle begins, but it is not a clean slate. Let's not obsess about cleanliness, even if maintenance is required. Carefully preserving the multiple traits of our history across all nine previous issues we have opened the windows to let new winds in. We need to understand the challenges of real life and shape a structure which could be sustainable and have longevity, so that as we invent our tradition the magazine continues to be reconfigured, rethought and redesigned, always to meet the everyday needs of real life.

Our deepest gratitude goes to all those who trusted us so far with their contributions, shaped our editorial and advisory committees, financially supported our ideas and gave flesh and bone to our endeavour. A big thank you goes to the Goethe Institut as well as to the Schwarz Foundation, among others, as without their help this magazine would not be in your hands today.

For this crucial tenth issue of *South as a State of Mind,* we wanted to fully embody the transitional state of staying afloat in which we find ourselves—maintaining our energy, maintaining the sovereignty that strengthens this particular state (of mind), nurturing friendships (including the commitment to Athens as a base and to the South as parable for shared direction) and thereby maintaining and growing our networks of resistance to the increasingly violent spread of empire across this planet. But what does it mean to maintain? If the word at first strikes you as vaguely conservative or at odds with the productive or creative or sexy vocabularies put in the service of art and culture (which remain our preoccupations) please stay with us. The pages that follow, the contributors who use them fully, open up this much-maligned method.

The open, *South-facing* window on to our world reveals many attempts to hold on to—to maintain—tyrannical power, hegemony or what Suely Rolnik terms the broad "Abuse of Life." Within these regimes and within their molecules that burrow deep inside most of us, a "colonial-capitalistic unconscious" reduces the subjective experience to the consciousness of a subject. In defiance, Rolnik outlines steps for harnessing worldwide power by constructing the commons based on empathy and resonance. Likewise, through his critique of Berlin's Humboldt Forum—portrayed as a choking institution—Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung advises us to listen to the voices that do not occupy the epicentre, even to dismantle the epicentre as a whole. Through her involvement with the Public Archive of the State of Bahia in Brazil, Ana Pato further confronts the institutionalisation (and erasure) of memory produced by Western colonial society. In contrast, in the collective reimagining of Indigenous institutions, as narrated by Sandra Benites and Pablo Lafuente, memories remain "important to identifying the paths for stepping ahead; not for creating more misunderstandings beyond those that were already created." Rather, "what is aimed at is not the solution of problems, but their prevention, and the creation of tools that appear alongside histories."

1 As we each solicited, read and discussed different contributions to this issue, we noted different preoccupations and interpretations, in distinction to all these attempts to control meaning. Many of our *South as a State of Mind* working sessions occurred in kitchens, in Athens and Kassel, also Salvador, Berlin and Vancouver, so it seems all the more fitting now that a still from Ângela Bonadies's video *The Kitchen* also appears on our cover, even if we chose this image a long time ago.

Another type of tool gets a sharpening: the facsimile of Mierle Laderman Ukeles's original *Manifesto for Maintenance Art and Proposal for the Exhibition "Care"*, written nearly half a century ago, presents the full spectrum of maintenance activity (reproduction, attention, cleaning) as forms of art and potentially revolutionary acts. Writing between turns at the picket lines surrounding Goldsmiths University where she teaches, Marina Vishmidt's "Pure Maintenance" picks up on the problems set out by Ukeles ("the sourball of every revolution: […] who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?", which finds echoes in a poem by Wisława Szymborska we have also republished), and connects them to a necessarily ongoing project of negation, or what she terms, with Isabelle Stengers, "a planetary struggle against the totality of the capital relation." The ramifications of this struggle in today's Venezuela are fully felt in Ángela Bonadies's *The Kitchen*, an image-text essay comprised of video stills and a manifesto that casts the notion of maintenance ambiguously: a loving look at a cook (which manages to respect her wish to remain unrecognisable) and words for the tenacious grip on power by the Bolivarian government whose leader seeks total visibility. Attempts at maintaining state power by monopolising narration in Turkey, and "a double case of maintenance violence" in Greece are further investigated by Ayse Çavdar and Angela Dimitrakaki respectively.[1]

The aforementioned questions of (hegemonic) narration combine with questions of cultural misappropriations, which exploit misery as if it were a commodity in the contributions of the film writer Miquel Martí Freixas and the director Luis Ospina (in dialogue with Ángela Bonadies). They explore the dynamics of *Pornomiseria*, a term deployed by Ospina with his collaborator Carlos Mayolo in the making of *Agarrando Pueblo* or "The Vampires of Poverty", Carlos Mayolo. This section may be read as much alongside Yorgos Tzirtzilakis's complex historical, geopolitical and poetic articulation of "joy-making mourning"—a deft counter to the widespread assumption, which has captured the Northern/Western imaginary, that "the Greeks are a happy people"—as alongside the text which immediately follows it, the story of another pueblo by Lucy Lippard.

Lippard's excerpt from her forthcoming chronicle of Galisteo, the tiny New Mexican town she chose as her home a quarter of a century ago, combines geological, agricultural and historical times as well as the human time of individuals and groupings. Jorge Garcia's account of Mesoamerican calendrical cycles governed by the movement of bodies much greater than our human flesh—the Sun, the Moon, Venus and this blue planet—further unsettles the centrality of (Western) humans in the telling of history. And Megha Ralapati's consideration of the living root bridges of Meghalaya, built and maintained across generations, defies prevailing notions of "art made by individuals", as Ukeles already questioned. These texts may prompt a rereading of contributions by Rolnik, Ndikung, Vishmidt or Lafuente and Benites for signs of new or newly germinating forms of life, and new or renewed ways of keeping time.

Our own relaunch syncs with the opening of the 10th Berlin Biennale, whose curators and selected artists contribute a crucial segment to this issue. Gabi Ngcobo and her team comment on assumed beingness and know-hows in "I'm Not Who You Think I'm Not a Manifesto." *South* becomes an active site of this biennale, a venue for its public programme and a partner in their collective synergy for self-preservation. Among the contributions is the poem "High Tide" by Koleka Putuma, published in our pages for the first time and exclusively. The new edition of *South* is offered to the public under these verses at May-Ayim-Ufer in Berlin. May the sirens for which the poet writes send their blue light and their blessings to our restart.

The Abuse of Life
Matrix of the Colonial-Capitalistic Unconscious

Suely Rolnik

"It is always a question of freeing life wherever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into an uncertain combat."

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1991[1]

"The exhaustion of natural resources is probably much less advanced than the exhaustion of subjective resources, of vital resources, that is afflicting our contemporaries. If so much satisfaction is derived from surveying the devastation of the environment it's largely because this veils the frightening ruin of subjectivities. Every oil spill, every sterile plain, every species extinction is an image of our souls in rags, a reflection of our lack of world, of our intimate impotence to inhabit it."

—The Invisible Committee, 2014[2]

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Percept, Affect, and Concept," chap. 7 in *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 171.

2 The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, trans. Robert Hurley, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Semiotext(e), 2015, p. 33.

The world is in convulsion, and so are we. We are taken by a malaise comprised of a mix of sensations. A dread in the face of the sinister landscape brought about by the rise of reactive forces everywhere, whose level of violence and barbarity reminds us of the worst moments in history. Along with fear, we are also taken by a perplexity in the face of another phenomenon, simultaneous with the first: the takeover of worldwide power by the capitalist system in its latest version—financialised and neoliberal—which extends its colonial project to its ultimate limits, its globalitarian realisation.

At first glance, the simultaneity of these two phenomena seems paradoxical, which blurs our comprehension and leaves us confused: the high degree of complexity and perverse refinement proper to the neoliberal way of life is light-years ahead of the narrow-minded archaism of the brute forces of this new conservatism. They are symptoms of radically different reactive forces, originating in distinct historical moments, coexisting in our contemporaneity. But after the initial shock, we understand that neoliberalism needs these rude subjectivities to do the dirty work of destroying all the achievements of democratic, republican culture, dissolving its imaginary and eradicating from the scene its protagonists—including the lefts in all their nuances, but not only them. Lacking moral limits of any kind, reactive subjectivities fulfil their task at a dizzying speed and with intense violence—as soon as we recognise one of their coups, another has already happened. Carrying out this task gives them a perverse narcissistic *jouissance* to the point of being pathetic. The ground is prepared for a frictionless and unencumbered free flow of transnational capital.[3]

In addition to fear and astonishment, there is a deep frustration with the recent dissolution of several leftist governments across the world, especially in Latin America—which, not by chance, occurs at the same time as the rise of reactive forces of conservatism and neoliberalism, temporarily united. Such frustration mobilises the traumatic memory of the unfortunate fate of twentieth-century revolutions. A state of alert settles into our subjectivity, as when the scarcity of essential resources crosses a threshold, putting life itself at risk. These are traumatic situations before which we either succumb (a pathological response that saps our vital potency) or we widen the horizon of our gaze, which gives us more precision in deciphering the violence and inventing ways of fighting it (a response which preserves our vital potency, and even intensifies it, in certain cases). In the moments when, in the face of the trauma that we are experiencing, the second response wins, we can see an insurmountable limit against which left-wing projects stumble, especially institutional ones. Such a view imposes on us the task of problematising this limit, in order to create the conditions of its overcoming.

First of all, we are forced to recognise that this barrier is not located only outside the territory of the left, imposed by adverse forces that are external to it. In fact, it is chiefly located inside the left's own territory, whose horizon ends at the borders of the macropolitical sphere. This is the sphere of the shapes of a world, and its own modes of existence: the positions and functions set out in the social map, the modes of relation between them, as well as their codes and their representations.

3 Once the dirty work of these rudimentary straw men of financialised capitalism is completed, with its globalitarian rage, capitalism will throw them in the trash of history without the least embarrassment. This has already begun to happen on our continent.

Even when the left, especially the institutional left, talks about modes of existence, it tends to do so only from a macropolitical perspective. It thinks of the oppressed as identitarian entities and tends to crystallise them, neutralising the 'creating power' (potency) of their subjectivity, and preventing this creating power from fulfilling its function: to respond to the need for change that emerges in the relational fabric of collective life. Worse still is when the focus is on groups of disadvantaged people who don't fit into the category of the 'worker'—the identitarian place to which the oppressed are confined in much of the left's imaginary, reduced as it is to class relations. The left tends to fetishise the workers or even to render them folkloric, imparting a lot to these figures-turned-caricatures within the official map of democracy, which only allows access to civil rights. This is the central goal of the lefts' resistance: what moves them in this operation is the urge to promote the 'inclusion' of such groups into the existing map, resulting in their submissive adaptation to the hegemonic mode of subjectivation. That is the case, for example, with the left's approach towards Indigenous peoples in Brazil. This focus on mere inclusion suggests to us that the left wing not only assumes the dominant mode of existence as its reference, but also considers it as *the* sole and universal reference, denying any alterity. The consequence is that they lose the crucial opportunity to inhabit the relational fabric woven by decidedly different modes of existence and, above all, to sustain the possible shifting effects that could render the dominant cartography void. More worryingly, when such effects are felt and new modes of existence emerge within collective life, they are read by the left wing through the same lens and tend to be similarly confined to identitarian entities. This is the case, for example, with movements that continue to disrupt dominant notions of gender, sexuality and race. The singularisation processes underway in these insurrections are ignored, thereby neutralising their vital impulse for transmuting the dominant modes of subjectivation and the changes to individual and collective forms of existence this impulse could unleash. In short, what is ignored and neutralised is these groups' strength for micropolitical resistance.

Although some left-wing groups recognise micropolitical movements, their readings tend to reduce these to the issue of inequality, narrowing the focus of such uprisings to the class struggle. This persistent reduction of such vision and modes of action to the macropolitical sphere is responsible for the left's helplessness in the face of the challenges of the present, keeping them imprisoned in sterile academic lucubrations of democracy. In such lucubrations various lefts emphasise 'demo' (referring to δεμος or 'people' in Greek) in the notion of 'democracy', which they translate as "government of the people". This denies a fundamental detail of its original sense in Greek, which gives it the meaning of 'self-government' *by* the people. This reduces the discussion of the current crisis of democracy to the question of how to reform the state machine in order to better represent 'the people'.

The dreary fate of left resistance today and the repeated frustration it provokes in us, added to the confusion and fear provoked by the current state of things, leads us to become aware of the absolute limitations of the macropolitical horizon. Here and there insurrections erupt with new strategies in response to the violences against life, in all their nuances, for which the pair right/left is no longer a sufficient designator of forces or stakes. Isn't the new presence of micropolitical insurrection what surprises

us in the resistance movements bursting forth all around, mainly among younger generations and among women, black and LGBTQ people from the metropolitan suburbs, as well as in Indigenous communities? Isn't this precisely what fascinates us in these movements, despite the difficulty of deciphering and naming it? Is it not just such movements that prevent us from succumbing to melancholic and fatalistic paralysis within the bleak landscape that surrounds us? In these territories-in-formation that are increasingly populated, there is an effective change of the politics of subjectivation. Their horizons expand the reach of our vision, enabling us to foresee the micropolitical sphere. How does the violence of colonial capital operate in this sphere?

The Abuse of the Vital Force

What distinguishes the colonial-capitalistic system is the pimping of life as a force for creation and transmutation. This force is life's essence and its condition for persistence, in which lies its greater goal, or, its ethical destiny. The matrix of the system relies on the profane rape of life to the point that we can designate it as 'pimping-capitalistic'**.** This system expropriates and corrupts the vital force of the entire biosphere: land, air, water, sky, plants, animals and humans. In our species, such rape has particular characteristics, arising from the way the vital force is materialised; it depends on a process of creation with multiple options, implying the need to make a choice. For this reason, Freud assigned the name 'drive' to the human vital force, distinguishing this from 'instinct'. On the one hand, our specificity broadens the possibilities for the transmutation of world-forms when life asks for it; on the other, it makes our species the only one that can prevent the fulfilment of this ethical exigency. And when that happens, the effect is a disempowerment of life, interrupting its germinative process, destroying the vital energy sources of the biosphere—which, in humans, includes the subjective resources for its preservation.

If the Marxist tradition originating in industrial capitalism made us realise that the expropriation of the human vital force in its manifestation as labour is the source of capital accumulation, the latest version of capitalism leads us to recognise that such expropriation is not confined to the domain of labour. In its new fold, this regime feeds off the energy of the drive: the very impulse to create forms of existence and cooperation in which the claims of life materialise into new modes of existence, transforming present scenarios and their attendant values. Diverted by pimping-capitalism from its ethical fate, the drive is channelled to build worlds according to the purposes of the dominant regime: the accumulation of economic, political, cultural and narcissistic capital. This violation of the vital force produces a trauma that makes subjectivity turn deaf to the drive's claims: it stops being guided by the impulse to preserve life, it corrupts desire and can even act against it. This increasing deterioration of life is precisely the violence of the colonial-capitalistic regime in the micropolitical sphere: a cruelty typical of a perverse politics of desire—subtle, refined, invisible, unreachable by perception. It is a violence similar to that of the pimp who, in order to instrumentalise his prey, operates by means of seduction. Under his spell, the prostitute tends not to realise the pimp's cruelty; on the contrary, she tends to idealise him, which leads her to surrender to the abuse of her own desire.

National Mobilisation of Indigenous, 2017, Brasilia, Brazil
Photo by Rogerio Assis

Strange-Familiar:
The Inescapable Paradox of Subjective Experience

I propose the name 'colonial-capitalistic unconscious' to designate the dynamics of the unconscious typical of the existing regime. The main feature of the colonial-capitalistic unconscious is the reduction of subjectivity to its subject's experience. But what is this experience?

The function of the subject is to enable us to decipher the forms of society we live in, its codes and its relational dynamics. We associate what we perceive and feel with certain representations and we project these representations back onto what we perceive and feel, allowing us to classify and recognise in order to produce meaning. In this sphere of experience, sensory and sentimental, the other is experienced as an external body, separated from the subject. They relate through communication based on a shared language. It is in the experience of the subject that habits are constituted, giving us a sense of familiarity. This is the macropolitical sphere of human life; inhabiting it is essential in order to live in society. The problem with the colonial-capitalistic unconscious is the reduction of subjectivity to the subject, which excludes its immanent experience of our living condition: the outside-the-subject. This exclusion is extremely harmful to life.

In our living condition we are constituted by the effects of forces, or affects, with their diverse and mutable relationships that stir the vital flows of a world and traverse all the bodies that compose that world, making them one sole body in continuous variation, whether or not we are conscious of it. It is an experience that is extrapersonal (since there are no personal contours, since we are the variable effects of the forces of the world, which compose and recompose our bodies), extrasensory (since it happens via affect, distinct from perception), and extra-sentimental (since it happens via vital emotion, distinct from psychological emotion).

Unlike communication, the means of relating with the other in this sphere is empathy. Here, there is no distinction between the cognisant subject and external object. In the subjective experience outside-the-subject, the other lives effectively in our body; they dwell in us through their effects—the affects. By inhabiting our body, the forces of the world impregnate us, creating embryos of other worlds. These produce in us a sense of strangeness, distinct from the familiarity provided by broader recognition of our experience as subjects.

The Malaise of the Paradox Calls Desire to Act

The subjective experiences of the subject (the personal) and the outside-the-subject (the extrapersonal) therefore produce two totally different sensations: the familiar and the strange. These work simultaneously and inseparably, but according to distinct logics and temporalities. There is no possibility of synthesis or translation between them; their relationship is marked by an irreducible paradox that is unavoidable in principle. On the one hand, the movement of the drive, stirred by worlds in embryo

National Mobilisation of Indigenous, 2017, Brasilia, Brazil
Photo by Rogerio Assis

attempting to germinate, presses subjectivity toward the conservation of life in its essence, embodied in new modes of existence. On the other, the movement presses subjectivity towards the conservation of existing modes in which life is temporarily embodied so that subjectivity can recognise itself in its experience as a subject.

The malaise caused by the tension between the strange and the familiar, as well as between the two movements triggered by this paradoxical experience, functions as an alarm that summons desire to take action in order to recover a vital, emotional and existential balance; a balance shaken by the emergence of new worlds and the dissolution of the existing world. A constant negotiation between these two movements is imposed on desire. It is precisely at this point that the politics of desire are defined—from the most active to the most reactive. This choice is not neutral, because from it result distinct fates of the drive, which imply distinct unconscious formations in the social field, carriers of greater or smaller affirmations of life. Such is the battlefield in the sphere of micropolitics.

The Colonial-Capitalistic Unconscious

A reactive micropolitics prevails under the control of the colonial-capitalistic unconscious wherein subjectivities are reduced to the experience of a subject. This tends to impose exclusively the movement of conservation of presently existing forms of life. Dissociated from the ongoing process of change that characterises the dynamics of the vital force (which in the human, corresponds to the dynamics of the drive), subjectivity experiences the pressure from embryos of other worlds. There is a threat of dissolution of the self and of its existential field, since '*this* world', the one in which the subject dwells and which structures the subject, is lived as '*the* world', sole and absolute. Under these conditions, to regain a balance, desire clings to established forms, which it seeks to preserve at any cost. It may even deploy high levels of violence to ensure its permanence.

It is this separation of subjectivity from its living condition that paves the way for desire to surrender (with *jouissance*) to the pimping of the drive. Such surrender manifests itself in the conversion of the drive's force for creation into mere 'creativity', which re-accommodates the established cartography, producing new scenarios for the accumulation of capital. In situations of crisis, surrender manifests itself in the investment of the drive in collective movements clamouring for the maintenance of the status quo, such as in the case of the vertiginous rise of conservatism today. The *jouissance* of the subject, in both cases, comes from its illusion of belonging, a placebo for the fear of stigmatisation and social shame that the destabilisation of its world provokes. This type of desiring action results in a hapless fate for the drive: the interruption of the process of germination of collective life. Even if the germination is suspended only in the existence of an individual or group, it necessarily generates a necrosis point in the life of the social body as a whole.

The profane abuse of the drive is difficult to grasp since it happens in an invisible sphere covered by a spell of perverse seduction. Yet its numerous manifestations in the social field are fully accessible to those who can tolerate seeing the process of degradation of life, present in all these symptoms of the drive's violation. The most obvious are the relations with the environment that generate ecological disasters. Or the power relations based on classism, machismo, homophobia, transphobia, racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, nationalism, colonialism, and so on. These relations confine 'others' to an imaginary place of inferiority or even subhumanity, leading to their total invisibility and non-existence, and even their concrete elimination, which, in extreme cases, consists of the very disappearance of their bodies. These manifestations are not mere epiphenomena of the regime, but its very bone-marrow.

In the face of this, it is not enough to subvert the order of places designated for each character at play in the scene of power relations (macropolitical insurrection); we must abandon those characters themselves and their politics of desire (micropolitical insurrection), which may render the continuity of the scene itself impracticable. The dissolution of the regime depends unavoidably on the insurrection against violence everywhere and in all human activities in both the macro and micro spheres, which operate with disparate and paradoxical logics and temporalities. This is the necessary condition to achieve an effective transmutation of the present.

In its new version, the regime has managed to colonise the whole planet, affecting its macro- and micropolitical guts, to the point that no human activity can escape from it today. If the lefts' horizon is limited to the macropolitical sphere it is because the subjectivity that tends to predominate in its territories is also structured by the pimping-capitalistic unconscious. As such it is unable to reach the micropolitical sphere. It is already a big step to recognise this fact, instead of remaining paralysed in melancholic frustration with left-wing governments, endlessly lamenting over left impotency towards the latest form of capitalism. But it is not enough to realise all this; we must take one step further, a step indispensable for creating adequate means of resistance to the actual state of things; we must explore the micropolitical sphere, its differences from the macropolitical one, and the inextricable connection between both. What follows are some notes in this direction.

Macropolitical Insurrection:
A Programmatic Protest of Consciousness

Focus (visible and audible): the asymmetrical rights and social relations established by the colonial-capitalistic regime, wherein power manifests through social classes, but also through constructions of race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and so on.

Agents (only humans): all those who occupy subordinate positions in the power relations that predominate in all fields of social life.

What moves agents: the urge to 'denounce' the injustices of the world in its current form, which tends to mobilise consciences.

Intent (empowering the subject): to free oneself from oppression and exploitation; to

Protests resulting from the assassination of Marielle Franco, 2018, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Photo by Paulo Barros / Favela em Foco

leave the state of invisibility and inaudibility in order to occupy affirmatively a place of speech and possess the right to a dignified existence. It is about dismantling the asymmetry in power relations, promoting a redistribution of positions that is more equal—not only in political representation, but also in social and economic fields.

Criteria for evaluating situations (moral): a certain system of values. It is this moral compass that orients our choices and actions in the macropolitical sphere.

Operating mode (by opposition): to oppose the oppressor, to subvert the distribution of positions within existing power relations. These are strategies to fight against oppression and the laws that support it in all its manifestations in individual and collective life.

Mode of cooperation (construction of organised movements and/or political parties via identity recognition): such construction is programmatic, departing from a previously defined action plan aimed towards a common demand (a concrete demand, in this case) and based on a similar subordinate position in a particular segment of society. An alleged identity contour is drawn around the sphere of the 'person' in subjective experience, which facilitates the necessary grouping. When subjectivity confines and reduces itself to this contour, it interrupts the processes of subjectivation, which result from the active tension between the personal and the extrapersonal. Several of these segments can be united in one movement (around the claims involving, for example, gender, race and class), just as movements of different segments can get together around a cause that concerns all. This mode of cooperation generates pressure to force an effective reversal in power relations at the institutional level (which includes the state and its laws, but is not limited to these). This kind of work is finalised when such a reversal is achieved in the particular field in which the struggle took place.

Micropolitical Insurrection:
A Drive's Protest of the Unconscious[4]

Focus (invisible and inaudible): the perverse abuse of the vital force of the biosphere in all its elements, including the human, by the colonial-capitalistic regime with its highly aggressive pathology and its serious consequences for the fate of the planet.

Agents (human and nonhuman): all the elements of the biosphere that rebel against violence towards life. The dynamics of response to this violence in human and non-human agents are different: the non-human instinctively recognises the anaemia of vital force resulting from its abuse and produces transmutations that allow it to resume its course. A river that dries out because of excess pimping-capitalistic trash may rebel, returning to flow now underground, where it is protected from these toxic effects;[5] a tree may bloom before spring, preventing the sterility that can result from excess pollution.

The human response to this abuse depends on the dominant politics of desire, which vary in different cultures, yet the broader reduction of subjectivity to the experience

4 The idea of a "drive's protest of the unconscious" is related to the notion of a "drive unconscious" proposed by the Brazilian psychoanalyst, João Perci Schiavon. See from this author: *"Pragmatismo pulsional"* [Drive Pragmatism], in *Cadernos de Subjectividade*, Sao Paolo, 2010, pp. 124-31.

5 This actually happened to the Rio Doce [Sweet River], near a village named Krenak in the municipality of Resplendor. Some time after this part of the river was seemingly dead due to the devastating impact of its abuse by the multinational mining company Vale do Rio Doce, it was discovered that it had started to flow again underground. See Ailton Krenak, "Em busca de uma terra sem tantos males" in *O lugar onde a terra descansa*, Núcleo de Cultura Indígena, Rio de Janeiro, 2000.

as a subject, inseparable from the abuse of the drive, leads us to interpret the fragile state in which we find ourselves as a sign of collapse. Desire thus clings to the status quo, acting against the perseverance of life, and not in its favour: we become the walking dead, zombies. The agents of micropolitical insurrection in the human field are therefore all those who seek to resist the rape of their vital drive and resume the power to decide its fate, and so regaining ethical responsibility towards life. Assuming that the decolonisation of the unconscious necessarily implies the field of our relationships, from the most intimate to the most distant, the effects of any gesture in this direction are collective.

What moves its agents (the impulse for the perseverance of life): in humans this manifests as the impulse to announce worlds to come, which tend to awaken the unconscious, aggregating new allies to the micropolitical insurgency.

Intent (potentialising life force): to reappropriate the life force and its power of creation, which in humans depends on the reappropriation of language so that the drive can find its utterance (in words, images, gestures, modes of existence, sexuality, etc.), in order to render sensible the worlds which announce themselves to life-knowing. In other words, combating the pimping of the drive implies building for oneself another body, leaving the shell of a body structured in the dynamics of abuse—as the locusts abandon their exoskeleton so another body, still embryonic, can germinate and take its place. Producing the potentialisation of the life force is thus distinct from empowering the subject, an idea belonging to the sphere of macropolitical insurrection. Both intentions are important; the problem is that when the insurgency aims only for empowerment we remain captive to the logic of the very system we seek to combat.

Criteria for evaluating situations (ethical): what life demands in order to persevere itself every time it is weakened. When existing values stop making sense and start to suffocate life, an ethical drive-compass guides desire through choice and action toward a transvaluation.

Operating mode (by affirmation): affirming life in its germinative essence to abandon power relations. Resisting abuse, which depends on the long work of overcoming the trauma that such abuse necessarily provokes, is the condition for dismantling the power of the colonial-capitalistic unconscious, be it in the subjective position of the subaltern, even when we rise up macropolitically against it; or in the position of the sovereign, even when we are the most macropolitically correct. For example, a woman who remains dependent on the male gaze to exist not only falls into the trap of chauvinist sexist abuse but feeds it with her own desire. Trying to get out of this place, but only macropolitically, rising up against inequality, but not incorporating the micropolitical sphere, maintains a struggle for power wherein the chauvinist character and the sexist scene remain the hegemonic references, and thus perpetuate the very scene this struggle aimed to combat.

However if any figure occupying the subaltern position in the script of power relations—as the oppressor's victim, or opponent—abandons their role, transfiguring their character to a different one or simply deserting the scene, the scene can't go on. Facing the anguish provoked by the destabilisation of the scene, the oppressor has several possible responses. At best—which is already happening, but only for a minority—this experience can propel him to overcome his disconnect from extrapersonal experience as well as his inability to sustain himself in the tension between the personal and extrapersonal experiences. From then on, he will tend to recreate himself in order to interact with these new character(s)—that, in turn, tend to transmute with this interaction—becoming himself an agent of micropolitical insurrection as well. In this collaboration, a new script might emerge, in which the politics of desire that guides the characters and the relationship between them is no longer unconsciously subjected to colonial-capitalistic pimping, leading to the constitution of new scenes in the social landscape. But it is also obvious that the impossibility of continuing to act as an oppressor can equally provoke a violent backlash, driven by its exasperated will to conserve the scene and its characters at any price. This is, unfortunately, the trend evidenced in the exponential increase of femicides in the regions of the world where feminism has intensified and expanded, as is the case in Latin America.

In the micropolitical mode of insurrection, resistance to the pathology of the colonial-capitalistic regime is thus inseparably both political and clinical. It is about seeking to heal life of its impotence, in its captivity inside the relational plot of abuse that alienates subjectivity from vital demands. Such healing, on which depends the dissolution of the regime at a micropolitical level, involves subtle and complex work interrupted only by death. But every time we take a step in this direction, a particle of the regime—within us and outside of us—is dissolved.

Mode of cooperation (construction of the commons, via empathy, through resonance between embryonic worlds): to cooperate here is about weaving multiple network connections from distinct situations, experiences and languages, whose unifying link is an ethical perspective: the affirmation of life in its transfiguring and transvaluating essence. This weaving creates temporary relational territories, varied and variable, in which collective synergies are produced, providers of a reciprocal sheltering that facilitates the work of elaborating the trauma which results from the perverse operation of the colonial-capitalistic regime. This is the condition for success in composing an individual and collective body that is resistant to the pimping of life and capable of repelling it. From such collective reappropriations of the drive comes the potential constitution of fields for the emergence of events, in which other modes of existence and their respective cartographies—germinal worlds—continue to develop. Unlike the macropolitical mode of cooperation, these insurrectionary actions are not pre-programmed.

—Translated from the Portuguese by Vivian Mocellin.

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The Social Poltergeist
A Case Study of Maintenance Violence

Angela Dimitrakaki

"The critique of violence is the philosophy of its history—the 'philosophy' of this history, because only the idea of its development makes possible a critical, discriminating, and decisive approach to its temporal data."

—Walter Benjamin, *The Critique of Violence*, 1921

Flyer signed by anarchists, communists and autonomous, self-governing bodies from Greece, Albania and Turkey in solidarity with Konstantina Kouneva, 2008
Courtesy of Delfys Women's Archive, Athens

Two Events in Context

December 2008. Athens, Greece.

A. On the sixth day of the month, in an incident of random police brutality (meaning an incident involving a special guard *aiming* his loaded gun at a *random* person), the fifteen-year-old schoolboy Alexis Grigoropoulos is murdered in Exarcheia. Known as the 'anarchist quarter' of Athens, Exarcheia is a city-centre district where Athenians of every ethnic origin and age like to hang out.

Shot in the chest, Grigoropoulos dies in the arms of his horrified best friend, Nikos Romanos, also a teenager—it is his name day, of Saint Nicolas, and in Greece a name day is celebrated with friends. The two boys had met as students at the prestigious and expensive Moraitis School, which Romanos (a brilliant student) will leave for a state school soon after his friend's murder. The slaughter of the unarmed Greek teenager who just *happens* to be standing somewhere with his friends when the officer decides to take aim will spark nationwide riots. Indeed, these will be known as the 2008 Greek Riots, as entered in Wikipedia, where it is further noted that 'outside Greece, solidarity demonstrations, riots and in some cases clashes with local police also took place in more than 70 cities around the world.'

Two years later, in 2010, Greece is taken over by the IMF and related guardians of the neoliberal, extractive, global capitalist world order. In this context of social upheaval, the Grigoropoulos Generation becomes a legend, seen as somehow connected with the country's rebellious stance against imposed practices of pauperisation and debt bondage. In December 2014, at the age of 21, Romanos comes to public attention. Now an anarchist and in jail for a bank robbery connected to his anti-state politics, he goes on a hunger strike, as the state denies him the right to attend lectures despite his having successfully passed his university entry exams. The young man's hunger strike moves the nation in the country's fourth winter of discontent. The right-wing government led by prime minister Antonis Samaras (always charging against the 'illegal immigrants') begs to look disgustingly cruel in addition to incompetent. Some of us start using the word 'biopolitics' even when writing for lifestyle magazines in Greece, such as in an article I wrote for *Propaganda* magazine in 2014. In January 2015, in what the left in Europe and beyond has looked upon with unprecedented hope, the Syriza party, seen then to represent a range of social movements (converging on anti-capitalist stance) and promising to act against the hated 'memoranda' of debt extraction, will win the national election by a small margin.

B. On the twenty-second day of that same month, a small group of men violently attack Konstantina Kouneva, the militant secretary of ΠΕΚΟΠ, the Union of Female Cleaners and Housekeepers of Attica. (Attica is the greater region encompassing Athens.) A Bulgarian immigrant with a university degree in history, Kouneva has been employed in Athens as a cleaner. This is not a case of 'random' brutality distributed by the police. Rather, it is an intentional attack perpetrated by thugs that, one might assume, 'the bosses' have hired illegally. Kouneva has received life-threatening calls on her phone, and the company she works for has refused to move her to a morning shift, despite her child's serious health problems. The attack thus targets the leading voice of a union representing mostly working-class women, both Greek nationals and immigrants.

That the attackers also force acid down Kouneva's throat is perhaps symbolic of private capital's perceived right to silence any such militant voices, so as to minimise the risk of insurgent politics, to avoid the contagion spreading within the broader rur sector. The attack (a horrific torture, which results in Kouneva losing one eye, enduring devastating damage of vital organs, and being permanently scarred on her face) angers many, but does not lead to nationwide riots. You will not find this December date listed in the extremely detailed Wikipedia entry outlining the day-by-day unfolding of the '2008 Greek Riots' all the way to January 2009. Kouneva will get her own Wikipedia entry, under her name, as an individual. The entry is much shorter than that for Event A. A handful of smaller-scale demonstrations supporting Kouneva does, however, take place, including those organised by the Feminist Centre of Athens and the newly formed Solidarity Assembly for Konstantina Kouneva. Needless to say the protesters clash with the police this time, too.[1]

Eight years later, in 2016, Kouneva, now a member of the European Parliament affiliated with Syriza, will face a concerted attempt to discredit her through the suggestion that her bank account holds funds from 'suspect' sources. Kouneva will respond to said claims publicly by saying that the funds come from solidarity donors who enable the continuation of her medical treatment.

Today, Kouneva carries on as an MP in the European Parliament, with her interventions focusing on labour and human-rights issues. Her own appeal to justice against her attackers remains unresolved. Notably, whereas the first court case (2013) had characterised the attack as a 'work accident'. The second court case (2016) found no connection between 'the bosses' and 'the attackers' (who remain unknown). In 2017, Kouneva took her case to Areios Pagos, the country's supreme court. As I write these lines, the supreme court's verdict is pending. What is not pending is the fate of the country's work force: Extortionist financial demands have led to the loss of workers' rights, the loss of income and the loss of morale. The labour movement still exists, but the 'crisis' has become normalised and the spirit of insurgency that had gripped the world of labour just a few years back has now been subdued.

A Conjuncture

The year 2018 marks a decade since events A and B, and eight years since George Papandreou, then prime minister of Greece, announced on TV (with a cold sore on his lip and speaking from a distant border island near Turkey) that the country was effectively taken over by the IMF and 'the creditors'. The above description of events A and B already suggests that they did not remain contained to December 6 and December 22 respectively. But to think in terms of their 'aftermath' would seem misplaced, as my aim is not to elucidate consequences. If the dictionary's sample sentence on 'aftermath' is 'food prices soared in the aftermath of the drought', there is no political desire here to trace the 'effects' of these two events that would, in turn, erroneously frame them as 'causes'.

Rather than persist with a logic of causality, I propose to engage a logic of *articulation*, one that gives pride of place to 'the materialism of the encounter' as once proposed by Louis Althusser: two events preceding a crisis and its discourse have encountered a crisis and its discourse. The two events were *unaware*, so to speak, that the crisis and its discourse would happen. Yet, the two events became woven into this crisis and its discourse. One might say that it was the crisis and its discourse that imbued the two events with duration, connecting them to the cultures of resistance that formed within the crisis and remain recorded in its discourse. The precise ways in which the two events were woven into the crisis and its discourse remain elusive, and I do not hope to trace them in this short essay. Rather, what interests me is how the two events can be introduced into a *conjuncture*, in the way that Louis Althusser thought of this term in his *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of Scientists and Other Essays*, stressing its relevance to "the possibility of political action, detached at last from the false antinomies of 'freedom' and 'necessity' (the 'play' of the variations in dominance in the conjuncture), and of the real conditions of political practice […]."

This was a conjuncture in which social movements formed, reformed, intersected, allied, accelerated, gained and lost momentum, all the way to the eventual normalisation of the crisis—as its discourse notes. It was a conjuncture that included 2011, with protests and movements erupting in Greece and in many other parts of the world and a *TIME* magazine cover featuring 'the protester' as 'person of the year'. Arguably, 'the protester' should have remained 'person of the year' until now—and yet there has been a broad silent or voiced acknowledgement of the fact that the

1 Since 2003, Kouneva had worked for OIKOMET, a private firm contracted to provide—'rent out' is the popular phrasal verb here—cleaners to ΗΣΑΠ (Athens & Piraeus Railway Company). See 'Protesters Clash with Riot Police over Acid Attack on Syndicalist Cleaner in Athens', libcom.org blog, 29 December 2008, http://libcom.org/news/bosses-attack-militant-cleaners-syndicalist-vitriolic-acid-athens-protest-march-occupation. See also Sissy Vovou, 'The Ugliest Face of Neoliberal Employers', Transform! Europe, 20 May 2009, https://www.transform-network.net/en/publications/yearbook/overview/article/journal-042009/the-ugliest-face-of-neoliberal-employers/ Both accessed 22 February 2018.


PARKING
PARKING

Riots in Athens following the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos by the police in December 2008
Photos by Dimitris Parthimos

revolutionary moment of the early twenty-first century has now evaporated. This feeling of loss permeates the immediate context of the two events (Greece) and the broader transnational space where the left is portrayed as always being cornered, the circumstances never quite maturing into a horizon of sustained advance. But can a revolutionary moment be 'lost'? If not, in what sense can revolutionary moments be maintained?

What can be maintained is the actuality of the experience and the lessons the latter offers. But then the driving question becomes: What is it that connects the two events of December 2008 with what remains of these gains and losses, with the 'partial freedom of human will' (Althusser) limited here to the will to learn about how to *preserve* a lesson of history (a lesson of the encounter?) so that history as resistance, amid other delineations, can continue?

It is perhaps important at this point to throw in the mix the specific complexity of the conjuncture. Although there is no doubt that *the autonomisation of the economy* witnessed in contemporary, finance-driven capitalism is at the root of the social experience that engulfs the two events, the so-called 'crisis' proved *not* to be one. This is true for Greece as much as for elsewhere. When we read that in the United States today, the gains of civil rights struggles have been reversed, we need to think about the continuity of racial hatred but also about the discontinuity of the latter's purpose. For if fashioning the black slave served the harvesting of free labour as part of production, fashioning the radicalised 'other' in a regime of job scarcity and the undoing of the welfare state may well be serving the justification of presenting to decent folk an abhorrent social abject, a burden that must be shed as 'undeserving'. In Poland, critics of the far right's spectacular ascent are having trouble explaining it through a straightforward link to the country's (fast-growing) economy, stressing a 'preservation' principle.[2] As for Greece, Golden Dawn blood donation supplies for 'Greeks only' during the crisis—also a refugee crisis—is another realisation of the conjuncture. The conjuncture is full of xenohatred—xenophobia being too moderate a word.

And yet the conjuncture is no longer thought of as exceptional. Greece itself is proving to be a long-term experiment in the resilience of extractive capitalism in its clash with opposing forces. My interest lies precisely in what the two events, which precede the 'crisis', tell us about the latter's eventual normalisation—indeed, the *enforcement* of crisis as a long-term social reality. The issue at hand is not a normalisation of the mantra that 'there is no alternative' but rather the hypothesis that the principle element contributing to enforcing the abstraction of 'no alternative' as a concrete social reality has been present *before* the crisis and apparent in the two events with which I opened this essay. This element is violence. Violence is the conjuncture's animating force, as affirmed time and again by an impossibly long line of theorists of the contemporary—Martin Jay, among them, who wrote back in 2003 in *Refractions of Violence* about the 'keen awareness that we do indeed live in such a finite economy in which utter redemption *from* violence is as utopian as redemption *through* it.'

Redemption, utopia, finitude—these are words of existential weight; ontologies of a scale that is unlikely to be conjured in the dullness with which the everyday is executed and with which it, apparently, executes. 'The everyday' used to be a cheerful if critical term of modernity, associated with the pleasures and perils of consumer culture or of 'ordinary dignity or the accidentally miraculous' to the point that it was embraced by the likes of the Surrealists, the Situationists and the feminists.[3] Yet the conjuncture in which the two events of my case study are located points to a different everyday modality, also laced into modernity, and also constituting a refraction: a change in direction, that is, of violence as it leaves the scale of the existential (redemption, utopia, finitude) and enters the plane of the mundane (captivity, struggle, generations). In that topography, violence becomes a condition for the reproduction of hegemony. But such reproduction is not limited to engineering sameness. It may, instead, encompass processes of *testing* the legitimacy of the *status quo* that appear as breaches of sameness, subversions of the everyday, social *poltergeists*. These are not safe procedures.

2 Michal Kozlowski, 'How to Live in a Hostile World: On the Polish Paradox', *books & ideas*, 22 February 2018, http://www.booksandideas.net/How-to-Live-in-a-Hostile-World.html Accessed 1 March 2018.

3 Stephen Johnstone, ed, *The Everyday*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2008. The phrase is quoted from the back cover.

Two Expressions of Maintenance Violence

The two events of December 2008 in Greece are structured by discrete kinds of violence. On the one hand is the violence residing in 'random' police brutality, violence effectively authorised by the very *existence* of the police representing the state's right to the monopoly on violence in civil society. This violence is formal and incipiently present even when not materialised. Irrespective of whatever measures the state and its judiciary system can take after the act of the special guard that shot an (unarmed) human being for being in a certain place at a certain time, what is important for the social body is the awareness that the *potential* of such violence exists. Parents should caution their children against hanging out in anarchist quarters, and basically everyone should be aware that authorised deadly violence cannot be excluded from the incidents or accidents that constitute the web of everyday life. There can be no protection from the potential of such violence, which spreads an invisible membrane across the spaces and times of everyday life. The membrane is a threat, the promise of a possible occurrence, a subtle yet persuasive reminder about where the power of reproduction, and the reproduction of power, lies. It lies in the *status quo*.

On the other hand, we have the nonrandom violence of thugs targeting a militant female union leader. This violence is not authorised formally. Much like the police shooting, it is also addressed by the judiciary system, and therefore the state—yet it is not, in principle, authorised in its potentiality by the state. The social body can only *assume* that capitalist patriarchy deployed this violence against Kouneva. It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove to whom this violence belongs. Capital or patriarchy will not rush to the stage to claim authorship of this violence (called at best a 'work accident'). They don't have to. The important thing for capital and patriarchy is that they have access to this violence and that the social body knows that such violence can be, *ultimately*, unleashed against anyone not knowing her place.

Seemingly unrelated, the two events of December 2008 constitute expressions of violence that are connected structurally. When considered together, the events are revealed as complementary and therefore purposeful—and this puts some pressure on the aleatory, or at least relocates it from the randomness of the two 'occurrences' (from the fact that they preceded the crisis) to their temporal proximity. Yet it is this proximity that compels one to grasp the two expressions of violence as co-articulated within a *status quo* that relies on a circuit of oppression, suppression, and repression: the oppression of youth and (feminized) workers; the suppression of moves towards enacting an alternative or acting in terms of a challenge to oppression; the repression, through the fear generated by the suppression, of the will to rise against oppression.

Significantly, these expressions of violence were not realised against a collective (a rioting multitude, a general strike), but were rather exercised against what civil society sees as an 'individual'—that is, the sacred unit of capitalist democracy, precisely what the *status quo* vows to protect. The continuing hegemony of capitalist democracy, perceived to be based on consensus rather than coercion, persistently invokes the individual's protection as the justification of the state's biopolitical management. But here we observe a confrontation of the biopolitical with the necropolitical—and so, should this confrontation be seen as an unfortunate, undesirable *co*incidence (pun intended) or the manifestation of a necessary 'knocking spirit', that is, a social *poltergeist* intended to remind those within hearing range of the depths to which authority runs, but also how swiftly it can reach the surface?

Here, the *threat* of violence reached the social body, in whatever collective identity it might wish to assume (nation, workers, the country's youth and so on), through the *application* of violence on the sacred nucleus of the *status quo*. We may want to enhance this dialectic between threat and application by mapping it onto the one connecting ideology and the material conditions in which life and death are managed by a sovereignty in the conjuncture. In suffusing threat by actualising violence, the *status quo* proved that the individual as *latent* singularity can be an easy target, that the individual may be *activated* as a target at any point, and ultimately that the promised protection is conditional and revocable. The question we are left with, nonetheless, is if such activation of the individual can bring forth a *society*.

A Society

It was Margaret Thatcher who in/famously said, back when people had to be convinced that the autonomisation of the economy was a good idea, "there's no such thing as society" but "there are individual men and women". What she had in mind was that worthy (hard-working) individuals would benefit from this autonomisation, as opposed to other individuals. There is an opportunity offered by the two events of December 2008 to correct her, not by insisting that society exists but by looking into *how* it comes into existence. Society is a complex term. If the word's etymology points to individuals coming together in friendly association in sharing norms and understandings about how things work (or should), it has become clear that such etymology is inadequate to the present conjuncture where civil society threatens to dissolve into civil war—a threat that some fear but some would welcome.

A society did come forth in December 2008. Social antagonisms became manifest and unmissable. The two December events described at the outset already testify to this: a multitude was activated in the riots against police brutality, and even a generation was named; a concrete awareness was born around immigrant workers' role in union struggles, as well as women's leading role in the latter, and capital's methods of silencing them. The social poltergeist was heard. And a response was elicited—that individuals *enacted* processes of sharing a struggle in common with other individuals. The dual maintenance violence applied was, *in some sense*, defeated at the point of its temporal randomness: it became possible to see that the *status quo* has no need for a state of emergency as a framework for demonstrating its authority, that the exercise of authority can, and must, take place within the everyday. And in the aleatory encounter of the two events with the crisis and its discourse, society found itself prepared for struggle—a struggle that unfolded in the voting booth (elections, a referendum) as much as in the streets and in the volume of speech-acts through which social movements declared their existence. All this happened. And yet, writing in hindsight, from the vantage point of 2018, things appear more complicated—which is why the perceived defeat of preventive violence has to be qualified as 'in some sense'.

To begin with, and as also evident in the description of Events A and B, the enacted processes of December 2008 in Greece failed to integrate at the point of their emergence. The process of opposition enacted by police brutality remained parallel to (as in 'separate from') the outcry against the attack suffered by a union leader. The social experience remained short of witnessing a fusion of the two. A society did come forth, but it did not overcome the barrier of compartmentalisation, even if it refused atomisation. The *status quo* did not have to face a new consciousness of allied opposition then and there—and in 2018, we are left with speculating what might have happened to, and in, the conjuncture had the two events preceding the crisis and its discourse scaled up into one. This shortcoming is not new. In 1934, Arthur Rosenberg wrote:

> In every country the capitalists rule only so long as decisive sectors of the population feel at one with their system, are ready to work for them, to vote for them, to shoot others on their behalf, all in the conviction that their own interests demand the preservation of the capitalist economic order.
> —Rosenberg, 'Fascism as a Mass-Movement', 1934

The above excerpt outlines what I have called the *status quo*, sustained through the misguided 'conviction' of those who 'work', those who 'vote', those who 'shoot'. Rosenberg connects all these with 'preservation'—that of an 'economic order'. Although in the two events of December 2008 some 'sectors of the population' lost the conviction that their interests aligned with those of the *status quo*, they did not identify the latter with an economic order. This is why the two events remained separate, and also why the support for Kouneva not only did not develop into nationwide riots but remained, to some extent, attached to the notion of personal misfortune. The riots against 'those who shoot' indicated the emergence of an ethical left, still hesitant in questioning the core demand of the *status quo* in the specific conjuncture. Secondly, to say that a society came forth in the positive, emancipation-oriented reading provided above entails a narrative partisanship, as it imbues the key term (society) with oppositional capacities valued by the left. But the discourses of 'opposition' and 'social movement' do not just belong to the left—both historically and at present. As regards the past, suffice to remind us of the fate of Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1908): Written in support of the general strike, it ended up being useful to Benito Mussolini and other fascists.

As regards the present, the neo-fascist Golden Dawn refers to itself in terms of a 'movement'—indeed, an oppositional one—across all its discursive platforms, from websites to public speeches; and this 'movement' of politicised misanthropy also grew within the conjuncture and claimed the everyday as the paradigmatic locus for claiming 'change'. Golden Dawn also heard the 'knocking spirit'—and it rightly recognised itself within both its prefigurative and actual aspects. That some of its members are on trial for the murder of antifascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas has not deterred the party's thugs from carrying out violent attacks, one as recent as February 2018, in which eight people chanting "blood, honour, Golden Dawn" attacked the Favela Social Centre in Piraeus, the port of Athens. Golden Dawn had already emerged as third party in the national election of January 25, 2015, which brought the so-called 'coalition of the radical left' to power, as well as in the national election of September 20, 2015, which ended the illusion—or, if you will, the 'parenthesis'—of the radical left in power. And, in both elections, the right-wing party of Νέα Δημοκρατία [New Democracy] was voted second. This is the party that was in government when Nikos Romanos went on hunger strike in his prison, six years after his best friend died in his arms by maintenance violence. Romanos seemed to have no illusions. His words that follow conclude a fact-packed paragraph about the dialectic of biopolitics and necropolitics in the specific conjuncture where the 'radical left' was voted to 'power' in Greece (and for many, by extension in Europe). They were made public before the Greek Referendum of July 12, 2015, as the calendar date marking the beginning of the end of the illusion:

> In short, Syriza fully retains all those geopolitical, economic and military commitments of a state that belongs to the capitalist periphery, while at the same time, to throw dust in the eyes of leftist voters, it actively supports some moth-eaten bureaucratic officials who maintain a leftist rhetoric, and yet when the hour comes for the political mutation of Syriza, they will be thrown out.
> —'Interview with Anarchist Nikos Romanos (Greece)', *325/no state*, 2015

The hour when the political mutation appeared did, indeed, come. The winning NO of the Greek Referendum as an answer to the question 'Should the agreement plan submitted by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the Eurogroup of 25 June 2015, and comprised of two parts which make up their joint proposal, be accepted?' was turned into a YES at the Brussels all-night summit on July 12 that year. Scores of disillusioned party members subscribing to what Romanos called 'leftist rhetoric' exited Syriza over the coming months, although the party was voted again to power in September, having itself *become* the doxa of 'there is no alternative'. That was a political mutation of consequence. What remains of the society that came forth in December 2008 is currently a moot point.

As Konstantina Kouneva—the firebrand immigrant female worker punished by maintenance violence—continues to participate as a Syriza member of the European Parliament in the very democracy that Romanos was taught violently to reject, the question of how the social poltergeist relates to that elusive reality called 'society' looms disturbingly. A provisional answer might be that 'society' is not the shape of reality in a given conjuncture, but a periodically affirmed *reality check* on the balance between the biopolitics-necropolitics nexus and the forces that, in negating that nexus, make it apparent. This negation can be constituted consciously or by, and through, the materialism of a chance encounter. But the positions are unstable—and the precise content of the negation is as well. In the events of my case study, Kouneva embodied the conscious opposition and Grigoropoulos the rupture of the aleatory. But the conjuncture (like life) had other plans, as, ten years later, the Greek crisis has itself mutated into a multidimensional political defeat—a defeat punctuated by the regular attacks of a social poltergeist emboldened into being noisier and noisier.

—For Marielle Franco

Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Palast der Republik 2009_Northside*, 2009, colour photograph, 149x180 cm
Courtesy of VG Bild Kunst, Bonn and the artists

Those Who Are Dead Are Not Ever Gone
On the Maintenance of Supremacy, the Ethnological Museum and the Intricacies of the Humboldt Forum

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

ACT I The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. Maybe especially with such foods, as the greed to devour that delicacy rapidly, with little focus on mastication, more on consuming, might lead to the diversion of a piece from its track towards the oesophagus into the trachea. In the process of choking, one tender gamba would block the upper airway and prevent oxygen from entering the lungs; within four to ten minutes the lack of oxygen flow to the brain would lead to an irreversible brain death, if no one comes to the rescue. When the banality of breathing is obstructed, death is imminent.

Let us afford ourselves the luxury of making a couple of suppositions related by analogy to choking … The institution of the ethnological museum or world museum seems to be in the midst of a serious crisis of choking. The delicacies that most such museums have acquired, which is to say co-opted, which is to say ingested—usually under the most dubious of conditions, ranging from blatant looting to petty theft,[1] blackmail and acquisition for little money, preying on the greed and naivety of some sellers, in the best spirit of predatory capitalism—including historical and ritual sculptures,

1 As reported by Michel Leiris in his description of the French *Mission ethnographique et linguistique Dakar-Djibouti* in his memoir of that journey, *Phantom Africa.* Trans. Brent Hayes Edwards, Kolkata, Seagull Books, 2017.

fabrics, artworks and artefacts of all kinds, human skulls and skeletons, over the course of the history of ethnological museums, seem to have collectively missed the track to the oesophagus and got stuck in the air tract. Actually, they have been stuck there for as long as the history of mass collections, acquisitions and looting, for as long as the ruthless and ongoing extraction of cultural property has occurred in the former colonies outside of Europe. In the case of the Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin-Dahlem, this has been since its foundation in 1873 and its opening in 1886.

The coughing from the choking throes of the ethnological museum / world museum / universal museum is becoming loud and blaring, and while some people are dashing off in a helter-skelter panic, others are running to slap the ethnological museum on the back—or punch it beneath the diaphragm—with the hope of rescuing it at this late stage of choking. But just like in every choking situation, rescue is only possible if the delicate morsel blocking the windpipe is spat out.

ACT II These blows and punches have come in a multitude of forms and with varying intensities. Since the summer of 2017, particularly, they haven't stopped, and while momentum is growing, optimism is also dwindling as time passes by. In that blessed July of 2017, as the prominent French historian, professor at TU Berlin and Collège de France Bénédicte Savoy stepped out of the blue on to the pages of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to vent her frustrations and raise serious allegations against the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, SPK) and Berlin Humboldt Forum's lack of provenance research, lack of autonomy, dearth of transparency, inadequate scientific prowess and general irresponsibility, I was sure that this blow to the back was one to reckon with.[2] A blow that could either thrust the blockage out of the windpipe, if heeded, or sound the ground for demise, if ignored. In this notorious interview, Savoy lamented that the Humboldt Forum was like Chernobyl, a comparison which drew venom from the founding directorate, SPK President Hermann Parzinger and art historian Horst Bredekamp, as well as from the former British Museum and current Humboldt Forum director Neil MacGregor.[3] Beyond the polemics the interview brought with it, we were finally hearing from someone, who had once had the privilege of being an insider, who had once thought it possible to change things from within, and who was now stepping out to reveal to us that the within is just as much of a fiction as those on the outside imagined it would be. The revelation that all the discourse about provenance and multiperspectivity, all those aurally charming concepts like 'shared heritage', were mere slogans, hashtags, pop political bling bling, came as less of a surprise.

While further jabs here and there followed, the next full blow came from a rather unexpected source. In November 2017 French President Emmanuel Macron gave a speech at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, stating that "African heritage must be highlighted in Paris, but also in Dakar, in Lagos, in Cotonou." He went on to add: "In the next five years, I want the conditions to be met for the temporary or permanent restitution of African heritage to Africa."[4] The world has since gained another temporal annotation or demarcation, namely the pre-Macron-Ouaga age and the post-Macron-Ouaga age. In celebration of Macron's call and in critique of the German context, Dr Kwame Opoku noted "German officialdom is indeed at a loss; they do not realize that in this post Ouagadougou period, the old arguments and methods are no longer applicable. The only choice available is to keep up with Macron or to out-macron Macron; they can either follow the steps of the bold and imaginative French leader or take a step ahead of the Elysée: i.e. implement some of the implications of the Ouagadougou Declaration. They could do this, e.g. by returning without any further delay or discussion some of the 508 or more Benin artefacts they have been holding in the Ethnological Museum, Berlin since 1897."[5] Another blow aimed at forcing the blockage out of the windpipe. Now the choking persists and the coughing is becoming desperately tedious as every ounce of air is a battle. With the open letter initiated by Berlin Postkolonial, signed by artists, activists and intellectuals, and addressed to Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, forcing her to take a stance on looted art and artefacts in German museums, as well as the appointment of Bénédicte Savoy and Senegalese writer and economist Felwine Sarr as consultants for the repatriation of African artefacts held in French museums, pressure is mounting.

ACT III The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. To diagnose the choking, one might have to look at hubris. There is a certain arrogance of strength and greatness that would restrain someone from pleading for help even if they were at the threshold of the yonder. Even if they were choking and if air were tight. The kind of condescension not only for the other, but also for the self, masked under the guise of power. The power that typically accompanies and emanates from patriarchy. The hubris which smells of the debris of coloniality or the longing for a time gripped by the claws of the colonial enterprise. When Paul Gilroy wrote in *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* that the inclination to romanticise colonial times reveals itself in our contemporary as "an unhealthy and destructive post-imperial hungering for renewed greatness",[6] he could just as well have been writing an essay on the Humboldt Forum. It is this hunger for greatness that urged the rebuilding of a former Prussian Palace in the middle of Berlin. This could be held as a masterclass on the reconstruction, the rewriting of history through architecture: the one-to-one reimagination of the Hohenzollern residence, whose foundations were laid in 1443; reconstructed around 1700 as a baroque residence; demolished after the Second World War; restructured from 1973 as the Palace of the Republic, in which the People's Chamber of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) met, but which was also a "place of happiness and sociability" for citizens;[7] shut down after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and from 1998 to 2008 gradually demolished to make space for this rebuilding of the palace.Perhaps this wouldn't be such a problem if this building and the institution it represents didn't symbolise a manifold erasure of histories and an exultation of monarchial and imperial systems.

It is not unusual to hear that after the fall of the Wall and the reunification of Germany, West Germany usurped and moved on to fully replace East Germany. Every effort was made to wipe out a system deemed retrograde and to implement a capitalist democratic system befitting the twenty-first century that lay ahead. Not only did the people of the former GDR lose, expeditiously, their social, economic and political structures and ways of life, they also lost their bearings, as their street names were changed, monuments were contested, political figures chastised, identity questioned and

2 Interview with Jörg Häntzchel, "Das Humboldt-Forum ist wie Tschernobyl", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 July 2017, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/benedicte-savoy-ueber-das-humboldt-forum-das-humboldt-forum-ist-wie-tschernobyl-1.3596423?reduced=true

3 Christiane Peitz, "Kunsthistorikerin Savoy: 'Da herrscht total Sklerose'", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21 July 2017, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/streit-ums-humboldt-forum-kunsthistorikerin-savoy-da-herrscht-totale-sklerose/20092228.html

4 Annalisa Quinn, "After a Promise to Return African Artifacts, France Moves Toward a Plan", *New York Times*, 6 March 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/arts/design/france-restitution-african-artifacts.html

5 Kwame Opoku, "Parzinger's Cri de Coeur: Genuine Plea For Un/unesco Assistance or Calculation to Delay Restitution of Artefacts?" *Modern Ghana*, 24 January 2018, https://www.modernghana.com/news/830590/parzingers-cri-de-coeur-genuine-plea-for-ununesco-assista.html

6 Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture*, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 331.

7 "Tagung: Ein öffentlicher Ort. Berliner Schloss—Palast der Republik—Humboldt Forum", event announcement, 19 September 2017, https://recs.hypotheses.org/718

shamed, and history challenged, in an effort to erase the communist past. This—what is considered by many as a takeover of the GDR by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)—is at the root of much frustration in the Eastern part of Germany today, which has led to proto-fascist sentiment, a radical shift to the right, and xenophobic attacks on foreigners, who have become the scapegoats of both the political system and the '*besorgte Bürger*'. Director of the Berliner Festspiele Thomas Oberender, ruminating on why the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD or 'Alternative for Germany' party) became so successful in the former GDR region, stated:

> Thirty years after the fall of the Wall, Germany is building a Humboldt Forum to bring Humboldtian surveys of the world in line with German colonial history. For this the Palace of the Republic was demolished and in its place nothing reminds one of it. How does one reflect on this inner German colonialism? This national 'roof damage', does it imply that there is nothing left to worry about regarding the history of the GDR, except the deaths at the Wall and the Stasi? What remains of the GDR is a reminder of victims and perpetrators, of injustice and failure and misbelief, this is the whole truth.[8]

Architecture as tool for the erasure of history—or, construction as eraser. The destruction of the Palace of the Republic as one coordinate in the tradition of tabula rasa urbanism.[9] Tabula rasa and *Wiederaufbau* (reconstruction) as means of maintaining what Aníbal Quijano calls the coloniality of power.[10]

On the other hand, the rebuilding of this palace in which objects and subjects—war booty and otherwise—from all over the non-West will be displayed and framed under the auspices of Humboldt must also be seen as a re-membering, as in re-piecing together as well as reminiscing about, and as a reinstituting of a historical era of Prussian greatness. This greatness was also characterised by the Brandenburg-Prussian endeavours to set up colonies on the West African coast in the seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries. With the establishment of the Kurbrandenburg Navy around 1676 and the Brandenburg African Company (BAC) in 1680, the Great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm sent commercial and military vessels to set up forts and colonies in West Africa. The frigate Morian reached the Guinea coast in January 1681 and facilitated the building of a fort on the land of the Ahanta people on the coast of present-day Ghana, as well as commercial posts for the trading of gold, pepper, ivory and people as slaves. This is how Brandenburg-Prussia entered the the transatlantic slave trade, selling an estimated 15,000 to 24,000 Africans in the years between 1680 and 1717 on 124 trade journeys. It should be noted that approximately 10 to 15 percent of these human resources did not survive the sheer brutality and harsh conditions of these trades. King of Prussia, Friedrich I. continued the colonial endeavour after the death of his father the 'Great Elector' in 1688, but later sold Prussia's colonies to the Dutch West India Company in 1717.[11]

ACT IV What does it mean to rebuild a Prussian base of power, name it after the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, fashion it as the world centre for culture and cultural dialogue housing works from the Ethnological

8 "Kulturpresseschau, Aus den Feuilletons, Wochenrückblick", Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 27 September 2017, http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kulturpresseschau.media.fe4c31b0b0d0521ea48a732768d73078.pdf. My translation. In German the expression 'roof damage' implies mental problems.

9 "The demolition of the Palast der Republik in 2008 is rooted in the tradition of tabula rasa urbanism. Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris (1922–25) and Oswald Mathias Ungers' idea of a green urban archipelago in Berlin (1977) are the artistically outstanding urban models with a history of city planning that includes demolition, new building and reconstruction: urbanism as curatorial practice that views buildings as objects on display and the city itself as an exhibition. The Plan Voisin explicitly made room also for historical buildings; once historical monuments had fallen victim to the tabula rasa approach, they could, according to Le Corbusier, be rebuilt at any other random location in Paris. In his urban archipelago Ungers planned—subsequent to the destruction of entire city neighborhoods—to reconstruct historical architectural projects unrealized until today." Wilfried Kuehn and Stephan Trüby, "Display Architecture" in *Displayer 03*, HfG Karlsruhe, Ausstellungsdesign und kuratorische Praxis, 2009, pp. 247–57, http://kuehnmalvezzi.com/media/publikationen/Disp03.pdf

10 Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America" in *Nepantla: Views from the South 1.3*, Duke University Press, 2000, pp. 533–80.

11 Elisabeth Nechutnys, "Brandenburg's Colonial Past", Postcolonial Potsdam blog, 27 May 2014, https://postcolonialpotsdam.wordpress.com/2014/05/27/brandenburgs-colonial-past/

Museum of Berlin and the Museum of Asian Art? Did this provoke the choking? How did these arts and artefacts, objects and subjects get into these collections in the first place? What does it mean to have one of the founding directors, Horst Bredekamp, claim openly—as one could hear in Lorenz Rollhäuser's "Haus der Weißen Herren: Humboldt Forum, Shared Heritage und der Umgang mit dem Anderen" ["House of White Men: Humboldt Forum, Shared Heritage and Dealing with the Other"][12]—that unlike other European cities like London, Brussels or Paris, Berlin did not collect colonially? Kwame Opoku et al. have published numerous essays, such as "Benin to Berlin Ethnologisches Museum: Are Benin Bronzes Made in Berlin?", discussing the colonial contexts and dubious means through which too many of these 'objects' were stolen, sold or conned out of the African continent or other parts of the world, and found themselves in European and North American museums.[13] Bredekamp's comments also stand in stark contrast to what Richard Kandt, resident of the German Empire in Rwanda, wrote in 1897 to Felix von Luschan, Head of the African Department of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde [Royal Museum for Ethnology] Berlin, about the provenance of the 'objects' in the museum: "It is especially difficult to procure an object without at least employing some force. I believe that half of your museum consists of stolen objects."[14] This fact of 1897 remains the fact of 2018.

Though this surpasses the frame of this paper, it is worth briefly mentioning some very clear cases, much discussed in the past years. The invasion and destruction of the Edo Kingdom of Benin and the humiliation of the Oba Ovonramwen by the British in 1897 was accompanied by the mass looting of an estimated 3,500 valuable bronze statues from the King's palace.[15] These were later taken to the British Museum or sold to museums and individuals across the Western hemisphere. The very well-documented correspondences of Felix von Luschan as well as other archive materials reveal that he was fully aware of the illegitimate acquisitions, provenance and blood that was attached to his purchases.

The throne of a king does not belong to the king, but to his people. The Bamum people of Cameroon have had to do without their throne ever since it was allegedly given as a gift by Sultan Ibrahim Njoya to Emperor Wilhelm II in 1908. Ever since, the 'Mandu Yenu' has been an economic and political gravitational force in the Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin-Dahlem. A blatant question arises: What is a gift in the context of colonialism? It is no secret that colonialism—in all its forms and shades—was "a crime against humanity", as Macron pointed out.[16] What is a gift in this context of extreme power gradients and colonial violence? If a thief came to your home, pointed a gun to your head and asked for you to offer up your most valuable goods as a gift, what chance is there for you to say no? The extortion of Makabu Buanga by Ludwig Wolf, colonial officer Hermann Wissmann's doctor, from the Congolese Prince Ischiehwu is another such case, with evidences of the extortion documented in Wolf's travel diary.

ACT V The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. To diagnose the choking, one might have to look at the entanglements of science and race.

12 Lorenz Rollhäuser, "Haus der Weißen Herren: Humboldt Forum, Shared Heritage und der Umgang mit dem Anderen", Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 23 September 2017, http://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/raubkunst-im-humboldt-forum-haus-der-weissen-herren.958.de.html?dram:article_id=391520

13 Kwame Opoku, "Benin to Berlin Ethnologisches Museum: Are Benin Bronzes Made in Berlin?" *Modern Ghana*, 13 February 2008, https://www.modernghana.com/news/157501/1/benin-to-berlin-ethnologisches-museum-are-benin-br.html

14 Original quote: "Dass der Erwerb von Ethnographica in der Kolonialzeit auf der Grundlage mehr oder minder 'struktureller Gewalt' erfolgte, soll hier in diesem Rahmen nicht näher verfolgt werden. Einzelnen Zeitgenossen war diese Tatsache im Übrigen durchaus bewußt. So schrieb der Afrikareisende und Resident des Deutschen Reiches in Ruanda, Richard Kandt, 1897 an Felix von Luschan, den stellvertretenden Direktor des Berliner Völkerkunde-Museums: Überhaupt ist es schwer, einen Gegenstand zu erhalten, ohne zum mindesten etwas Gewalt anzuwenden. Ich glaube, daß die Hälfte Ihres Museums gestohlen ist." Cornelia Essner, "Berlins Völkerkunde-Museum in der Kolonialära: Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Ethnologie und Kolonialismus in Deutschland" in *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart—Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin*, ed. Hans J. Reichardt, Munich, Siedler Verlag, 1986, p. 77. My translation.

15 Kwame Opoku, "We Will Show You Looted Benin Bronzes but Will Not Give Them Back: Second Defeat and Permanent Humiliation for Benin?" *Modern Ghana*, 2 October 2017, https://www.modernghana.com/news/806847/we-will-show-you-looted-benin-bronzes-but-will-not-give-them.html

16 Michael Stothard, "Macron calls France's colonial past a 'crime against humanity'", *Financial Times*, 17 February 2017.

Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Palast der Republik 2009_Southside*, 2009, colour photograph, 149x180 cm
Courtesy of VG Bild Kunst, Bonn and the artists

Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Palast der Republik 2009_Eastside*, 2009, colour photograph, 149x180 cm
Courtesy of VG Bild Kunst, Bonn and the artists

At the height of Germany's colonial era in the African continent, the Germans perpetrated what is widely regarded as the first genocide of the twentieth century in Namibia. Between 1904 and 1908, German troops in the former imperial German colony of South West Africa massacred—by shooting, hanging from trees, starving to death by banishing into the desert—an estimated one hundred thousand Hereros and Namas, leaving only fifteen thousand survivors. These survivors were forced into concentration camps, women and girls were raped, and even more people killed. As if the killing wasn't enough, the skeletons and skulls of the Herero and Nama people were shipped to Germany for 'scientific' racial experiments.[17] Even more recently, more than one thousand further skulls were found, until the last decade purportedly unknown to the institutions housing them, having been taken apparently from Rwanda and former East African colonies for Germany's racial research.[18] Due to enormous pressure from groups within and outside of Germany, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation has been forced to step up efforts to research and publish information on the provenance of the skulls, as well as to repatriate them. While Germany has started repatriating some of the skulls, an important consideration arises, one that is not easily understood within Western epistemological and spiritual frameworks. The souls of the people killed, and whose skeletons were shipped out of the country, as well as the soul of their nations, will not be healed just because the skulls were sent back. The healing commences only when the provenance is cleared, which is to say, only when one can put a name on each skull. The spirits of the dead will linger and seek abode until they are named and laid to rest in their homes. The choking persists as bones are unpacked, cleaned and debated upon, while the ghosts of the assassinated hover in a wondering state of anchorlessness.

ACT VI

Spirits inhabit
The darkness that lightens, the darkness that darkens,
The quivering tree, the murmuring wood,
The water that runs and the water that sleeps:
Spirits much stronger than we,
The breathing of the dead who are not really dead,
Of the dead who are not really gone,
Of the dead now no more in the earth.

Listen to Things
More often than Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the bush that is sobbing:
This is the ancestors, breathing.
—Birago Diop, "Spirits"

One must acknowledge that the readiness of some Western museums to send back the human remains—skeletons and more—to the previous colonies is a great moral and ethical gesture towards humanity; finally a recognition of their humanness. After centuries of objectification of other humans as tools, resources, utensils and labour

17 "Namibia: Skulls of My People", *Al Jazeera*, 26 May 2017, https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2017/05/namibia-skulls-people-170524084141641.html

18 "Germany to investigate 1,000 skulls taken from African colonies for 'racial research'", *Guardian*, 6 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/06/germany-to-investigate-1000-skulls-taken-from-african-colonies-for-racial-research

that enabled slavery, colonialism and racism, these museums and other scientific institutions seem to have realised that it was and is improper, unethical, immoral, illegal to have used other human beings for their experimentations, for their purposes of constructing otherness, for their goals of objectifying fellow human beings. Or have they? It is important that we remind ourselves that other humans were treated in this way under the guise of promoting Western civilisation, Christianisation and 'modernity'.

Let's assume that the days when you would go to an ethnographic museum and see the skull of your great-grandfather are over. Let's assume that morality and ethics permit the skulls to be locked up in boxes and stored in cellars, but not kept in the open. Let's assume that one day, when their provenance has been properly sorted out, all these humans will be laid to rest alongside their people. All of this because it has been finally understood that Africans, Latin Americans and Asians too have subjecthood and subjectivity. Since Western institutions now recognise that these human beings are not objects but subjects, who once upon a time possessed personhood, agency, consciousness and realness within their societies, they must be sent back.

Yet what many Western museums and institutions wrongly and forcefully harbouring many so-called 'objects' from the non-West do not understand, or have not fully recognised, is that most of the so-called 'objects' have never been and will never be objects. The objectification of these ritual and spiritual beings, historical carriers, cultural entities, orientations and essences is in line with the dehumanisation and objectification of humans from the non-West. If the skeletons have been delivered from objecthood, it is about time that the so-called objects also be freed from the bondages of objecthood, in which they have been detained ever since they were taken away from their societies as captives, as were humans as slaves. Understanding these so-called objects as subjects necessitates a radical shift from Western understandings of subjecthood, personhood and community, as well as a drastic shift from a Western understanding of art, authorship and society, and subsequently a profound reconfiguration of what it means to be human.

Firstly, to understand the subjectivity of the so-called objects, one must be able to understand that, for some of us, some of them are indeed the ancestors. Not representations of ancestors, as might be the case with a painting in a church or an effigy of Jesus or a portrait of one's great-grandfather—no—rather, some of the so-called objects must be seen as incarnations, embodiments or personifications of our ancestors. The transformation from a life of flesh to a life of wood or metal or clay. The corporealisation of some of those who have transmitted to that place a yonder. Indeed one must see some of these so-called objects *as* the yonder. In this case, how do the 'objects' differ from the skulls that are currently being repatriated? They too have personhood, agency and consciousness. I for one do not have any interest in seeing my ancestors, in whatever form—skeletons, wood or otherwise—in a museum.

Secondly, to understand the subjectivity of the so-called objects, one must be able to understand that some of them are indeed ritual entities that also possess subjectivity. As such they contain the possibility for healing, mediating between (wo)men

and gods, and conscious of the dynamics of communities as they protect individuals in society. The so-called objects have feelings and desires; they hunger and thirst, and this is why they are fed, given sacrifices, prayed to and appeased in various ways to avoid them shedding their wrath on us. If agency is the capacity to act and make choices, then the so-called objects also possess agency, as they determine, act upon and wield power over individuals and societies, and most especially hold perspectives for their societies. As Alain Resnais and Chris Marker pointed out in their 1953 classic *Statues Also Die,* the placement of these ritual beings in glass vitrines in well-tempered museums in the West is a form of murder.

Thirdly, to understand the subjectivity of these so-called objects, one must be able to understand that some of them were created or emerged within traditions or understandings of arts that stand at a yawning gap from Western traditions of artistry. In "Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink", Gloria Anzaldua writes: "My people did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life."[19] Where Anzaldua was heading here was towards a differentiation of what she called an "invoked art"—an art invested in performance ritual—from the non-West, and Western artistic practice. Anzaldua points out that invoked art is dedicated to the validation of humans, whereas most Western art is dedicated to the validation of itself. Invoked art, she writes, is communal and speaks to everyday life. Anzaldua thus argues that in Indigenous cultures, art-making aligned aesthetics with spiritual, functional and social contexts. She points out that making art for art's sake, or for the purposes of mastery, as is common in Western cultures, leads to the objectification of art. Anzaldua believed, just as her people did, in art's capacity to make change, to heal, to mend, to validate humanity. The difficulty for Western museums to recognise the qualities of so-called objects as subjects in themselves lies then in the sheer discrepancy in perceptions of what art is and can do. In this light, subjects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and from Native American cultures, lying captive in ethnographic museums around the world, are condemned to objecthood until they are repatriated and rehabilitated to subjecthood.

ACT VII The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. To diagnose the choking, one might have to look at the politics of hunger and toxicity.

One of the weapons implemented by the Germans during the Herero and Nama genocide was the weapon of starvation. Those who survived the severe military attacks were sent into the desert without food and water. In *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, Mike Davis states that in the later part of the nineteenth century, "millions died, not outside the 'modern world system', but in the very process of being forcibly incorporated into its economic and political structures."[20] He explores how colonialism and capitalism in British India and other British colonies increased rural poverty and hunger while economic policies exacerbated famine during the El Niño–Southern Oscillation-related famines killing between thirty and sixty million people due to the Malthusian economic ideologies of the colonial governments. Similarly, in Cormac Ó Gráda's *Famine: A Short History,* he expatiates on the history of famine in relation to political and economic

19 Gloria Anzaldua, "Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink" in *The Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural Literacy,* eds. Rick Simonsson and Scott Walker, Saint Paul, Graywolf Press, 1988.

20 Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, London, Verso, 2001.

histories, for example in Mao's China, Stalin's Ukraine or the 1943 Bengal famine. With regards to the latter, one of the worst famines of all times, Rakhi Chakraborty in "The Bengal Famine: How the British engineered the worst genocide in human history for profit" writes:

> Winston Churchill, the hallowed British War prime minister who saved Europe from a monster like Hitler was disturbingly callous about the roaring famine that was swallowing Bengal's population. He casually diverted the supplies of medical aid and food that was being dispatched to the starving victims to the already well supplied soldiers of Europe. When entreated upon, he said, 'Famine or no famine, Indians will breed like rabbits.' The Delhi Government sent a telegram to him painting a picture of the horrible devastation and the number of people who had died. His only response was, 'Then why hasn't Gandhi died yet?'[21]

Hunger, in the context of colonialism, has always been one more tool in the efforts to dehumanise, de-motivate, de-spirit and torture the colonised. An engineered hunger was a way to strip subjects of their subjectivities, in order to expose them as bare objects.

These same methods of objectification used on humans were and are still being exercised on the so-called objects in Western museums. It is very common that people in many non-Western cultures bring food of all kinds and make sacrifices to their ancestors. Just as it is normal to see people pour libation to their ancestors. If one acknowledges that the so-called objects have feelings and desires, hunger and thirst, then one must consider a discourse of starvation when one thinks of them in the glass boxes of museums. The hunger here is a concrete and physical hunger, but it must also be seen as a spiritual starvation.

Another means of elimination and dehumanisation adopted in cases of extreme power abuse and oppression is the use of toxic gases. So the relation with the gasification of humans comes in as a parallel. The fumigation of objects in museums to eliminate woodworms or moths, for instance—that is to say to take away any life so as to certify and reiterate the objecthood of what has been made an object. Dead wood without any trace of life is what the museum does to our ancestors. It is said that around 90 percent of the so-called objects harboured by many ethnographic museums have never been displayed and most likely will never be seen. This is in part because in the huge storage spaces they have been banished to, these beings have been gassed with arsenic and a cocktail of other gases, in an effort to sustain them and prevent both their decay and their life.

ACT VIII One of the many complaints that people who come from societies that have lost spiritual beings, historical artefacts or ancestors to Western museums make is that they feel an extreme sense of deracination and a loss of bearings. Many of the Benin Bronzes for example are carriers of historical accounts. Whenever something special happened in the society, the Oba asked his guild of artists to record the event by making a sculpture. This is to say that without these historical scripts in the form of artworks, the society loses its past, and its history is bound to be narrated by

21 Rakhi Chakraborty, "The Bengal Famine: How the British engineered the worst genocide in human history for profit", *YourStory,* 14 August 2014, https://yourstory.com/2014/08/bengal-famine-genocide/

the scripts and languages of those who plundered the Benin Palace. This sort of deracination has been said to have led in many cases to waves of rural-urban or Northern migration, as humans do not want to inhabit spaces devoid of their histories.

If we agree with Anzaldua that such spirited and living artworks have the potential to validate humanity in certain societies, then a loss of such beings which serve as coordinates of existence, coordinates that aid in one's navigation through life and society, produces as a consequence disoriented societies with extreme psychogeographic problems. A society that has lost its spiritual base is a de-rooted society. Though the physical spaces of dwelling might still be inhabited, their deprivation of gods, mediums and deities leaves them in a state of divine barrenness, which is a form of deterritorialisation. Divinity and spirituality are territories which once taken away leave gargantuan cavities that can only be filled by restituting, re-instituting and rehabilitating the spiritual and sacred beings. What is the psychological burden of a people that have had to exist for more than a century without their sacred throne?

ACT IX

Don't let them fool ya
Or even try to school ya!
—Bob Marley, "Could You Be Loved"

The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. To diagnose the choking, one might have to look at rhetoric, at propaganda as pedagogic method, and the politics of commodification.

As the debates surrounding the legitimacy of the so-called objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania and from Native American cultures in Western museums get louder, and as the pressure to repatriate them to their places of origin intensifies, some museum directors have sought to come up with smart-ass concepts that might make one misunderstand Marley as having sung, "Don't let them fool ya / Or even try to screw ya!" instead of "school ya!". Again, it seems there is a thin line between 'schooling' and 'screwing'. The reasons given by the colonialists to set up the colonial enterprise around the world was often related to setting up or instituting a universal knowledge, which was synonymous with Western epistemology. The excuse was to bring civilisation to the uncivilised. To liberate them from savagery. To free them from false gods and introduce them to the one and only jealous God with a capital G. While the colonial soldiers, merchants and priests paved their ways on these missions, telling people to give up their false gods, others like Felix von Luschan were loitering in the metropole waiting for the seized and stolen 'goods' to be sent over. The schooling in the Western epistemology came hand in hand with a screwing of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being.

It is thus no wonder that as the air gets tighter people like Hermann Parzinger have come up with 'wonderful' concepts like 'shared heritage'. In his by now notorious 2016 'manifesto', "Shared Heritage Is a Double Heritage", Parzinger spells out what his concept is all about.[22] It sounds so well intentioned and full of goodwill. As full of goodwill as the words of a spin doctor about to sell you a political or economic agenda

22 Hermann Parzinger, "'Shared Heritage', Geteiltes Erbe ist doppeltes Erbe", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 October 2016, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/shared-heritage-geteiltes-erbe-ist-doppeltes-erbe-14481517.html
All quotations to follow are translated by me.

you would probably disagree with. As full of goodwill as the words of a 419 or Feyman, who earnestly promises to double or triple your money, if only you would give him 100,000 euros.[23] As full of goodwill as trying to sell to those once colonised the idea that their gods, ancestors, mediums, historical entities and arts, which were for a large part forcefully or cunningly taken from them, are now humanity's heritage—that they belong to the world. Indeed, 'shared heritage' seems to be the new star in the planet of Feymania.

Let's then take a look at Parzinger's concept of 'shared heritage' through a detour into a few key points from his manifesto-like text. First of all, he writes:

> We manage the cultural assets of humanity together. So we should also share them with the nations that we once subjugated as colonies.[24]

While it is well intentioned to share the cultural assets at hand with the former colonised, the first question that arises is: Who gives you the mandate to manage the cultural assets of humanity? What does it mean to talk about the cultural assets of humanity that your nation once took from people who at the time were not even considered human? How is this sharing supposed to happen and under which power dynamics? Are nation states the right mediation or communication partners in such a venture?

When the Afo-A-Kom, a deity of the Kom people of Cameroon, was found in the collection of Furman Gallery, New York in 1973, after it was stolen from Cameroon in 1966 (allegedly bought for one hundred dollars and sold on to a New York art dealer), the gallery requested 60,000 dollars from the government of Cameroon. The cultural attaché of the Cameroonian Embassy in the US, Thaddeus Nkuo, made a strong plea for the repatriation of the Afo-A-Kom: "[It] is beyond money, beyond value. It is the heart of the Kom, what unifies the tribe, the spirit of the nation, what holds us together. It is not an object of art for sale, and could not be."[25] But still the US government was not ready to go the extra mile to get it back to Cameroon. Eventually, Furman Gallery sold the Afo-A-Kom to a businessman, who returned it to the Kom people.[26] Nowadays, with African nation states headed mostly by stooges of the West, with minimal interest in cultural heritage, many African nation states have become an even worse or careless force to reckon with. Also, from a historical point of view, it is hardly the nation with which one should be negotiating, in cases where the kingdoms—no matter how small they might be these days—still exist. That is to say, if the kingdom of the Kom still has a legitimate chief, why limit negotiations to the nation of Cameroon, and since the Benin Kingdom, founded in 1180, still has an Oba, why negotiate with the nation of Nigeria that is barely 104 years old?

Parzinger goes on to write:

> At the heart of shared heritage is the idea that the cultural heritage is merely kept by the museums, but in principle is considered the property of all humanity. However, this principle can only apply under the condition of legal acquisition.[27]

23 419, term for scam/scammer, in reference to Article 419 of Nigeria's criminal code, which deals with fraud. Feyman is the equivalent Cameroonian term, along with 'Feymania', the act (or art) of scamming. See Stephen Ellis, "The Origins of Nigeria's Notorious 419 Scams", *Newsweek*, 5 September 2016, http://www.newsweek.com/origins-nigerias-notorious-419-scams-456701; Dominique Malaquais, "Anatomie d'une arnaque: Feymen et feymania au Cameroun", *Les Etudes du CERI*, 77, June 2001, https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/etude77.pdf; Sarah Sakho, "Feymania, l'arnaque à la camerounaise", *Slate Afrique*, 22 December 2011, http://www.slateafrique.com/1775/feymania-arnaque-cameroun

24 Original quote, Parzinger: "Wir verwalten die Kulturgüter der Menschheit gemeinsam. Also sollten wir auch die Nationen an ihnen teilhaben lassen, die wir einst als Kolonien unterwarfen."

25 John H. Merryman, Albert E. Elsen and Stephen K. Urice, *Law, Ethics and the Visual Arts*, Kluwer Law International, 2007, pp. 364–65.

26 Alessandro Chechi, Anne L. Bandle and Marc-André Renold, "Case Afo-A-Kom—Furman Gallery and Kom people", *Platform ArThemis*, Art-Law Centre, University of Geneva, https://plone.unige.ch/art-adr/cases-affaires/afo-a-kom-2013-furman-gallery-and-kom-people

27 Original quote, Parzinger: "Im Zentrum von shared heritage steht der Gedanke, dass das kulturelle Erbe von den Museen lediglich verwahrt wird, grundsätzlich aber als Besitz der ganzen Menschheit gilt. Gelten kann dieser Grundsatz jedoch nur unter der Voraussetzung legalen Erwerbs. Shared heritage ist damit in gewisser Weise ein postnationales Programm, das jedoch auch eine entsprechende Geisteshaltung bei allen Beteiligten voraussetzt."

As many before me have stated, the problem is not the idea of sharing heritage per se.[28] The issue is about who calls the shots. Who gets to choose which museums may determine and declare what humanity's cultural heritage is and who gets to 'host' it? Further, who has the right to determine what a museum actually is, and under whose conditions this so-called property of all humanity is stored and displayed? It goes without saying that the Benin Bronzes were never made to be presented in glass boxes in well-tempered rooms. So how can this property of all humanity be a shared heritage, if the host considers themself omniscient and claims to know best how this heritage should be kept? Most importantly, what is a legal acquisition and what is shared heritage when one's partner is on the other end of the barrel of a gun?

Referring to Germany's brutal suppression of the Maji Maji uprising of 1905–7, Parzinger stresses the need "to work through the Maji Maji uprising with scientists from Tanzania and narrate this in the Humboldt Forum. This path may be difficult, thorny and not risk free; but it is mandatory for the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and its state museums."[29] Fair enough. It is indeed the duty of German institutions to narrate their brutal histories of colonialism, which is an all-too-often ignored chapter of German history. This history of colonialism is an entangled and shared history, which should be told from multiple perspectives. The telling of this story will not be done by inviting, once in a while for a brief time, a colleague from Tanzania, but rather by acknowledging that a sustainable structure must be built in which both the descendants of the former coloniser and the colonised will be represented within the thematics, the personnel, and the audience of the programme. However, one must continue to watch out for further instrumentalisation of the so-called objects in ethnological museums as surfaces on which all kinds of histories are projected.

According to Parzinger:

> It is conceivable to enter into a much closer cooperation with the museums of the countries of origin and exchange stocks temporarily for temporary exhibitions, one way or the other, which is of particular concern to our colleagues in Africa. The Humboldt Forum could be the *epicentre* of such a novel relationship with the world. […] [A]n equal partnership in a particular case may well include the return of individual objects, if they are proven to have been illegally acquired. Because shared heritage can only ever be as good as the corresponding provenance research, and a maximum of transparency about the acquisition circumstances is […] an indispensable prerequisite for any cooperation.[30]

The most fascinating thing about Feymania is the packaging. The fine gold look-alike with which faeces can be beautifully packaged is an art of its own. The idea of the Humboldt Forum as the epicentre of a relationship with the world is a narrative that is at least five hundred years old. It is the aftershock of an old fantasy that saw Europe at the centre of the world and its colonies at the peripheries. While the repetition and representation of fantasies doesn't make them any more real, the repetition and representation of violence does amplify damage. And as we all know, sometimes the aftershocks of a quake can be deadlier than the quake itself. Oh and

28 See for example Kwame Opoku and Berlin Postkolonial.

29 Original quote, Parzinger: "Und trotzdem geht es auch hier darum, einen gemeinsamen Weg zum Umgang mit dieser Geschichte zu finden. Deshalb wollen wir den Maji-Maji-Aufstand mit Wissenschaftlern aus Tansania aufarbeiten und im Humboldt-Forum erzählen. Dieser Weg mag mühsam, dornig und auch nicht risikofrei sein; aber für die Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz und ihre Staatlichen Museen ist er zwingend."

30 Original quote, Parzinger: "Denkbar ist, mit den Museen der Herkunftsländer in eine viel engere Kooperation einzutreten und Bestände zeitweise für Wechselausstellungen auszutauschen, in die eine wie in die andere Richtung, was gerade unseren Kollegen in Afrika ein wichtiges Anliegen ist. Das Humboldt-Forum könnte das *Epizentrum* einer solch neuartigen Beziehung mit der Welt sein. Und viertens kann zu einer gleichberechtigten Partnerschaft im Einzelfall sehr wohl auch die Rückgabe einzelner Objekte gehören, wenn diese nachweislich illegal erworben sein sollten. Denn shared heritage kann immer nur so gut sein wie die entsprechende Provenienzforschung, und ein Maximum an Transparenz über die Erwerbungsumstände ist—fünftens—unabdingbare Voraussetzung für jegliche Zusammenarbeit." My emphasis.

Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Palast der Republik 2009_Westside*, 2009, colour photograph, 149x180 cm
Courtesy of VG Bild Kunst, Bonn and the artists

by the way, transparency without further qualification is just … emptiness. One can't fail to notice Parzinger's over-stressing of temporality in his proposal of a possible temporary exchange of stocks for temporary exhibitions. Who gets to determine how long this temporary exchange could be? And how come we are talking about the host loaning the works to the country of origin instead of the other way round? The return of 'objects' should not be an exception, but rather the norm. Then at that point, after the return, one could start talking about shared heritage, wherein the "countries of origin" could decide to loan some of the so-called objects to Western museums, in exchange for a handsome remuneration.

It is interesting that Parzinger goes further to propose his concept of 'shared heritage' and the Humboldt Forum as a solution to the 'clashes of civilisations', the recent rise of xenophobia in Germany and Europe despite increasingly multi-ethnic populations. He writes in this regard:

> What we are currently experiencing is not just a consequence of poverty and lack of prospects. Education is one of the crucial weapons against prejudice and extremism, and that's what museums and cultural institutions in general can do to combat isolation and xenophobia: they have the potential to give people tolerance and respect for other cultures. This is perhaps the most important mission of the Humboldt Forum in the new Berlin Palace.[31]

Education as weapon? What kind of education by the Humboldt Forum would help fight xenophobia? Education about the history of Prussia's greatness as a monarchy? Education about the collection of Germany's war booties from its former colonies, labelled as Prussian Cultural Heritage? Education about the Christian cross on the Humboldt Forum's facade? The education of othering that is insinuated by putting all non-Western cultures under a single umbrella? Maybe instead of becoming a place where isolation and xenophobia are combated and where tolerance and respect for other cultures are practiced, the Humboldt Forum could turn out to be the place where the supremacy of Prussia, whiteness, colonial dominance and the monotheism of Christianity will be celebrated and commemorated, by those who were presumed to learn the opposite. As for those of us born and bred in the colonies, as well as those Germans of Colour, the way the Humboldt Forum sounds in Parzinger's depiction, it will be a place where we are reminded of times when we were dehumanised, othered, humiliated and subordinated. So, education as weapon? As the mighty Fela Kuti would have said: "Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense".

What Fela meant to say is that what is considered good sense by the one, is not the good sense of the other. The field of play has changed, and not only do we have to change the language of 'education', we also need to change the curriculum. Radically so. 'Shared heritage' as it is proposed today belongs to the old curriculum. The curriculum of the metropole. The yearning for a nucleus in a decentralised world.

In this light, two further anecdotes are worth mentioning. Firstly, after giving an interview on the Humboldt Forum in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*,[32] among the

31 Original quote, Parzinger: "Was wir gegenwärtig erleben, ist nicht nur eine Folge von Armut und Perspektivlosigkeit. Bildung ist eine der entscheidenden Waffen gegen Vorurteile und Extremismus, und das ist es, was Museen und Kultureinrichtungen insgesamt beim Kampf gegen Isolierung und Xenophobie in die Waagschale werfen können: Sie haben das Potential, den Menschen Toleranz und Respekt gegenüber anderen Kulturen zu vermitteln. Das ist heute die vielleicht wichtigste Mission des Humboldt-Forums im neuen Berliner Schloss."

32 Interview with Werner Bloch, *Die Zeit*, 21 January 2016.

reams of hate mail that came my way I received a letter from a German medical doctor who had travelled the African continent for forty years. He wrote that in his travels around Africa, especially in Cameroon, he hadn't seen one institution worthy of the name 'museum'. His concern was that if this African heritage were to be repatriated, where would it be housed? And wouldn't it be destroyed by Islamists or other barbarians? He went on to say that I should invest my energy in ousting corrupt African leaders and building museums before wasting my time advocating for repatriation. This too is part of the old language of education and the old curriculum. Needless to mention here, before the Europeans set foot on the African continent, people had been making, exhibiting and preserving their cultures for thousands of years. Some of the bronzes, masks and other beings taken away were between eight hundred and more than one thousand years old. Who says one needs a Western museum to accommodate them? After the age of the colony and imperialism we will all need to find new ways and spaces—in form and in content—to accommodate this heritage, rather than have it assimilated within a Western paradigm.

Secondly, when the Deutsche Historische Museum held *Deutscher Kolonialismus*, its first exhibition on the colonial history of Germany in 2016–17, I received an invitation to be part of a panel discussion with Paul Spies and Neil MacGregor, amongst others. When I accepted the invitation on the condition that my participation would be a speechless one, and that every question on the podium directed to me would be answered by a performance from the audience, I was disinvited. Language as we know it, especially colonial languages, can no longer carry our concerns. Language as we know it, and as used by those trained in the prestigious academies of Feymania, cannot advocate for us. Our bodies have to speak for us. Our bodies are impregnated with our burdens. It is through the phenomenological and through performativity that we will speak and manifest the agendas of the new curriculum.

ACT X

You wan damé you mimbe wi, you wan soulé you mimba wi
—Lapiro de Mbanga, "Mamba Wi"

A much too sidelined conversation around issues of ethnological museums and heritage from other parts of the world is the economic question. As Lapiro de Mbanga rightfully put it in his song "Mamba Wi", directed at the political and economic elites, "*You wan damé you mimbe wi, you wan soulé you mimba wi*"—"If you want to eat think of me, if you want to eat think of me". The Humboldt Forum is said to be a more than 600 million-euro project with a yearly budget of circa 60 million euros. It is estimated that roughly 3.5 million people will visit the museum each year. The Quai Branly by comparison receives 1.4 million visitors per year and the British Museum 6.7 million visitors. If one considers this in addition to advertising, merchandising, and other means of commodification, the maths is easy.

'Shared heritage' must be dissected from an economic perspective. "*You wan damé you mimbe wi, you wan soulé you mimba wi*". If this much money must be made from our ancestors, spiritual beings and historical vessels, 'shared heritage' must also mean having them in Cameroon, Nigeria, Mexico, Iraq or Egypt, and having people from all over the world pay visa fees and air tickets to fly to these places, pay hotels and

food, pay entrance fees to see the throne of Sultan Njoya, the Benin Bronzes, the headdress of Montezuma, the Ishtar Gate or the Nefertiti Bust. This is also a matter of economy.

ACT XI On the Sanctification of Humboldt

The very strange thing about choking is that one can choke even while eating the most delicious of foods out there. To diagnose the choking, one might have to look at processes and strategies of sanctification, beatification and canonisation. As usual in such a context, Alexander will take too much space from Wilhelm.

In Andrea Wulf's *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science*, we are told that the Prussian polymath, naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt transformed the sciences, revolutionised physical geography and meteorology, and dedicated his life to understanding the Earth and the cosmos.[33] That Humboldt was a genius is almost an indisputable fact. In his eloquent speeches and vivid writings, he exposed European readers to the realities of colonialism and slavery, as well as to the human and ecological degradations he encountered in the New World. In another recent publication—one of many that pop up like mushrooms—Rüdiger Schaper's *Alexander von Humboldt: Der Preuße und die neuen Welten* [The Prussian and the New Worlds] we will learn that Humboldt was a humanist and stood against slavery. His diaries and other notebooks were found, and in these documents, we are told, one can see that he was the best Prussian. A Prussian who was against the empire and who simply wanted to explore the Americas. Humboldt's shining credentials of identifying two thousand new plant species, discovering the magnetic equator, being the first European to explore and map the Casiquiare, the Orinoco and the Amazon rivers, or the first to conduct experiments on electric eels are widely known and celebrated.

One must acknowledge also that in comparison to his contemporaries, Humboldt was progressive, as he criticised the social and political systems in America, and his critiques of colonial society in Spanish America were used as an ideological base for some resistance movements.[34] While there is a discourse in Europe that we have to revive Humboldt's legacy, to many people in the world, especially in the Americas, Humboldt was and still is omnipresent. Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Humboldt Mountain, Humboldt ranges in China, South Africa and Antarctica to Parque Nacional Alejandro de Humboldt, Humboldt Falls, Humboldt Glacier, Humboldt Bay, the Humboldt River, the Humboldt Sink … These are just a few of the many traces of Humboldt around the world. But what should also be discussed is the politics of naming. What does it mean to name a plant, river, mountain or animal after Humboldt? What were these called before? What knowledge is lost when a name is changed? One of the strongest tools of coloniality is the ability to name. The power of nomenclature and taxonomy. How does unnaming lead to deterritorialisation and disorientation? This too is a reality of the colonised.

While the myth of an innocent, pacifist, abolitionist Humboldt is cultivated and disseminated, we must also remember that his travels through and information on the

33 Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science*, London, John Murray, 2015.

34 Sandra Rebok, "Alexander von Humboldt's perceptions of colonial Spanish America", *Dynamis*, vol. 29, 2009, pp. 49–72.

colonies (maps, political essays, data collected about agriculture, geology, manufacturing, zoology, botany, and meteorology) were very important both for his contemporaries and the next generation's efforts to invade and occupy the colonies. In more direct terms, it is also known that in 1804 Humboldt landed in the US after five years in Latin America, where he spent a week in Washington with President Jefferson, Secretary of State James Madison, and Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin, feeding them valuable information about the Spanish colonies he had just explored. It is thanks to this information from the anti-colonialist, pacifist Humboldt, and to the explicit advice he gave to Jefferson that it was worth fighting for the land between the Sabine and Rio Grande rivers, that what is today Texas was colonised and annexed. While Humboldt told Americans that slavery was a 'disgrace' and that the oppression of Native Americans was a 'stain' on the nation, he didn't deem it necessary to emphasise this to Jefferson.[35] There is also little evidence of Humboldt critiquing the Spanish Kingdom for their roles in transatlantic slavery and colonialism, as he was always grateful to King Carlos IV (1788–1808) for granting permission for his expedition through the American colonies.

While the myth of an innocent, abolitionist Humboldt is cultivated and disseminated, one should still listen attentively to the likes of Mary Louise Pratt, when she writes, "Humboldt's eye depopulates and dehistoricizes the American landscape even as it celebrates its grandeur and variety."[36] It is also important to scrutinise Humboldt with regards to the politics of knowledge generation and dissemination—with regards to authorship. As Margarita Serje points out in "The National Imagination in New Granada", Humboldt was a controversial figure when it came to where he got his information from and how, who he credited in his writings and who he didn't.[37] Serje points to the 1887 article in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* in Nueva Granada devoted to Alexander von Humboldt. Like many chronicles of the era, this one complained about "the ingratitude of foreigners who forget to acknowledge the merits of people" in their work. [38] The chronicle stated that in Santafé (Bogotá), Humboldt met more than a dozen Native natural scientists who helped him by providing local and practical knowledge on the country, its topography, mines, production and climates. However he failed to mention these scientists in his writings. Specifically, the case of Francisco José de Caldas, a criollo scientist and politician,[39] aka 'El Sabio', who invented a method for measuring altitude through boiling water, without the use of a barometer, as well as early ideas on plant geography. Both these concepts were used by Humboldt without acknowledging or referencing Caldas in his writings.

Serje also underlines how Humboldt's aesthetic and scientific representation of nature and landscape, as well as his political representations, were inscribed in the consciousness of the new nations in the Americas.

> Humboldt's dramatic depiction of the tropical American landscapes […] was a re-enactment of the notions the criollos had developed about their 'new world' and about the way they had occupied its territory. This re-enactment was performed by disembedding landscapes and peoples from their own historical and geographical continuity to place them in the context of modern natural (Universal) history.[40]

35 Nathaniel Rich, "The Very Great Alexander von Humboldt", *New York Review of Books*, 22 October 2015, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/10/22/very-great-alexander-von-humboldt/

36 Mary Louise Pratt, "Alexander von Humboldt and the Reinvention of America" in *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, eds. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini, University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p. 592. This view has been contested by Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert in "A 'Romantic' Encounter with Latin America", in *Children of the New World: Society, Culture and Globalization*, ed. Paula A. Fass, New York University Press, 2006, pp. 41–55.

37 Margarita Serje, "The National Imagination in New Granada" in *Children of the New World*, pp. 83–97.

38 Ibid.

39 Criollo, refers to a white descendant of the Spanish colonists.

40 Serje, "The National Imagination in New Granada".

Serje argues that in his efforts at 'reinventing' America, as Marie Louise Pratt put it, "Humboldt inscribed on the scenic images of the American tropics a set of colonial notions about landscape, culture, and history, granting them scientific and aesthetic legitimacy."[41] By drawing from the imagination of the criollos, who had imposed a certain vision of nature, geography and cartographic knowledge from the metropole on to the land, Humboldt legitimised colonial constructs, for example of hierarchical spaces. Another epistemic violence Serje points to is that in *Vues des Cordillères et monumens des peuples indigènes*, Humboldt writes about a 'natural' distinction between biogeographic strata—the highlands, *tierra fría*, with cold and temperate climates, and the hot or lowlands, *tierra calientes*—as well as cultural differences between the highlands and lowlands. These distinctions, imported from the European idea that civilisations develop in temperate, 'rational' regions, still stand as ethnographic and social knowledge of the region, maintaining the constructs of social orders.[42] Biogeographic stratigraphy is transformed into caste stratification. According to Serje, Humboldt's *Geography of Plants* naturalises one of the cornerstones of the colonial order of things: its geopolitical imagination.[43]

Finally, while the myth of an innocent, pacifist, abolitionist Humboldt is cultivated and disseminated, one shouldn't forget that Humboldt's work was first of all facilitated by the colonial structures in place at the time. During his 1799 visit to Madrid before heading off on his Spanish American expedition, with the help of politicians and scientists like Mariano Luis de Urquijo and Gonzalo de O'Farrill y Herrera, Humboldt obtained a personal interview with King Carlos IV, which led to the vast royal endorsement that enabled his travel to Spanish America.[44]

ACT XII When someone is in a choking fit, circular culture demands a firm blow on the back to kick out the piece stuck in the trachea. For the Humboldt Forum to stop choking, to begin breathing, the expulsions would have to involve an urgent study of provenance, a matter-of-fact dealing with the repatriation and rehabilitation of the so-called objects in their collection, an apologetic confrontation of and with its entangled colonial histories, as well as the acknowledgment of those thoroughly erased GDR histories and identities.

For the Humboldt Forum to stop choking, to begin breathing, the expulsions would have to involve a rigorous reconception of the understanding of what a museum is supposed to be and do. Who and what is the museum, and what are its goals? *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis*, as they say. Within the process of beatifying Humboldt one must narrate the multiple histories and facets of his being, as related to his position within the history of colonialism and the imaginary geographies and geopolitics of his time, as well as to the politics of epistemology.

For the Humboldt Forum to stop choking, to begin breathing, the expulsions would have to mean listening to other voices. Listening to the whispers in the corners. Listening to the voices that do not occupy the epicentre. Dismantling the epicentre as a whole. So what are we to do with concepts and spaces like the Humboldt Forum and other ethnological museums in the twenty-first century? I would like to finally think of such concepts and spaces in terms of queering and queerness. Perhaps it is the queering of the Humboldt Forum and others that could deliver such institutions from the perils of their own violent histories.

41 Ibid. Serje cites Marie Louise Pratt: "Alexander von Humboldt reinvented South America first and foremost as nature. Not the accessible, collectible, categorizable nature of the Linneans, however, but a dramatic, extraordinary nature, a spectacle capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding. […] Three images in particular […] combined to form the standard metonymic representation of the 'new continent': superabundant tropical forests (the Amazon and the Orinoco), snow-capped mountains (the Andean Cordilleras and the volcanoes of Mexico), and vast interior plains (the Venezuelan llanos and the Argentine pampas)." Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 120 & 125.

42 Alexander von Humboldt, *Vues de Cordillères et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*, Paris, Librairie Grecque-Latine-Allemande, 1816.

43 Serje, "The National Imagination in New Granada".

44 Ibid.

At the beginning of *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz writes:

> QUEERNESS IS NOT yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. […] Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.[45]

I would like for us to replace every 'we' in Esteban Muñoz's quote with 'the Humboldt Forum'. I would like to think of ways in which it could be possible to queer Humboldt by looking for, imagining and enacting futurities of the then and there. Ways of dreaming new and other pleasures, ways of enacting other ways of being in the world. Ways of propelling ourselves beyond romances of the negative, in order to acknowledge that this world is not enough.

I would like for us to think of the body as the primary museum. If a museum is a space in which knowledges are kept and disseminated, then the body is that quintessential space of cognition and experience. How then does this primary museum of the body encounter the secondary museum, which tends to be those spaces in which 'objects' are 'conserved'? How does the secondary museum reflect on or influence the primary museum? If the secondary museum becomes a site of concern, of insult, of epistemic violence; a site of the erasure of histories, a site of hubris, then what impact does that have on the beholder, the visitor, the citizen, the human?

Queering the Humboldt Forum should therefore imply a radical renegotiation of the encounter between the primary and secondary museum, which must involve questioning the limited understanding of the museum in currency today. The museum must be discharged and liberated from the burden of its normativity of whiteness, maleness, straightness, Western and anthropocentrism, and freed from its onus of trying to recount a single narrative or a linear history. The museum today, the

45 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York University Press, 2009, p. 1.

Humboldt Forum and others, must be able to negotiate to and fro between the norms through which dominance of various kinds is constructed and perpetuated, and become fully conscious of the ways societies are constituted through the exclusion, silencing and mis- or underrepresentation of a majority of their subjects. Queering the museum means detaching from these norms, delegitimising the marginalisation and subordination of others. The concept of the museum has to be more fluid; it will have to remain in flux and to resist any rigid understanding of what a museum is or can be. The museum needs to be perpetually reconceived and rearticulated.

As much as this might sound like a dream, it is such a dreamscape that we should be able to enact and navigate. Or, as Toni Cade Bambara said, "The dream is real, my friends. The failure to realize it is the only unreality."[46]

46 Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*, London, Vintage, 1992, p. 126.

Listen to Things
More often than Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the ancestors breathing.

Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the trembling of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that runs,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.

Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the bush that is sighing:
This is the breathing of ancestors,
Who have not gone away
Who are not under earth
Who are not really dead.

Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in a woman's breast,
In the wailing of a child,
And the burning of a log,
In the moaning rock,
In the weeping grasses,
In the forest and the home.
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind to
The bush that is sobbing:
This is the ancestors breathing.
Each day they renew ancient bonds,
Ancient bonds that hold fast
Binding our lot to their law,
To the will of the spirits stronger than we
To the spell of our dead who are not really dead,
Whose covenant binds us to life,
Whose authority binds to their will,
The will of the spirits that stir
In the bed of the river, on the banks of the river,
The breathing of spirits
Who moan in the rocks and weep in the grasses.

Spirits inhabit
The darkness that lightens, the darkness that darkens,
The quivering tree, the murmuring wood,
The water that runs and the water that sleeps:
Spirits much stronger than we,
The breathing of the dead who are not really dead,
Of the dead who are not really gone,
Of the dead now no more in the earth.

Listen to Things
More often than Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the bush that is sobbing:
This is the ancestors, breathing.

—Birago Diop, "Spirits"

Transcription: The passport was issued by the police constable, on April 19, 1870, by the Police Chief of the Province of Bahia. This passport was issued to a slave named T., aged 25, Creole, born in that province, working as servant so that he could travel to São Paulo via Rio de Janeiro sent by his Mr. E.M.C. In the left frame of the passport, completed by hand by the police officer, it shows the validity of one month and a questionnaire with the physical characteristics of T.: height *regular*; hair *kinky*; forehead *regular*; eyebrows *full*; eyes *black*; nose *thick*; mouth *small*; beard; physiognomy *long* and colour *black*. Collection of the Public Archive of the State of Bahia, Section of Colonial/Provincial Archives, Police Series, Lot 6336.

Abandon to Keep

Ana Pato

"The tropics seem to conspire against memory."

—Giselle Beiguelman

The Public Archive of the State of Bahia holds documents that carry visceral memories of the violent constitution of Brazil. They ask for our attention as state violence is on the rise, also in the form of making people illegal.

The Public Archive of Bahia was established in 1890 to cement the country's republican regime following the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. Once the Public Archive was created, an order was given for all the existing documentation in churches, schools, hospitals and notary publics to be transferred there.

The Public Archive of Bahia is considered the second most important archive in Brazil, after the National Archive in Rio de Janeiro. Apart from the value of the documentation it holds,[1] the Public Archive is located in a historically relevant architectural facility, Solar Quinta do Tanque, a manor listed since 1949 by Brazil's Institute of National Historical Heritage. In 1552 the land was donated for the Society of Jesus to build Quinta do Tanque. In 1759 the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil and the Quinta was abandoned. From 1784 to 1938, the place was converted into a leper hospital and became known as Quinta dos Lázaros. Afterwards, it was abandoned again and then restored in 1979; the following year, it began housing the Public Archive.

1 This is particularly important due to three sets of documents which are part of Unesco's "Memory of the World" programme, which identifies collections relevant to international memory, namely: Tribuna da Relação do Brasil e da Bahia: 1652–1822, Registros de Entrada de Passageiros no Porto de Salvador (Bahia): 1855–1964 and Cartas Régias: 1648–1821.

During the time it was the seat of the General Government of the State of Brazil (1549–1763), the city of Salvador grew to become known as the capital of the South Atlantic, which led to the accumulation and storage of documents relating to the colonisation of Brazil. The paper stacks in the Public Archive comprise documents of every possible type: land grants to the wealthy Portuguese; indigenous mission deployments; proof of the land donation for—and later the expulsion of—the Jesuits; slave purchase and sale certificates; lists of inbound ships carrying thousands of enslaved Africans; chronicles of resistance and the slave rebellions; lawsuits, prison records and sentences—a whole bevy of documents relating the daily routine of the courts.

When I first encountered the Public Archive in 2014, as part of the curatorial team of the 3rd Bahia Biennal, it was in an alarming state of decay, with the building threatening to collapse—at risk of fire due to old electrical wiring, and full of ceiling leaks. The Public Archive team had worked with no lighting for the previous three years, so some of them worked in the building's inner courtyard.

One might ask if a complaint would not be timely and natural given the neglect of historical heritage and of the professionals entrusted with managing this memory. However the invisibility of archives in Brazil has to be understood in relation to the violence contained in the histories of these institutions. Where else can we address colonial Brazil and the model of the nation based on late nineteenth-century racial theories if we want to challenge our present?

In addressing the sepulchral dimension of archives, Achille Mbembe refers to archiving as a form of burial, an authoritarian act that can control the violence that 'remains' can produce, especially when left to their own resources.[2] In his opinion, the paradoxical relationship that evolves between the state and the archive, between preservation and annihilation, resides precisely in the violence that constitutes the state, contained in the documents stored in the archive. If it is up to the state to preserve the archive, the state also threatens the archive's existence by neglecting this debt or dependency; namely the correlation between the establishment of the archive and the formation of Brazil. I believe that once an understanding of this connection is in place, one can claim that the abandonment of archival institutions entails a process of erasure history of segregation and social exclusion. In this sense, the processes of appropriating and expropriating from the peoples already marginalised by colonisation are inscribed and imbricated in the archival 'apparatus' of their time.[3]

However, the moment there is a change in comprehension of the role of archives and museums, in the sense that they are no longer considered the holders of unitary authority (be this as repository or as visual display). Now that the practice of selecting, collecting, classifying and organising does not guarantee a final reading of the past, one can look more freely at the poorly lit shelves of archives, and in between the cracks of institutions. These fractures allow us to look, and beyond the bodies and objects we can see the very framework of the institutionalisation of memory produced by Western society.

2 Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits" in *Refiguring the Archive*, eds. C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover; R. Saleh & G. Reid, Cape Town, David Philip Publishers, 2002, pp. 19–26.

3 It is stated in the Laws of the Brazilian Empire of 1841, in the decree governing the police, in the section "On Passports", that Brazilian citizens may travel without a passport within the empire. Slaves and free Africans, or freedmen, even if they are in the company of their masters, are obliged to present a passport, except in cases where the traveller, whether free or a slave, is known by any of the authorities, or when respectable people know them and act as their guarantor. However, no one may leave the empire without a passport, except for those who are part of crews of national or foreign warships. The validity period of any passport cannot be longer than four months.

Transcription: The passport was issued by the police constable, on March 9, 1871, in the city of Aracaju, by the Police Chief of the Province of Sergipe, Doctor J.M.A.C. This passport was issued to a woman named G., aged 52, born in that province, carrying the status of a freedwoman working as a domestic servant, so that she could travel to Barra de Rio de Contas, in the Province of Bahia, with Mr. N.F.C., a resident there. In the left frame of the passport, completed by hand by the police officer, it shows the validity (blank) and a questionnaire with the physical characteristics of G.: height *regular*; hair *kinky*; forehead *regular*; eyebrows *little*; eyes *brown*; nose *flat*; mouth *regular*; physiognomy *long* and colour *black*, particular signs (blank). Collection of the Public Archive of the State of Bahia, Section of Colonial/Provincial Archives, Police Series, Lot 6336.

Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena, 2018. Installation view, Museu de Arte do Rio
Courtesy of Museu de Arte do Rio

A Way of Working Together
On Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena

Sandra Benites and Pablo Lafuente

This text gathers a series of thoughts and reflections somehow related to the exhibition *Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena* (*Indigenous Rio de Janeiro*)—thoughts and reflections about strategies, positions and questions that emerged during the process and during the time the exhibition was open to the public. The exhibition, presented at the Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) from 16 May 2017 to 25 March 2018, was a project of collective and collaborative construction between indigenous communities and individuals living in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, a curatorial team composed of Clarissa Diniz, José Ribamar Bessa and ourselves (Sandra Benites and Pablo Lafuente), a group of researchers and the permanent staff of the museum. The project was constructed through a series of meetings in the museum and indigenous villages in the region, with members of those communities and from other regions of Brazil, which generated the conceptual parameters, the methods and a large part of the attitudes that would define the rest of the process. Occupying a whole floor in the building, the exhibition was composed of works (videos, drawings, photographs, murals, sound installations, objects) commissioned from indigenous individuals or groups. We emphasised production by indigenous people and, if necessary for technical reasons, coproduction by indigenous people with non-indigenous people. Indigenous presence was secured in all areas of work, from the curatorial team to the graphic design and visual identity, in the mediation activities and in the public events. The following text adopted the same strategies, with contributions from two members of the curatorial team, one Guarani Nhandeva and the other *juruá*.[1]

1 In Guarani language, *juruá* identifies non-Indigenous people.

The Great Snake

Everything begins with the great snake. Or thus begins for some, for the peoples of the Alto Rio Negro—the Dessana, the Baniwa, the Tukano and some others from the three hundred Indigenous peoples who today inhabit the territory we know as Brazil. This snake emerged in a time when there was no water, no trees, no land. Then, in the Guanabara Bay, where the city of Rio de Janeiro is located today, a cobra-canoe was created and, from her, from her belly, humanity would be born. From Guanabara, the cobra swam up along the northeast and north coast, until the Island of Marajó, where she entered the Amazon River. She continued until the Alto Rio Negro, where along the journey several groups of men descended in different locations, forming what are today the diverse peoples of the region.

This snake is also a beginning for *Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena*, an exhibition with a Guarani title, organised for the MAR with and by Indigenous peoples and individuals who live in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The snake is and is not from here: she is born here, in the place the city occupies today, but she belongs to the history of peoples who are very far away, and who have ways, traditions and histories different from the peoples who traditionally inhabited the region. Some things have, of course, changed, mostly as a consequence of the invaders who arrived from Europe more than five hundred years ago. Now some of the peoples from the Alto Rio Negro live in Rio de Janeiro. For example Denilson Baniwa, the artist who designed the great snake that occupies most of the surface of the walls, hugging the exhibition and, by doing so, providing a frame for it.

The snake, as an origin, means history as the production of difference. In the exhibition, a narrative of difference enters via Baniwa's designs of the snake and other figures taken from the origin narratives of peoples such as the Dessana, the Krahô, the Yanomami, the Guarani and others. It enters via the graphic work of Priscilla Gonzaga, designer, non-indigenous, from Pernambuco to and via documents, images, and histories created or registered by indigenous or non-indigenous people today, recently or during the more than five hundred years of occupation and violence—and before the arrival of the Portuguese to the coast of Bahia in 1500, an area that is still known as the Discovery Coast.

Dja Guata Porã

Everything begins with a series of meetings, organised by MAR, starting in 2016. Meetings with the name that would eventually become the title of the exhibition, *Dja Guata Porã*, which in Guarani refers to a 'walking together' as well as 'walking well'. The trajectory of this walking is not defined from the beginning, but is rather constructed in a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledges (and peoples), which therefore implies conflict, but not confrontation. A conflict that will always exist, because the indigenous and non-indigenous are different bodies that talk together, moving according to their respective demands. A construction that will always be made without a predefinition, because the living object in movement needs to appear in varied versions.

Before the meetings there was perhaps another beginning: an irritation, a disagreement with the common ways of the visual arts and their institutions, which had been applied to the organisation of projects on indigenous culture in recent times in Brazil. The interest in indigenous cultures and their cosmologies, the concern for the violences imposed on the indigenous peoples of Brazil, are more common than ever before among non-indigenous Brazilians. The indigenous struggles are now part of some generalist political agendas. Elements from indigenous culture are incorporated into practices of life by parts of the population who until recently had no contact with those questions, struggles and practices. But this is not a matter of topic, of theme.

The very ways of doing are important: if the presentation of indigenous practices and elements happens without the negotiation with indigenous people, the violence of the colonial process is simply reproduced. Perhaps the act of appropriation has an element of appreciation, but it is much more than that. Tutorship implies concern, but such response is not the only way (or the best one) to demonstrate care. The processes of decision, the rhythms, the formats, the ways in which exchanges happen, the goals pursued, the languages used … all these shape different paths and ways of walking.

How to Work?

A different kind of walking implies always showing conflicts and misunderstandings, and from them accepting the need to establish a dialogue with all the participants, in order to hear what each group or community wants to show and why. A more democratic walking, which brings the ways of walking of groups closer to their lived realities. That is why *Dja Guata Porã* couldn't happen without the meetings, without convoking groups and individuals—such as Edson Kayapó and Josué Carvalho Kanhgág, people from the Guarani villages of Araponga, Sapukai, Itarypu, Bracuí or Rio Pequeno, the Associação Indígena da Aldeia Maracanã, the Centro de Etnoconhecimento Sociocultural e Ambiental Caiuré, Eliane Potiguara or Niara du Sol … They embarked on a trajectory, dedicating their bodies to a process that nobody could preview or control—listening to perspectives, listening to stories.

Because everything begins with stories and histories being told. And then, the histories having begun, problems might emerge. The problem, already defined, predetermined, is not the beginning—that would be the way of the *juruá*, a way that, as it begins with a defined problem, doesn't allow for new demands to appear on the way. In this scenario, the only possible thing to do is to attempt to resolve the given problem. In contrast, in indigenous cosmologies what is aimed at is not the solution of problems, but their prevention, and the creation of tools that appear alongside histories. For example, in relation to *Ywy Rupa*, or Planet Earth: in the indigenous world views it is possible to find all the knowledge necessary to look after the environment in which we walk and live, in order for it not to become a problem. And if the problem were to eventually emerge, the tools to face it will already be available.

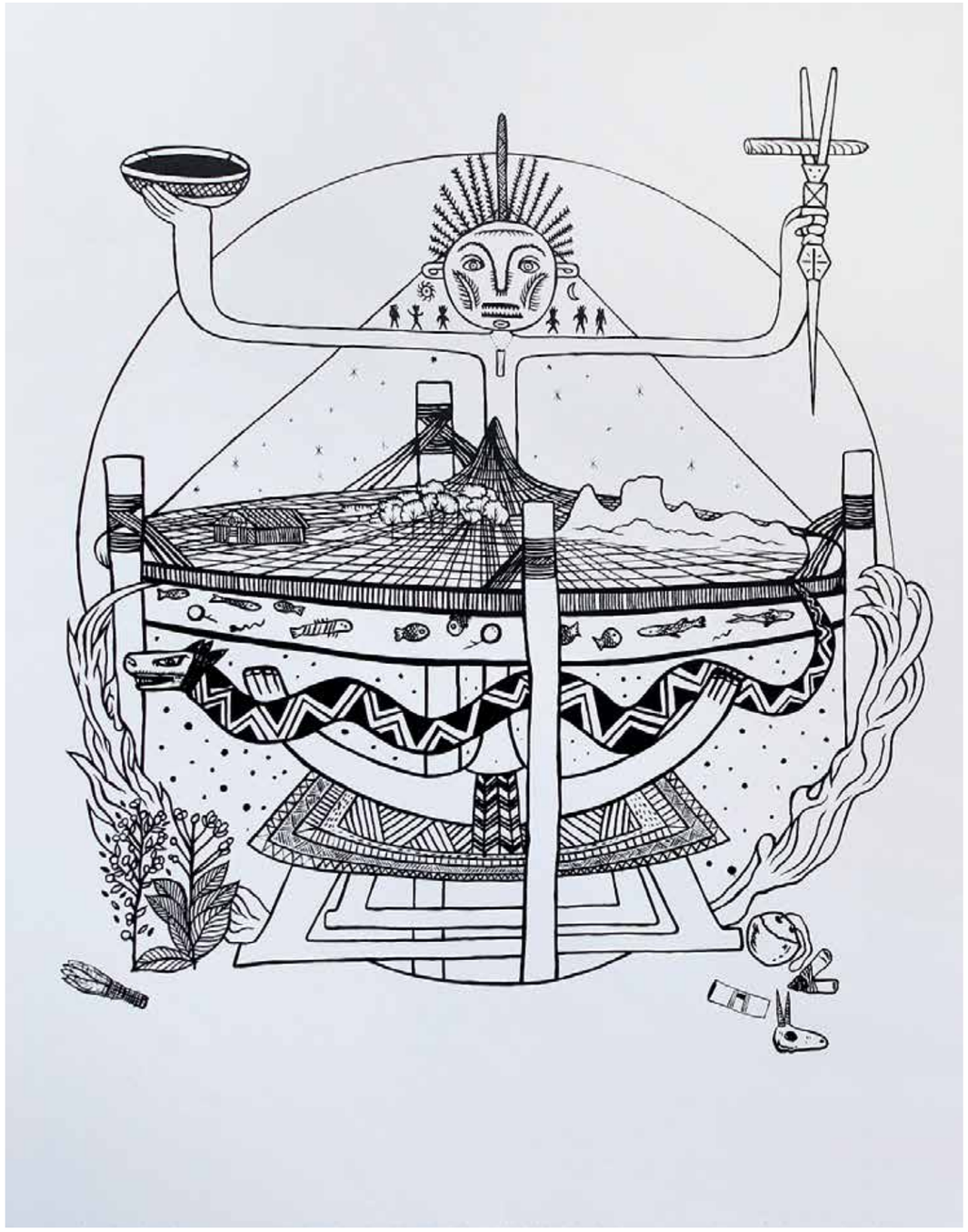
Dja Guata Porã, then, is not the solution to any problem. It might be thought of as a walking that provides us with tools for what might happen in the future, or even in the present. A possible answer to the question, "How to work?" would be "working together". Certainly it is not the only question—another, fundamental and urgent one, would be indigenous autonomy. Still, working together could be a strategy to secure resources, swap tools and articulate. Working through conflicts to show the diverse faces from different angles, without focusing on a particular version, a specific side, as museums often do. Working together in search of indigenous protagonism—in the cultural projects which are also political projects.

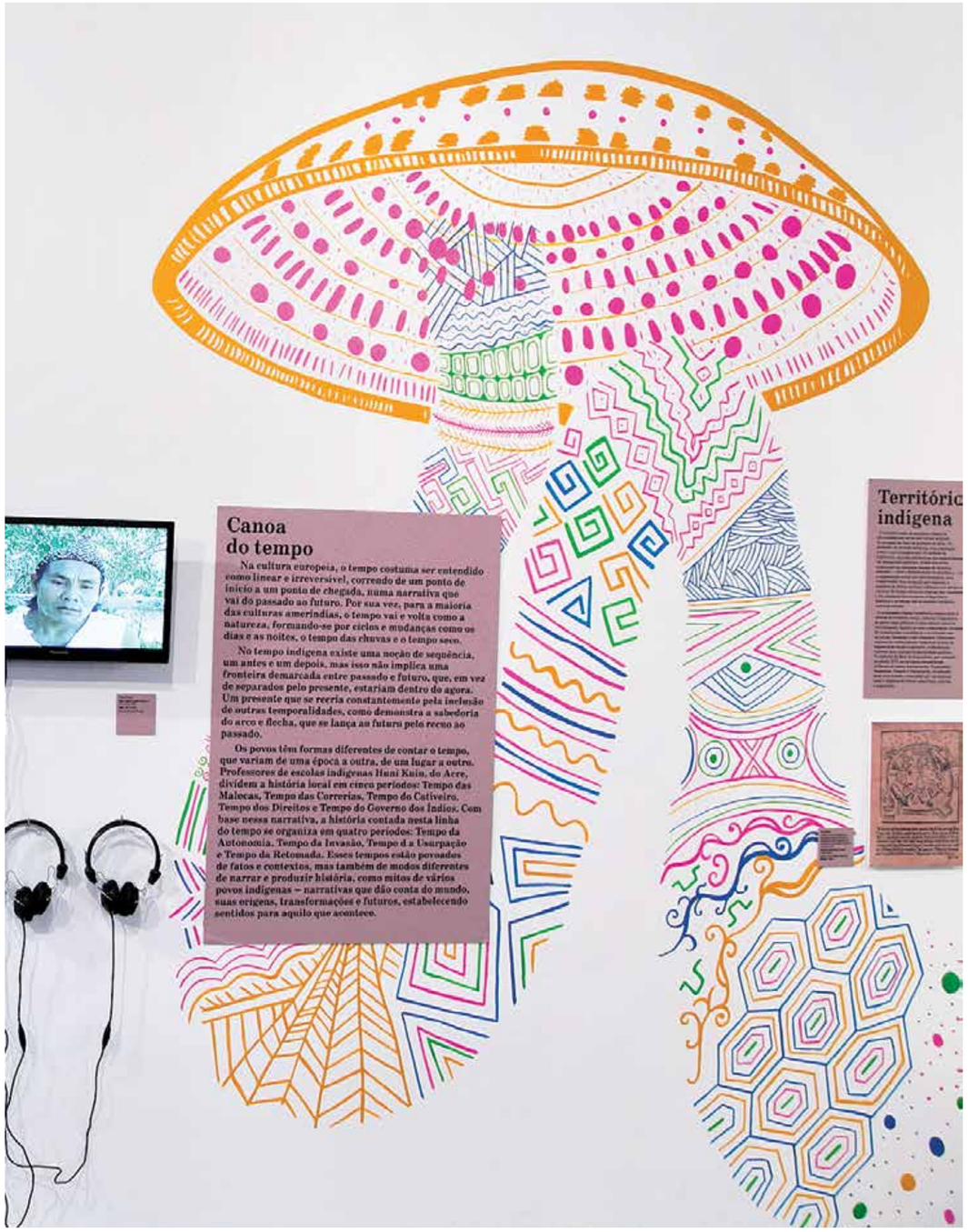
Indigenous Peoples and Their Patrimony

Everything begins with ignorance. In Brazil, the indigenous peoples are not familiar; they are literally unknown to the rest of the Brazilians. It is not uncommon to hear stories of indigenous peoples that tell of discrimination, of being mistaken for citizens from other countries, as if in Brazil there were no more indigenous people. The schoolbooks distributed in the public education system insist on the 'generic Indian', not actualised, as if he were a being from the past. They don't show the linguistic or cultural diversity of these populations. Museums could contribute to changing this situation. But only if they do not impose their perspective, but rather expose themselves fully to the varied knowledge of the communities to which collected objects and knowledges in their different forms and levels belong. Considering ethnic differences in this way shows the need to think about how to preserve patrimony and develop tools to manage it. In *Dja Guata Porã*, the Guarani, the Pataxó, the Puri, the indigenous in urban contexts were presented as separate groups in juxtaposition, showing the different ways of being indigenous today, in Rio, in Brazil.

To assert these distinctions it is important to identify and create a material and immaterial patrimony for each people, beginning from its own way of understanding the world. This patrimony needs to be recognised and studied, in order to gain respect within its *teko*, its way of being individual. Museums can provide bridges and provoke dialogues that might reach the indigenous villages. This becomes a way of giving each group an opportunity to articulate what it knows—for

Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena, 2018. Installation views, Museu de Arte do Rio
Courtesy of Museu de Arte do Rio





Dja Guata Porã: Rio de Janeiro indígena, 2018. Installation views, Museu de Arte do Rio
Courtesy of Museu de Arte do Rio

example, of protecting the environment, which is a fundamental aspect of protecting all indigenous cultural patrimony. Patrimony is not reduced to objects to be consumed as a tourist item, nor is it a past. It is the base from which a better future might be built for everyone, not just a specific ethnic group. Indigenous communities take this extremely seriously through their histories, their knowledge, which have kept nature on its feet. Yet this is not just the responsibility of the indigenous; this knowledge needs to be shared to enable collaboration—with public administrations, researchers and communities—because it is in the interest of and for the well-being of all.

Patrimony was also constructed in *Dja Guata Porá*: new works were commissioned in the form of histories told in films; in drawings that show ways of doing; in maps that construct an image of a territory for life, a territory which is at the core of the struggle; in examples of strategies for defence, for articulation, for construction, that might be useful for others, elsewhere.

What is the Museum (Good) For?

Let's imagine territory as a beginning. The museum itself is a construction of territory, where things and people might meet and miss each other, a space that might function as an instrument to provoke conflicts without confrontation, where diverse historical knowledges from ethnic groups are on view, exposed to give access to those who don't know the *arandu* (the knowledges), and the *rete* (the body of the Other). But it also needs to be a place where people can arrive and find themselves well, feeling well—the indigenous as well as the non-indigenous. Hence the welcome. Also the spatial articulation that intends to be clean and generous in connections—*isso também a articulação espacial que quer ser limpa e generosa em conexões*. The multiplicity of perspectives and ways of looking, which show that museum don't need to select, it could just include and offer and offer up itself.

In this way, the space of the museum becomes a bridge where provocations emerge, pointing at several territories; territories that are not just physical spaces but also bodies in movement, bodies that construct their way of being. A territory of morality, a territory of changes. Because of that it doesn't make sense to think in a closed, delimited version of 'territory'—in contrast to the words of the *juruá*, in which territory becomes a demarcation of spaces and intends to control movement.

It might seem that the museum talks about the time that has already passed, but the past is not actually the matter at hand. It is true that the object presented is always from a time that already happened, recently or not. In *Dja Guata Porã,* memory was brought from the past, and the museum became a place to meet the past to understand our present and to walk (well). In the museum, different ways of looking meet different bodies that are in their own *guatã* (movement) towards a future. Memories are important to identifying the paths for stepping ahead; not for creating more misunderstandings beyond those that were already created. Images without context don't provoke changes, photographs that don't show diverse angles might cause confusion and reinforce prejudice in the gaze of those who don't know the indigenous peoples and their particular ways and languages. From there, again, there is the need for each people—the Pataxó, the Guarani, the Puri—to decide how to display, in the way each considers best; the need also for those who desire to articulate from their position that is (at least partially) individual.

The Bodies

Because it is key to start from the concrete. Because when we speak from a general vision it is as if we were talking without a body. The space of the museum is occupied by different bodies that speak; bodies with limits we need to know about.

The meetings happen between bodies, not objects. The speaking of the object is done through the body—different bodies, living bodies, bodies in movement. The bodies of the participants, who articulate. The bodies of the visitors, who enter into a relationship with what was articulated in the exhibition. Bodies of women, of children, of teenagers. All those bodies need to have a specific path in order to dialogue with each other.

Language is also a body—language has to be of the body. Orality marks what is most important, because speaking the language is living inside the language. Languages that in Brazil amount to more than 250, but that, like the indigenous themselves, are hardly ever heard. That is why *Dja Guata Porã* begins with sounds, singing and speeches in seventeen different indigenous languages of people who permanently or temporarily live in the region, in languages the visitors won't understand, and will feel they don't understand, their bodies moved by that lack of understanding. The body is moved with the forced of the spirit, which is the word. But as the body is concrete it won't always be moved with the direction of the spirit and might suffer an impact after meeting with the Other, whom she can't understand. The spirit gives her force to continue, even with difficulties and conflict. The *teko*, each individual's way of being, contributes to construct, collectively, the *tekoha*, the place that makes possible the way of doing well, of living. However, as people are different, as they have different ways of looking, misunderstanding will always exist. That is why it is important to discuss starting from the concretisation of each one's *teko*—from its language, from its demands, and through its perspective.

Art, Artists

The artist is not, necessarily, at the beginning—*artista não está, necessariamente, no começo.* That is why *Dja Guata Porã* is an exhibition of participants, not artists. People who consider themselves artists, people who don't; adults and children; people who contribute ideas, objects, their skills or their presence and words; indigenous people, mainly, but also others, non-indigenous.

The word 'art' is also not in the beginning of the exhibition, even though the museum (MAR) has the word 'art' in its name. That appeared to necessitate collecting a short vocabulary of words in indigenous languages that came closest to the thing that the *juruá* consider art: *synuin*, from the Kaingang (that which is pretty, which might be seen as pretty by the person that receives it); *dzeeka*, for the Baniwa (to know how to make, something that someone manages to make from an evolution in their learning, something that is learnt with the elders and that characterises an exclusively human fabrication, with meaning for humans); *ziapohaw* for the Guajajara (to make, to provoke, to create, to solve); *mevi-revosh-shovima-awe* among the Marubo (work made with the tip of the fingers); *yamiyxop*, within the Tikmu'um (making things, an aesthetic effort that produces spiritual events, constituted by music, singing, with the presence of a multitude of spirit peoples). *Tembiapo*, for the Guarani, refers to an ability that has to do with art and memory. The 'artist' translates the art of the community in her work. Art is generalised, but also an individual manifestation. It is a presentation made from individual experience, but never as an act of claiming a personal position. The valorisation of *tembiapo*, of the abilities of our body, needs to be made by making it clear that it is important that the activity doesn't become an answer constructed from just one perspective. That it serves to contemplate one as all and from all to one, through world views and narratives that explain the world and how this world originates for this or that group. Those who no longer have access to their territory, their forests and rivers, lose their main knowledge, and it becomes necessary to discuss what led to such loss of contact. And that in the process, through the walking, what was lost is re-established, at least in part, creating the conditions to continue, to continue well, in a movement that has the form of an encounter. Movement of talking and searching. Movement of dialogue and of bringing the memory from the past to the present and future. Without forgetting about today, about now, relating the memory of the past to the movement of today. The articulation of the indigenous in an urban context and the indigenous in the context of the village defines the indigenous reality today, and it is connected to the conflict of facing the past and the present. It is a conflict that aims to embody awareness, and in this way makes us able to work out the conflicts of the future.

Written in one sitting, one year after the artist became a mother, and incidentally also one year after the Memphis sanitation strike, which proved pivotal for the civil rights struggle led by Martin Luther King Jr., this manifesto and exhibition proposal remain relevant. While the proposed exhibition "Care" was rejected by the institutions that received the proposal, much of Mierle Laderman Ukeles's subsequent artwork—recently celebrated in a major retrospective at the Queens Museum as well as in the touring exhibition *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Artworks 1969–1980*, and discussed in this issue of South by Marina Vishmidt—sustains the spirit of her 1969 manifesto, which called for nothing short of a total re-evaluation of maintenance work as an act of creation and indeed a work of art. —*SSM*

Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969!
Proposal for an Exhibition "Care"

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Next pages: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition "Care"*, 1969
Four typewritten pages, each 21.59 x 27.94 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York. Photo by Casey Dorobek

MANIFESTO!

MAINTENANCE ART -- Proposal for an Exhibition

"CARE"

I. IDEAS:

A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct:

The Death Instinct: separation, individuality, Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one's own path to death--do your own thing, dynamic change.

The Life Instinct: unification, the eternal return, the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species, survival systems and operations, equilibrium.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?
Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing.
Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.

show your work--show it again
keep the contemporaryartmuseum groovy
keep the home fires burning

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major room for change.
Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little room for alteration.

C. Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)
The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom. The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs= minimum wages, housewives=no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage, watch out don't put things in your nose, what shall I wear, I have no sox, pay your bills, don't litter, save string, wash your hair, change the sheets, go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it again--he doesn't understand, seal it again--it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again, flush the toilet, stay young.

D. Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art. "We have no Art, we try to do everything well." (Balinese saying).

Avant-garde art, which claims utter development, is infected by strains of maintenance ideas, maintenance activities, and maintenance materials.
--Process art especially claims pure development and change, yet employs almost purely maintenance processes.

E. The exhibition of Maintenance Art, "CARE", would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.

II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: Three parts: personal, general, and Earth Maintenance.

A. Personal Part:

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother (random order).
I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I "do" Art.
Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. I will live in the museum as I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby (right, or if you don't want me around at night I would come in every day) for the duration of the exhibition, and do all these things as public Art activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings"), cook, invite people to eat, clean up, put away, change light bulbs. I might save and make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse. The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be maintained in full public view.

My working will be the work.

B. General Part: Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds.

1. Previous interviews of, say, 50 different classes and kinds of occupations that run a gamut from "maintenance man", maid, sanitation man, mailman, union man, construction worker, librarian, grocerystore man, nurse, doctor, teacher, museum director, salesman, baseball player, child, criminal, bank president, mayor, movie star, artist, etc., about what they think maintenance is; how they feel about spending whatever parts of their lives on maintenance activities; what is the relationship between maintenance and freedom; what is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams.

   These interviews will be typed and exhibited.

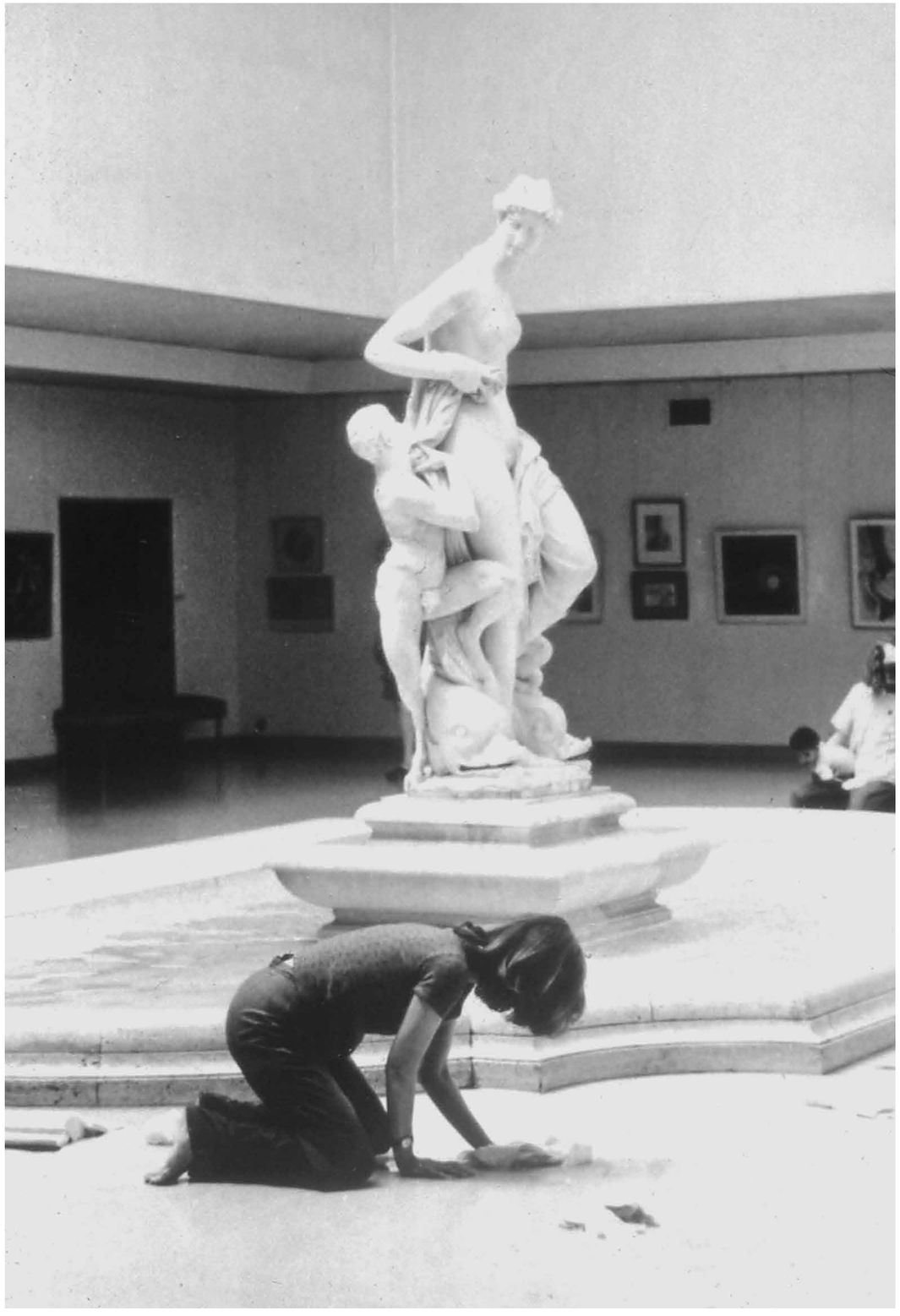
2. Interview Room--for spectators at the Exhibition: A room of desks and chairs where professional (?) interviewers will interview the spactators at the exhibition along same questions as typed interviews (in 1. above). The responses should be personal.

   These interviews are taped and replayed throughout the exhibition area.

C. Earth Maintenance:

Everyday, a container of the following kinds of refuse will be delivered to the Museum: 1) the contents of one sanitation truck; 2) a container of polluted air; 3) a container of polluted Hudson River; 4) a container of ravaged land. Once at the exhibition, each container will be serviced: purified, depoluted, rehabilitated, recycled, and conserved by various technical (and/or pseudo-technical) procedures either by myself or scientists.

These servicing procedures are repeated for the duration of the exhibition.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Inside*, 22 July 1973
Part of Maintenance Art performance series, 1973–1974. Performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

Pure Maintenance

Marina Vishmidt

Why it’s not wise to throw the baby of maintenance out with the dirty bathwaters of capitalist social life.

It is long past time to start dismantling the opposition of novelty and maintenance in order to develop a feminist politics of creativity which does not dissociate care from the capacity to engage in worldmaking. Instead of Schumpeter's creative destruction, there is the little explored possibility of transformative repair, of creative maintenance. As the architectural theorist Maria Giudici has written, we can reimagine maintenance as a radicalisation of, and at the same time a rejection of, ideas of management as an approach to the world, in favour of "the idea that creating a future does not mean necessarily to impose a form, but rather to imagine a set of relationships that can change, shift, readjust."[1] This starts to give us some of the tools to reimagine maintenance not just as reproduction—that is, as maintaining what already exists in a state as self-similar as possible, cut off from any idea of novelty or disruption—but rather as resistance.

This line of thinking envisions a maintenance praxis beyond any straightforward articulation of the politics of reproduction, seeking to elaborate the negative dimension of maintenance. Maintenance becomes a genre of struggle, in the sense that Isabelle Stengers puts forward—a *planetary* struggle against the totality of the capital relation as a 'negative universality' that sets the conditions for its own reproduction as well as for the reproduction of our lives.[2] This imbrication means that reproduction can only gain an affirmative valence in its political expression at the cost of 'reproducing' and 'maintaining' many of the brutalisms, archaisms and 'primitivisms' that define these conditions.[3] It is in the passage from invisibility to visibility, from work to strike, that the political creativity of maintenance praxis comes forward; a practical critique that shares many features with the human strike in its capacity to undermine and defunctionalise the normativities of subjectivity, agency and organisation.

We could begin by looking at this as a relation grounded in the seeming opposition of maintenance to production, or to 'production proper'. Discussions of maintenance and reproduction, often under the aegis of care, have featured prominently in recent feminist art-theoretical and political discourse. The artwork of Mierle Laderman Ukeles in particular, with its conceptual clarity and accessible form, has been examined from a variety of angles. The register of maintenance is decidedly not one which can be associated with "pure individual creation" as Ukeles wittily frames it in her 1969 *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*.[4] It is not the *ex nihilo* act of conceiving and putting something in the world that was not previously deemed so by the male artistic genius, but rather it is reproduction—making sure that this object or relation continues to exist over time, despite time's ravages on its existence and persistence. Ukeles flagged that most art is not pure autonomous sovereign creation, just like most work isn't, but is "infected by strains of" maintenance activity.[5] In this she was challenging a certain orthodox, patriarchal or Oedipal anxiety about autonomy and influence in modernist art, and pointing also to the undoubted fact that it took a lot of cleaning to keep the white cube white—in all its senses, including the implied institutional violence of racial exclusion, which she would go on to emphasise in later work. The manifesto demonstrated that if all the unwaged, naturalised, feminised and racialised labour were to stop from one day to the next, so would the conditions for the display and appreciation of the supposedly sovereign act of art—and, going back into the "hidden abode" of the family and the studio, likely also for that art's production.

1 Maria S. Giudici, "Learning by Numbers", *e-flux Architecture conversations*, March 2017, http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/architecture-conversations-maria-s-giudici-responds-to-zeynep-celik-alexander-mass-gestaltung/5784

2 Isabelle Stengers, "Autonomy and the Intrusion of Gaia", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, 2, April 2017, pp. 381–400. See also the discussion by Cinzia Arruzza, "Capitalism and the Conflict over Universality: A Feminist Perspective", *Philosophy Today* 61, 4 (Fall 2017), pp. 847–61.

3 Jordana Rosenberg, "The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present", *Theory & Event* 17, 2, 2014, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/546470

4 See pp. 76–79 of this publication.

5 Ibid.

What we encounter in Ukeles's *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* then is the materialist feminist troubling of the classic political economic division between production and reproduction—a division which of course also recurs in the critique of political economy—in which reproduction is always the devalued term. This resonates with related dualisms such as innovation and repetition, creativity and maintenance; with the valued and devalued, visible and obscure, thoroughly gendered divisions of labour and value in capitalist modernity. It is structural to patriarchy and capitalism that maintenance labour stays hidden—a "hidden abode" that stands in the same relation to labour as all labour does to the commodity, and as surplus value hides in the wage.[6] On the one hand, maintenance or reproductive labour could be seen as the 'secret' of the secret of the fetishism of the commodity; on the other, all labour can be seen as reproductive insofar as it provides the means of life. This point about how constitutive the work of reproduction was to all official economic, measured and recognised activities of production traversed the political spectrum of materialist feminism from the 1970s onwards. The statement was especially pronounced by groups like Wages for (Against) Housework, one of the foremost feminist tendencies of the period, which brought Marxist value categories to the debate in ways that generated, then as they do now, as many polemics as enthusiasms. More simply, the Marxist notion that labour is a metabolism with nature allows us to understand how production is always already reproduction in principle. "Metabolism with nature" here refers to how human activity should compose *with* the affordances of its environment rather than in opposition to it, in the way technology "stands over and against" the worker in the factory. The production of the means of life and the reproduction of social relations are entangled if not continuous, and nature and the social are at best heuristic distinctions rather than anthropologically given ones—another crucial point for feminist, queer, antiracist, and all movements challenging racial and patriarchal capitalism as the only possible social formation.

Such a metabolic understanding brings us close to the universality of individuation as the reproduction of self-consistent entities in the ideas of engineer and philosopher Gilbert Simondon, which will recur later in this text. At the same time, this conception's bias towards a kind of organicism or vitalism can be kept in check by way of a concrete sense of the continuity of production and reproduction. As noted above, this can mean reproduction of life, as well as the fact that all production is at the same time a reproduction of capital, both in the accumulation of value and as a set of social relationships.

Working out a notion of maintenance as resistance can then include the sense of *planetarity*. For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, planetarity invokes an ethics of alterity, which is needed to revise the human attitude to a no longer docile nature in the era of climate change and to an environment that the 'waste' of capitalist valorisation is rapidly making physically and socially unliveable. For Spivak, the planet is drawn in analogy to the white whale of *Moby Dick*, an unknowable force that pulls everything into its orbit. Stengers recently advanced a similar repositioning with her text "The Intrusion of Gaia", which personifies the planet as an implacable, agential entity in lethal combat with the consequences of capitalist worldmaking. Both narratives suggest that the anthropomorphism of biophysical forces can be a valuable tactic to

6 For discussions of reproduction as a hidden abode within a hidden abode, see Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2011; Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek, New York, Autonomedia, 1995; *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya, London, Pluto Press, 2017. The invisibility of gendered labour as nature can also be considered in the context of the racialised non-being described by Frank B. Wilderson II as "the position of the unthought" in white civil society, but also in its emancipatory politics, not excluding materialist feminism. See Wilderson III, "The Position of the Unthought: An Interview with Saidiya V. Hartman", *Qui Parle*, 13, 2, Spring/Summer 2003, pp. 183-201. See pp. 183–201; and "Reciprocity and rape: Blackness and the paradox of sexual violence", *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 27, 1, March 2017, pp. 104–11.

counter the 'capitalist religion'. There is a kind of turn to pre-modern myth, albeit an ironic one, in the same way that Donna Haraway's cyborg could be an "ironic political myth". This turn is structured by a socially critical ethics of maintenance rather than the social control portended by myth in the service of religion. A planetary scale for maintenance thus positions its praxis as a troubled but nonetheless collective attempt to 'handle' the uncontrollable eventualities of ecological damage and a will to persist in projects of reclaiming futurity for the living. It would mean innumerable processes of maintaining liveability for different human and non-human entities in an environment rendered alien by damage; no doubt one where all kinds of social alienation are all too familiar, along with ones hitherto little imagined. More simply, planetarity refigures maintenance in and of (the conditions for) resistance once the known quantities of resources can no longer be managed in the familiar ways. Maintenance, with its dogged orientation to survival, can emerge as a creative encounter with the truly eco-systemic unknown, necessitating newer (or even older) co-operative social forms.

Another impulse in this direction can be drawn from the idea of technological knowledge as a processual relation to contingency. In other words, the maintenance of objects, subjects and their transitions and transversalities across scale is faced with an unknowability that repels domestication, at a level of damage that is both granular and massive, social and planetary, where old exploitations might dwindle and others, even more virulent and makeshift, take hold. Here there is a partial correspondence with the notion of the incomputable that theorists Antonia Majaca and Luciana Parisi propose in their recent text "The Incomputable and Instrumental Possibility". They suggest that instrumentality can be reassessed not as an independent cultural logic tending towards a totalitarianism of things, a fully quantified and (ir)rationalised dystopia in the style of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but rather that technology embodies the socio-historical values of a period. While this may sound like a banality, the more intriguing dimension is that instrumentality is biopolitical and that the machine itself can be the source of "alien modes of subjectivation" which might be touched by inhabiting the perspective of the machine and not that of the engineer, architect, designer, user, security analyst or manager.[7]

How can this subjectivity be envisioned, and in the service of what? How to move from the scale of planetarity as the name for alterity in Spivak's political ecology to the intimacy of alterity in everyday technology, such as the data platforms that embed social life in new and prodigious forms of surveillance? In both scenarios, the question of alterity is formulated in terms of an enabling alienation, which can both defeat imagination and appear as something which "forces us to think" (Deleuze) and to act in political and affective response to genuine novelty. After alienation comes the intimacy of maintenance, which may yet entail a recalibration of the subject-object relation, which the commercial forms of 'techno-animism' that we experience through our devices today block rather than enable. This is made more urgent, in Parisi and Majaca's terms, because these devices foster paranoid forms of surveillance and control as the basic tone of relationality for their critics, users and developers alike. Instead what is needed is a reckoning with the mutual shaping of algorithmic and human cognition. Such a reckoning would involve thinking of ways to biopolitically inhabit these very technologies in all their errancy and imperfectability, rather than projecting police logic from the standpoints of critique and implementation alike (the robots are taking over, and they will make more robots, and these robots will vote for Trump).

Parisi and Majaca's contention is that "thinking from within the machine and from within the very logic of the instrument" may provide us, especially those among 'us' abjected by structural violence, some resources to evacuate the self-sustaining forms of algorithmic control that pervade current models of cybernetic governance. This would be primarily by overhauling the means-ends hierarchy embedded in technology as a repository for naturalised social relationships of competition, efficiency and control, and coming to it rather as a space of intimate alienation where the meaning of functionality itself can be exceeded, turned around and reinvented as one part of a transformative social process. Ultimately this would have to mean that the persistent, if philosophically discredited, duality between technicity and nature could no longer be perpetuated; that nature is not a set of timeless meanings that technology allows us to standardise and systematise. Central to this discussion is the idea of the instrument possessing its own ends, its own history of subjectification:

> The new subject can only be constructed from the hard labor of alienation, which includes understanding the logic of instrumentality, politicising it, and transcending it through usage itself. This requires building a non-paranoid imagination, and a readiness for a radical denaturalisation of both humanness and subjectivity as we know it.[8]

This work uses some of the same tropes, such as alienation and a fully constructionist view of nature, as proximate articulations such as xenofeminism, but importantly it points to the socio-historical and material framing of the nature-culture, function-chaos dyads that xenofeminism, with its schematic valorisation of rationality does not achieve with its retro-fitting of vintage cyberfeminist ideas into the received ideas of accelerationism. Doubtless the xenofeminist proposition also shows a certain colonial innocence with its disregard of the operations of biopolitical management for determining the nature:culture split as mapped onto gender and race, and the critical importance of structural violence for authorising rationality. Rather, Majaca and Parisi's short text alludes to the project of Gilbert Simondon, particularly his book *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, which offers an analysis of co- and trans-constitution between humans, milieus and technical objects.[9] Technical objects should not be degraded and dominated for the ends of profit, fashion or control, but rather their technicity should be allowed to develop towards ends currently deemed non-functional or undesirable. This entails granting an autonomy to technology which is less like the autonomy of capital and more like the autonomy of art, free to set its own purposes and envision a world in which that purpose matters—an instance of the abductive reasoning Parisi draws from the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce. This then can align with the social autonomy experienced by humans no longer subjugated to the naturalised despotism of the technical but working in conjunction with technical objects and the force of technicity. In a late interview, Simondon opined on the proximity between this notion of the autonomy of the technical and the ideas of maintenance discussed so far, from the angle of care: "I believe there are humans in the technical objects, and that the alienated human can be saved on the condition that

7 Antonia Majaca and Parisi, "The Incomputable and Instrumental Possibility", *e-flux journal*, 77, November 2016, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76322/the-incomputable-and-instrumental-possibility/November2016

8 Majaca and Parisi, "The Incomputable and Instrumental Possibility".

9 Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. Cecile Malaspina and John Rogove, Minneapolis, Univocal, 2016.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Inside*, 22 July 1973
Part of Maintenance Art performance series, 1973–1974. Performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

man is caring for them." As Yuk Hui has recently observed, for Simondon technical alienation is prior to social alienation—an alienated, functionalist relation between the human and non-human has to be established before dispossession and exploitation in their turn become the rule for relations among humans.[10]

Scale is a question for Simondon when he reflects on "orders of magnitude", between which relation is fundamental. This amounts to a "realism of relations". For Simondon an individual is the outcome of a process of individuation, which is myriad; it can be a mental, biological, chemical or social process, among others. The individual, of whatever ontological status, is not *in* relation but *is* relation, foremost with its milieu. The individual is a composite and container of relations, which exist at different scales: the scale of the individual, the scale of the pre-individual, the scale of the milieu. The individual thus can be seen as a phase of consistency in a landscape of diverse relations. The division between intellectual and manual, or better, routine labour, which has traditionally underpinned the division between production and reproduction, maintenance and creativity, and even management and execution, is denied by such a conception, which rather envisions a panoply of scales across which consistency and responsibility may form and dissolve. This approximates the logic of maintenance, attuned to ad hoc operations whose creativity is geared towards the amplification of effects and connections rather than efficiency and control for remote but unquestionable ends.

Management across scales can also imply management *of* scales, in the sense that management has the chance to develop into care: a reflexive undertaking rather than that mode of optimising activity or processes for predetermined ends called efficiency or performance. In this way management comes back to questions of scale from the standpoint of each specific situation. Scale is an artefact of the productive imagination and the specific engineering process in question, not a pre-existing frame of reference keeping a predetermined order that technology is designed to respond to, whether in an ameliorative or a punitive way. If, as Majaca and Parisi offer, "instrumentality is subjectivity in practice", or can be, this practice travels into the object and abandons the subject, but only at the (disavowed) cost of overcoming the empirico-ontological doublet of capitalist social relations, which the two authors do not engage with directly, unlike, to take an obvious example, Adorno's treatment of instrumental reason. Rather, they turn their attention to noting how contemporary developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning operate with notions of incompleteness, error and contingency, which are ripe for reappropriation by a feminist technics, pursued through concepts such as abduction. Abduction, as distinct from the more established modes of induction and deduction, is a way of trying to account for the unprecedented through a series of consequences that imply, or, rather, project a world in which that new event would make sense. Majaca and Parisi consider abduction as an "alien mode of cognition", as it starts with unknown or at least temporarily unknowable premises, fusing the energy of the speculative with the rigour of formal logic.

Such a mode of cognition could make sense of "the generation of new hypotheses of instrumentality, one that acknowledges the history of techne whereby the machine has been able to elaborate strategies of autonomy from and through its own use."

10 Yuk Hui, "On Automation and Free Time," *e-flux Architecture Superhumanity*, March 2018, http://www.e-flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/179224/on-automation-and-free-time/

In this, the xenogenetic scenarios of science fiction could be both an example and a methodology, leading us to approach this autonomy of the technical as another "ironic political myth". That kind of move would mean coming back to maintenance with a politics not rooted in the productive subject—even if this is a *reproductive* subject—but rather one that allows subjectivity for the object, and then for the process of unknowability that the autonomy of a technical object can bring into focus (such as when it 'breaks'). In the scenarios of science fiction, mechanism acts to condense, reflect or instigate social relationships which might be proximate enough to be recognisable but are unarguably different from what we know—think of the special mineral in the movie *Black Panther*, or further, the role of hyperempathy in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. But we might also look to historical episodes in which political invention ushered speculative instrumentality to the fore—for example, the attempt at cybernetic-monitored industry in Salvador Allende's Chile or the agricultural theories of 1920s Soviet writer Andrei Platonov, who suggested, as Maria Chekhonadskih relays, that if "nature is a realm of capitalist history, because capitalism exploits not only people, but also animals, plants and earth," then "[t]he task is, therefore, to liberate nature and all living creatures […]. Similarly to Marx, he writes elsewhere that the capitalist exploitation of the soil results in the creation of deserts and droughts. This is because exploitation exhausts the productive forces of the earth. Thus, what he terms 'the repair of the earth' should be implemented as a science of cooperative [communist] farming".[11] Platonov also went on to develop a number of prototypes for simple, cheap generators for use in the countryside. Maintenance, again, emerges as inseparable from transformation, and even from autonomy. In this light, and as the recent surge of cultural interest in the esoteric doctrines of Russian cosmism testifies, practical imperatives, politics and metaphysics most often come entangled. It is only for the goal of domination that the positivist dissociation between these strands can stake its pernicious claims to modernity and progress.

If we started out by looking at maintenance as the care of what is, enabling this to develop and become, we have now shifted the perspective somewhat by moving to inhabit alienation through the creativity and productivity implied, and by turning this alienation into the site where both creativity and productivity take on new meanings in and as praxis. This enables us to see how these divisions are not simply practical but predicated on social hierarchies of command and control, where creativity on one side is fostered by instrumentality on the other, with this instrumentality being the fate of those subjects who are not considered properly human, even prior to there being anything like non-organic mechanism, as in Aristotle's renowned definition of the slave as a "speaking implement".

Yet in this discussion of inhabiting mechanisms and reprogramming them in open-ended ways, the question of the social mechanisms of institutions can fall by the wayside (with the speculative energies of inhabitation foundering in the inertias of reprogramming). A tracing of the relations between maintenance and resistance should though touch down in the institution. What remains to be examined is how in the present, all management tends towards crisis management, and so by default tends to converge with the communal and emancipatory-minded politics of care.

11 Maria Chekhonadskih, "The Anthropocene in 90 Minutes", *Mute*, 23 September 2015, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/anthropocene-90-minutes

Nowadays management is concerned to be *seen* to care—to make sure everything is all right, that everyone has their voice heard, that everyone feels safe, especially in workplaces exposed to cycles of precaritisation and proletarianisation, such as educational institutions. This concern to ensure normality at all costs is saturated with biopower, as security-minded governing bodies show their solicitude for fragile bodies and psyches by inviting police and other agents of the state to 'take care' of deviant life as expressed by restive labour and students. Perhaps more insidious than such not surprising phenomena is the discourse of care that licenses aspirations to absolute control; where dissent is depicted not as a matter of antagonism but of insensitivity, and organising is made into a blow against dialogue rather than an attempt to foster one. In this state of affairs, any action of maintenance that is at the same time resistance—as with any defence of public services, any struggle over conditions—is automatically painted as an act of intimidation.

Power rebranded as care can be seen as a kind of reproductive realism, which appears to affirm the invisible labour of maintenance and survival engaged in by all, but only insofar as it guarantees the stability of its accumulation prospects. In this crude dissociation of maintenance and resistance, we are left with only management. Such dispositions spread far beyond large institutions and bureaucratic apparatus, often internalised by individuals who would seem to have little to gain from these principles or their exercise. A common tendency is the reframing of any disruption or discomfort as an unjustified exercise of power and privilege—those who want to resist are pitted against those who just want to persist. Negative solidarity arrives to the scene, with its disabused view of a zero-sum social field in which solidarity is a delusion and resistance an irresponsible pastime. A continuum can be drawn between moments on this spectrum: the cosmetic care routines of institutional management, the ruthless denial of political questions in favour of an etiolated ethics of care that somehow always confirms market subjectivity, and the 'maintenance art' of the hipster broom brigades that took to the streets of London in the aftermath of the 2011 riots to flaunt their race and class hatred in fits of photogenic compulsive cleaning—an ironic inversion, to be sure, of Ukeles's "the sourball of every revolution: […] who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"[12]

My short circumnavigation of some of the more dubious corners of the maintenance-management complex here ought to diffuse some of the piety that often clusters around the politics of care, as if there were just one politics and the invocation of the word 'care' was enough to signal its nature. In order to re-valuate and not just revalorise the activities of maintenance, there would need to be the kind of displacement of agency from human subjects to technical objects that Majaca, Parisi and Simondon talk about, but only as part of a larger transvaluation of abjected forms of labour and existence, which seem technically obvious but remain socially opaque. The manoeuvre of naturalising the technical as the opposite of a reified nature only means that the social content of nature is always already functionalised, whereas what is urgent now is reassessing the means-ends relationships of capitalist techno-science that are driving towards ecosystemic annihilation. This cannot be enacted by rejecting the scientific or the instrumental per se, but by rejecting the social relationships that perpetuate their mythologised versions as simple realism. This is something that the performativities of feminist art (as with Ukeles and her transvaluation of maintenance as a *non*-progressive form of life), science fiction and philosophies of technology can help us begin to unpack.

Yet maintenance as resistance is a common phenomenon. From the groundbreaking cleaners' campaigns for a living wage, sickness and holiday pay, and ultimately an end to outsourcing that have been transpiring in London over the past decade, to the self-organised emergency response and ongoing infrastructures of support in the wake of the state and corporate manslaughter of the Grenfell Tower residents, and even the struggle of university academics over vast pension reductions which swiftly reignited the debate over the reckless marketisation of UK universities, the urgency of matters of survival has not ensured political apathy but has rather been a source of political creativity. Struggles in social reproduction—often coinciding with what look like conventional workplace struggles, as noted earlier—are capable of opening wide rifts in the resignation of populations and the arrogant rock-face of power. If initially the force of argument is in the shameful material consequences of conflict (uncleaned public buildings, residents burning to death in central London), it is this sense that things are crumbling at their very foundations—invisible, unvalued—which can shift the conversation, and translate between lives which fundamentally don't make sense due to the poverty and exploitation that defines them to societies that fundamentally stop making sense because things are not *maintained*: they do not *work*. The withdrawal of maintenance labour and its turn to maintenance praxis strikes to the heart of capitalist rationality and accumulation in a way no narrowly framed wage struggle would be capable of. It must be stated that this threshold of senselessness is a very situated one: the intolerability of the unravelling of social and ecological fabrics is still very much a matter of history, of habituation, and of the level and arrangement of social antagonisms.

Maintenance has to be seen as the basis of a politics of transformation and not of a realism of survival. While it is crucial to consider the reinvention of usefulness, of instrumentality and technicity in this project, a praxis guided by the inseparability of negation and reproduction must remain central. In other words, maintenance does not have to become ontologised or naturalised to be a generative source of political practice, and if reproductive labour under capitalist conditions is a "fate worse than death"[13] because it reinforces the brutalities and instrumentalities of gender, race and accumulation in simply keeping things going and people alive, maintenance can be the logic of resistance on the way to a non-capitalist form of social organisation in which maintenance and creativity, reproduction and production, can and should no longer be distinct. Here it will be important to keep questioning instrumentality, to keep criticising 'usefulness', whenever it acts as a substitute for a materialist thinking. Insofar as the conditions of life we reproduce are utterly squalid and destructive, there is no autonomy for use or for care if it's not at the same time part of a project of negation. A project to be endlessly maintained.

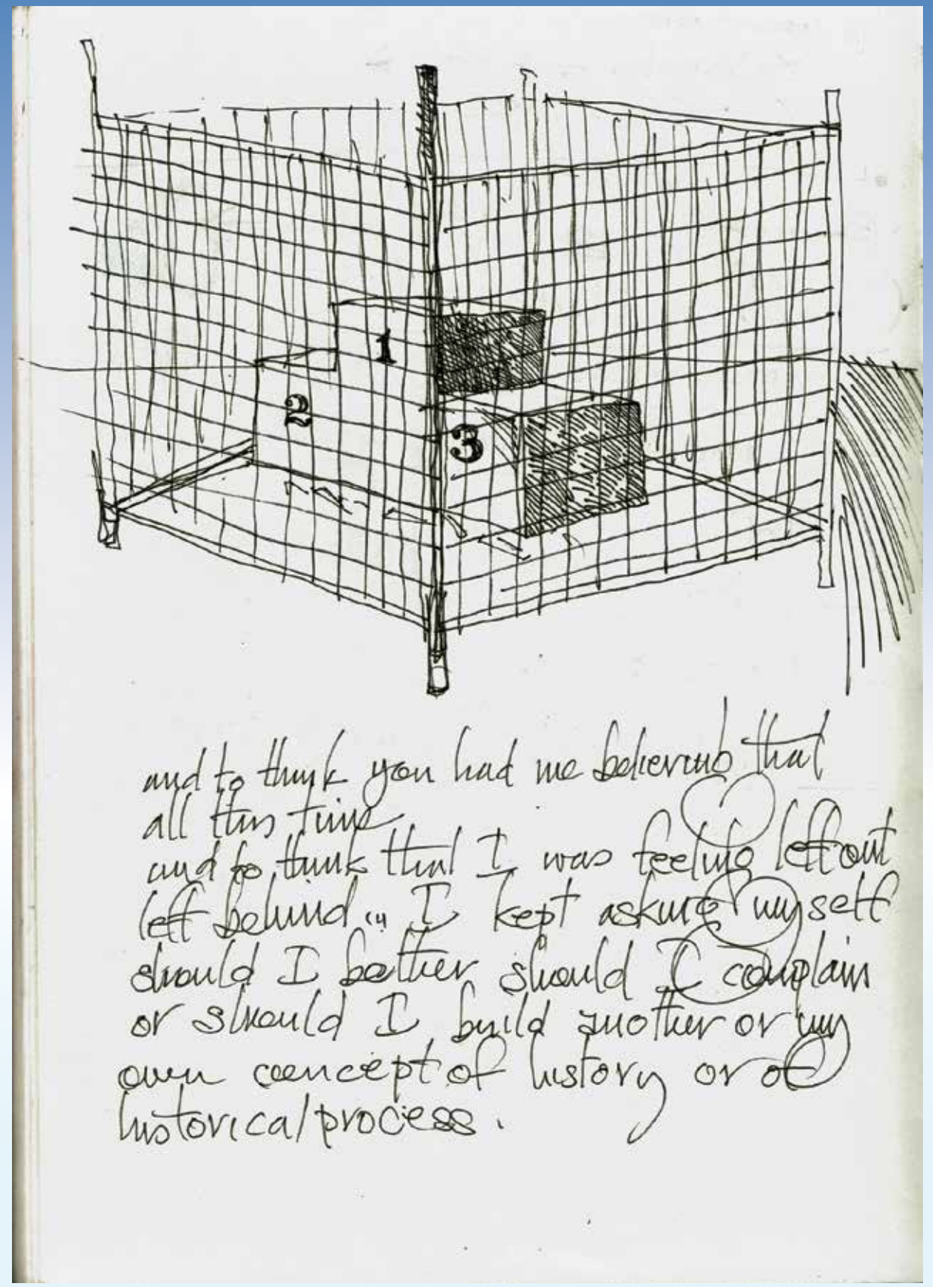
12 Ukeles, see pp. 76–79 of this publication.

13 Maya Andrea Gonzalez and Jeanne Neton, "Logic of Gender: On the Separation of Spheres and the Process of Abjection," *Endnotes* 3, September 2013, pp. 56–90.

We don’t need another hero
10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

I’m Not Who You Think I’m Not #6: Christopher Cozier, Koleka Putuma, Las Nietas de Nonó

I’m Not Who You Think I’m Not disavows assumed beingness and know-hows. Those assumptions are based on existing, constructed social frameworks and their associated speculations about particular subjectivities. *I’m Not Who You Think I’m Not* creates situations evading these assumptions, reflecting, resisting and nourishing potentials of self-preservation.



Christopher Cozier, Sketch for *and to think you had me believing that all this time*, 2002, in the frame of the Terrastories Project

Courtesy of the artist

I'm Not Who You Think I'm Not a Manifesto

What's not a question of power
Teacher don't teach me nonsense
This shit is fucked and we have to get out of this shit.

We the not-not educational spirits
Unteaching to unlearn

Each One Teach One

If there's war in one place there's war in all places
If there's a wall in one place there are walls in all places

What are the conditions that produced a situation that demanded a […] like that
This shit is fucked

Let's face this collective madness
Let's untangle uneasy entanglements
Let's confront the incessant anxieties

The feel of a problem
Creative interruptions
Building counter institutions

The silence before and after
Shut it down
Not our problem
We refuse to die

Self-preservation
Is an act of political warfare
Collective dreams and actions
We own the right to non-imperative clarities
Shut it down, the white noise
Can't make the same mistakes this time
Never stop the action,
Keep it up, keep it up.

Love

With Bessie Head, Jota Mombaça, Donna Kukama, Audre Lorde, EOTO, May Ayim, Tina Turner, Grace Jones, Nina Simone, Édouard Glissant, Fela Kuti and the Fallists.

High Tide

Koleka Putuma

Prologue this is how we *disappear*

(in another draft)

disappear is substituted with exit

(and maybe in a more transparent version of the same draft)

exit is substituted with suicide

either way //in all the drafts //the writer is always leaving//

slipping through something//or past someone//

(in a more courageous version of the transparent draft)

writer is synonymous with i

(the subject of the draft and the writer are the same person)

First

- the writer exits from 36,000 feet
- 36,000 feet is another way of saying control
- the writer wants to say: *i am losing control*
- the writer wants to say: *i am afraid of losing control*

in here

- *in here* is another way of naming the body
- *in here* the writer substitutes angst with skin
- *in here* the writer dresses the skin in public
- *in here* public is a figure of speech for mirrors
- *in here* the mirrors do not speak, only watch
- *in here* speaking and watching are the same thing
- *in here* visibility and disappearing are the same thing
- *in here* being celebrated and invisibilised are the same thing, too

Then • you hurl your body into

the water.

- they drink you up
- you begin to eat yourself from the inside
- consume the combustion
- so those around you can speak up. or look up
- then the fire consumes you
- and you cannot tell each other apart
- the mirror pretends to not see the burns
- you have rubble falling from your mouth
- the depression bulldozes you from the gut down
- you slip out of your body quietly
- so you don't collapse the rooms and structures that depend on you to hold them up
- or keep them together
- you fantasise about walking and never coming back
- but. you do. come back
- as a carcass with vacant eyes
- you drink yourself with the whole bottle
- you ingest yourself with all the pills
- close yourself with the curtains
- drown yourself in sex. and junk food
- and full auditoriums that stand and cheer for you
- while you jump from the edge of your selves
- onto tar
- the dirt road
- the tracks
- your skin plastering the railway with your DNA
- still
- no one can identify you
- you disappear with their eyes on you
- celebrating you

- building pedestals for you
- ~~to stand on~~. to jump from
- you could scream

~~i know~~. the writer knows

- you have a migraine in your throat
- and loneliness. and weapons
- and a love that does not chose you
- and rage
- and years of holding your tongue
- instead of holding others accountable
- you are a cyst twisted on the bathroom floor
- shoving help me into an empty medicine cabinet
- everything hurts
- even the shower
- you are the hemorrhaging
- your body has no grip or diagnosis
- you have no language for this kind of numb
- the kind that makes you want to slip out the back door
- into anywhere that is not this
- or this version of you. or the version of you they expect to show up
- the schizophrenia (in the dark) says give me a name
- and all you have is a face
- yours
- you are the electrical appliance flung into the bathtub
- the pain drags you by the skull
- shoves your jaw into the toilet
- and says *i am not leaving*
- *until you vomit me out*
- *or forgive me*.
- and every night
- this is how it ends:

- you, begging it to teach you
- how to let go
- it, saying:
- *you know how*

  and. slowly. you re-memorise how to let go

Epilogue

- you are Ryünosuke Akutagawa overdosed on veronal
- you are Ingrid Jonker walking into the sea
- you are John Berryman jumping from the Washington avenue bridge
- you are Virginia Woolf's pockets filled with stones and walking into the sea
- you are Alfonsina Storni drowning in the sea
- you are Danielle Collobert lifeless in her hotel room, on her birthday
- you are looking for the ones who look and sound like you who let go the same way
- you are Nat Nakasa jumping from a window
- you are Sylvia Plath's head inside the gas stove
- you are May Ayim jumping from a building
- you are Shirley Barker strangled by carbon monoxide poisoning
- you are Karin Boye overdosed, and found near a boulder
- you are Ana Cristina César jumping from a window
- you are Anne Sexton succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning in her mother's fur coat
- you are Sara Teasdale overdosing on barbiturates
- you are Deborah Digges jumping from the upper level of a stadium
- you are 144+ pages on wikipedia of writers who chose to exit
- you are the ones listed and the ones google has no name for
- you are the disappearances that do not go on record
- you are the disappearances you shared stages with//who no longer use microphones as sirens
- you are the siren
- you are the blue light rushing to save everyone else
- but yourself.

Foodtopia: Demonstrations During Hunting Season

Las Nietas de Nonó

Eating. Fighting for food. Emptying your plate. Licking. Eating everything and still be left scraping. Where one eats, two eat. Where three eat, four eat, and it keeps going all the way to twenty-two. Not everybody will eat. Eating your meat first before guests arrive and your mom takes it away. Growing up gazing at an empty fridge. Opening and closing the fridge's door as if by magic something would appear inside. Eating cornflakes like the blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked children of the TV commercial, but without any milk to go with them. When there is food it's better to fill up until you can't breathe. Become full. Very full. Fill up on rice grown in China or on anything from a can. A can-opener becomes priceless. The point is to eat.

BATATA!!! (sweet potato), said a guy that suddenly appeared on the local news for ten seconds while cameras filmed the National Protest of 1st May 2017. That day thousands of us poured on to the streets to demonstrate against austerity measures. If you search for: "el chico batata en el paro nacional de puerto rico" (*batata* guy at national demonstration in Puerto Rico) on YouTube, you'll see the most important ten seconds in our struggle for a sustainable agriculture, and the vindication of the *batata* as one of the most grown and consumed root vegetables of our ancestors. The authorities police tried to silence the massive mobilisation of the protest through repression and arrest.

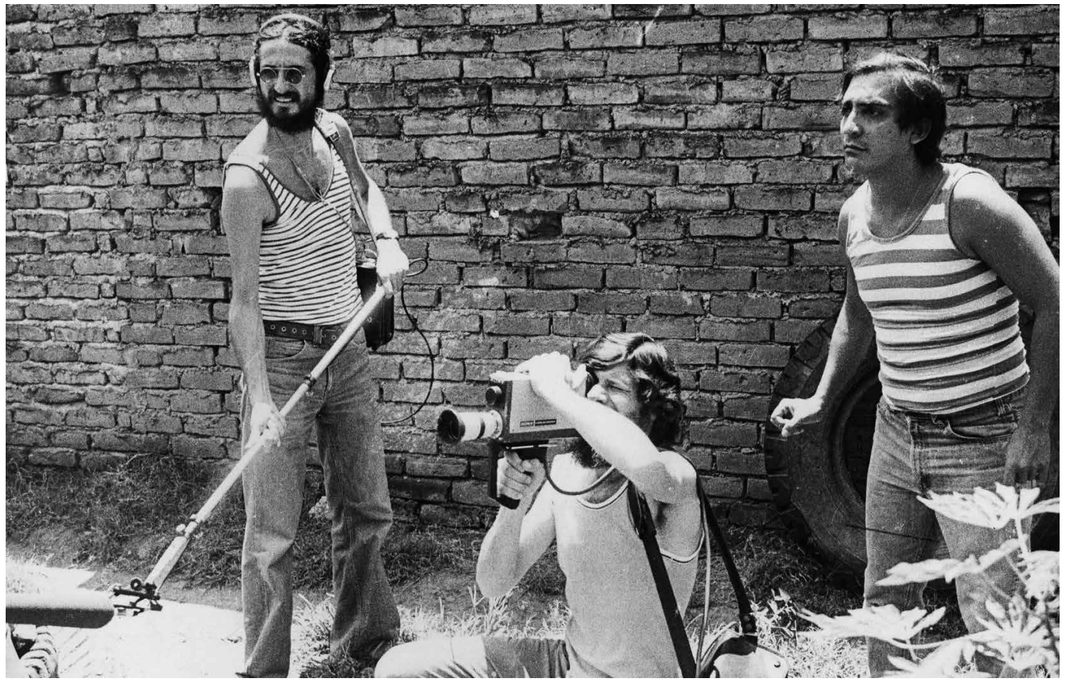
The crisis is a political one spawning a humanitarian one, which seems to conspire against our desire and need to feed ourselves with *BATATA!* yuca, arroz and habichuelas, while a certain species of green reptiles encroaches on our land, sunning themselves and eating everything we try to grow.

1898. The iguana is introduced to the island in the pet trade of the seventies. We see them raining from the trees and posing for postcards for tourists who also enjoy sunning themselves. In 2016 hunting the iguanas is introduced as a measure to re-establish the practice of growing food in our backyards that, since the forties, has been the only sustenance of our grandparents and paternal aunts. Recently, the government of Puerto Rico has granted a sanitary licence to process iguana meat with the condition that it is only marketed abroad. This is one of the measures to eradicate the plague. For now, hunting iguanas is the only way we can dream about once again growing *batata* and yuca on an island where we are sent boxes of "Meal, Ready-to-Eat, Warfighter tested", packed in 2006, to feed us during an emergency. PRERA (1933–?) We hunt and sell iguana meat at $1 per pound through the only company that processes it here, and then export it to the US where people pay up to $12 per pound. How long it will take for our crops to recover is part of the enigma.

—Translated from the Spanish by Joanne Namerou

Las Nietas de Nonó, *Foodtopia: Demostration During Hunting Season*, 2016

Photos by Beatriz Santiago Muñoz



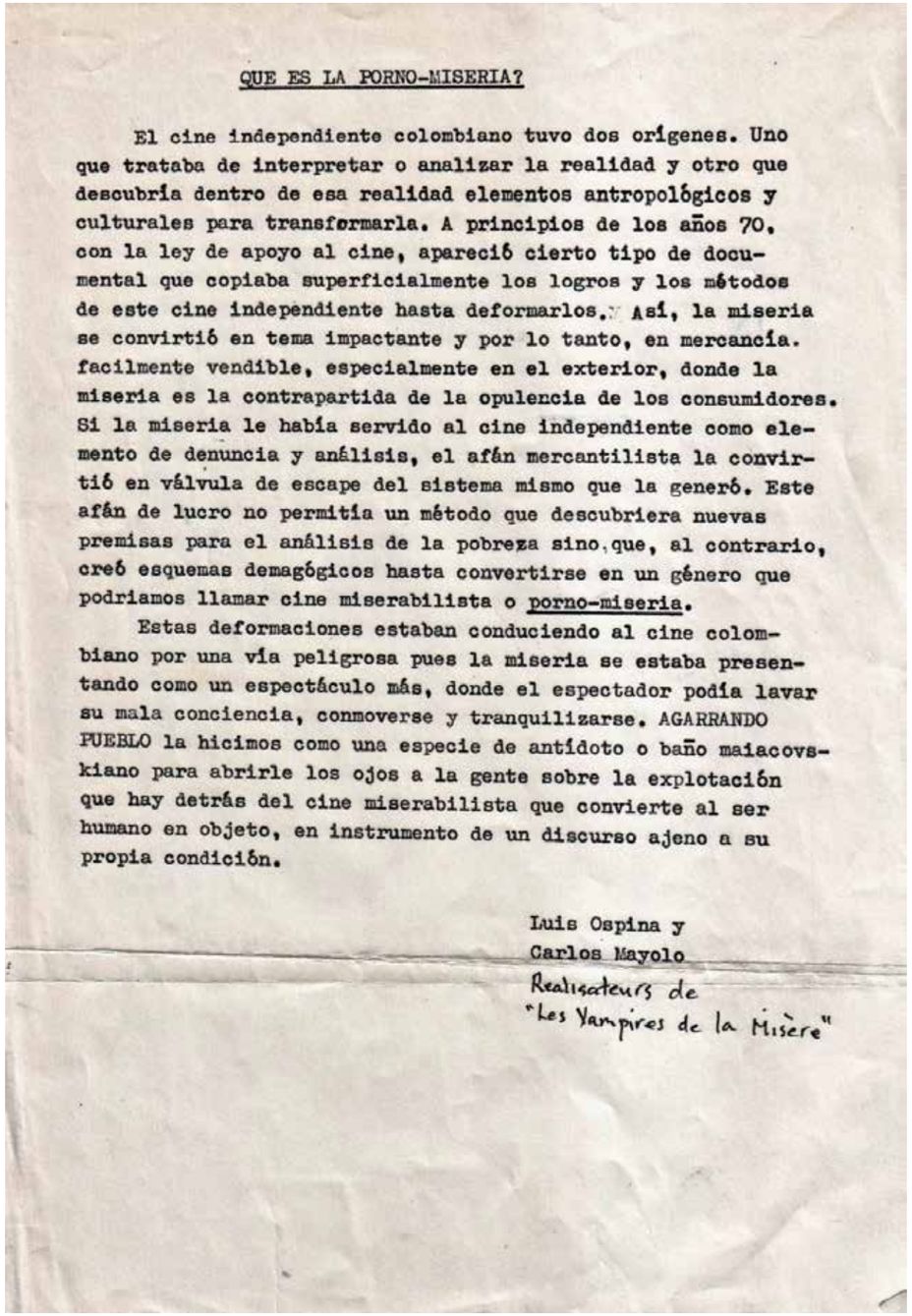
Filming *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty), 1977
From left to right: Luis Ospina, Fernando Vélez and Carlos Mayolo
Photo by Eduardo Carvajal

What Is Pornomiseria?

Miquel Martí Freixas, Ángela Bonadies and Luis Ospina

A term coined in the 1970s by two members of the Colombian Grupo de Cali, while shooting their epic documentary "Agarrando Pueblo" (The Vampires of Poverty) has lost none of its currency.

Rehearsal of *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty), 1977
From left to right: Fernando Vélez, Carlos Mayolo and Luis Alfonso Londoño
Photo by Eduardo Carvajal



QUE ES LA PORNO-MISERIA?

El cine independiente colombiano tuvo dos orígenes. Uno que trataba de interpretar o analizar la realidad y otro que descubría dentro de esa realidad elementos antropológicos y culturales para transformarla. A principios de los años 70, con la ley de apoyo al cine, apareció cierto tipo de documental que copiaba superficialmente los logros y los métodos de este cine independiente hasta deformarlos. Así, la miseria se convirtió en tema impactante y por lo tanto, en mercancía. facilmente vendible, especialmente en el exterior, donde la miseria es la contrapartida de la opulencia de los consumidores. Si la miseria le había servido al cine independiente como elemento de denuncia y análisis, el afán mercantilista la convirtió en válvula de escape del sistema mismo que la generó. Este afán de lucro no permitía un método que descubriera nuevas premisas para el análisis de la pobreza sino, que, al contrario, creó esquemas demagógicos hasta convertirse en un género que podríamos llamar cine miserabilista o porno-miseria.

Estas deformaciones estaban conduciendo al cine colombiano por una vía peligrosa pues la miseria se estaba presentando como un espectáculo más, donde el espectador podía lavar su mala conciencia, conmoverse y tranquilizarse. AGARRANDO PUEBLO la hicimos como una especie de antídoto o baño maiacovskiano para abrirle los ojos a la gente sobre la explotación que hay detrás del cine miserabilista que convierte al ser humano en objeto, en instrumento de un discurso ajeno a su propia condición.

Luis Ospina y
Carlos Mayolo
Realisateurs de
"Les Vampires de la Misère"

"What is pornomiseria?" Original text written by Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo
for the premiere of the film *Agarrando Pueblo* in Paris
Courtesy of Luis Ospina

Luis Alfonso Londoño during the shooting of *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty), 1977
Photo by Eduardo Carvajal

Independent cinema in Colombia had two origins. One attempted to interpret or analyse reality, while the other discovered, within that same reality, the anthropological and cultural means to transform it. At the beginning of the seventies, a certain kind of documentary film appeared after a law providing film subsidies went into effect. This form would superficially appropriate the achievements and methods of earlier independent cinema to the point of reforming the genre. Misery and poverty became a striking theme and thus a commodity, easily sellable abroad, where it acted as a counterpoint to viewers' opulence. If misery had served as a tool for analysis and criticism within independent cinema, the mercantilist impulse of the time transformed it into an escape valve for the very system that had instigated it in the first place. This desire for profit stalled all means for a new analysis of poverty and created demagogic schemes, establishing them as a genre we will refer to as the "Cinema of Misery or *Pornomiseria*". Such reformations led Colombian cinema down a dangerous path where misery was presented as one more spectacle for audiences to cleanse their dirty consciences, be moved and pacify themselves. *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty) was made as a kind of antidote or Mayakovskyan bath. The film would open people's eyes to the exploitation created by the Cinema of Misery, a genre that transforms human beings into objects and instruments of a discourse removed from their own condition.

Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo
Directors of Agarrando Pueblo

Agarrando Pueblo revisited by Miquel Martí Freixas

Yesterday's Vampires of Poverty

If someone were to ask me for an all-time top ten of the best documentary films ever made, I'd include, without a doubt, the small and not well-known Colombian film *Agarrando Pueblo*, made in 1977 by Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo. It may seem surprising at first to place this film next to the pillars that established documentary film as a genre (*Man with a Movie Camera* by Vertov in 1929 and *Nanook of the North* by Robert J. Flaherty in 1922), and close to the prominent names of those who forged a path for themselves within this form (Joris Ivens, Jean Rouch and Chris Marker, among many others). However, this small and modest Colombian film accomplished something that had not been undertaken before—a critical insight into the task of a cinematography that expands into an international context. This reflection is still very relevant forty years later. Ospina and Mayolo, perhaps even without knowing it, reach the core of one of the most important issues regarding the representation of others: the problem of ethics.

The film surfaced out of an emerging artist collective based in the city of Cali. Three names of the collective's members were put forward: Andrés Caidedo (1951–77), a writer, theatre actor and film critic who committed suicide at the age of twenty-five; and film directors Mayolo (1945–2007) and Ospina (1949). The latter, with a long trajectory in the genre of documentary film, narrates a world history from the small universe of Cali. Ospina's critical, humorous and imaginative perspective incorporates his commitment to honouring the creative legacy of the artist collective. His latest movie released in 2015, *Todo comenzó por el fin* (It All Started at the End), is in fact a feature-length film of over three hours wherein the director compiles the experiences of the Grupo de Cali, (as the collective is known), using film fragments, private recordings and statements from its living members. The background of the collective is made apparent with this movie, its inner workings, the input and presence of so many women participants, the fraternity, love, passion and joy they lived for decades. Primarily, the Grupo de Cali grew out of a cinema club. Even though other genres were common to the artistic production of the collective, film was their artistic backbone.

One attribute sets them apart from other artist collectives in Latin America—their distance from the militancy of the far right, whose reign prevailed in the rest of the continent, bringing forth fascist dictatorships and working-class repression and struggle. More concretely, documentary filmmaking served as a cultural expression of resistance in countries like Argentina and Chile. Contrary to this tendency, the Grupo de Cali was influenced by North American counterculture with rock music, underground references and protest movements all blended together with the local culture of Cali. Colombia did not suffer an armed takeover during those decades and in this sense, such forms of repression remained foreign to the country. However the Grupo de Cali did experience the bellicose vortex in Colombia towards the end of the sixties, which would later manifest as high daily doses of violence during the eighties and nineties, and a filthy, complex war between the government, guerrillas and the paramilitary. Artists in Cali were affected by the aggressive climate, like all other citizens. They experienced this time in their artistic production, filmmaking, intense lives and drugs, all of which kept them alienated for years from the raw reality of their country.

Developed by Ospina and Mayolo, *Agarrando Pueblo* belongs to the early stages of the Grupo de Cali. The two directors were focused on staging a strong criticism of the filmmaking business in their country. At the time, national subsidies were available for the realisation of Colombian films for worldwide distribution; this aid provided fast funds for directors developing low production-value documentary films that dealt with the overarching theme of poverty. European buyers would easily acquire such films as they fitted into their clichés of a poor and underdeveloped Latin America while satisfying the demands of their art venues. Many unscrupulous filmmakers used misery in their own countries without questioning its conditions, making it banal for their own gain. This was the starting point of the title *Agarrando Pueblo*, a Colombian expression bestowed with a double meaning: it refers to both stealing from people and deceiving the masses.

With their critical will, the two friends wrote a film script placing themselves alongside disadvantaged populations, since a consideration of the extreme social inequality in Colombia was already one of the recurring themes in their work. In a mixture of documentary and mockumentary, Ospina and Mayolo played the role of two directors working on a film for a European production company. Using the project alias "Vampires of Misery" they would carelessly incorporate passers-by in the city of Cali as film actors for a 'staged misery'. A misery that could be manipulated and exaggerated by virtue of their authority as directors. They drive fast, disregarding the inhabitants of the city. They sniff cocaine. Their film is full of great cinematic choices: the film's conclusion is its most remarkable aspect, with its narrative spins, denunciation, humour and punk attitude. The two directors give birth to the term *Pornomiseria*: "Misery was presented as one more spectacle for audiences to cleanse their dirty conscience, be moved, and pacify themselves. If misery had served its role as a tool for analysis and criticism within independent cinema, the mercantilist urge of the time transformed it in an escape valve of the system that instigated it in the first place."

The Vampires of Poverty Today

What makes *Agarrando Pueblo* astonishing is its relevance in 2018. Today one is still able to observe its unexpected validity. What began as a local critique is now a global matter, very much present in the daily movements of the Western world. What was born as a criticism of the unethical use of documentary film has exploded into television, advertising and photojournalism.

It would be demagogic to establish an ethics of documentary film on the basis of *Agarrando Pueblo*. It is extremely complex to dictate what is ethical and what isn't, an endless debate in certain cases. In the field of documentary film for instance, there have been great examples of ethical productions where a Western gaze is set

on formerly unknown lands, making these worlds comprehensible through the work. I will set forth two cases out of man: Jean Rouch, who collaborated with African protagonists to produce films of a highly collective character, and the French director Sylvain George's *Qu'ils réposent en révolte* (May They Rest in Revolt (Figures of War, 2010)), who spent four years travelling to Calais to develop an ethical affiliation with local immigrants, and sought a visual language that would separate him from the mainstream. George would deepen his relationship to observed conditions rather than stand at their shore. He would tell me in an interview, and I won't forget his words: "Who am I to film the misery of others? […] Why shouldn't I film my own misery instead?" He wanted to engage in the most ethical approaches possible, knowing full well that not all means are suitable to reach the desired ends.

If we look at today's largest documentary film festivals we discover a great number of works per year dealing with similar topics (inequality, poverty, social conflict), all set in African, Asian and Latin American locations. Frequently, it is Western filmmakers who produce these documentaries. If said projects lack an air of prior ethical consideration and a dedication to political thinking, it is because their directors haven't dedicated enough time to the very complex social realities of the regions they portray. Their films are bound to fall into clichés, which stand for a reality that remains unfamiliar to them. This is often the case, unfortunately, and although many of these projects stem from good intentions—seeking more than the visibility and recognition of film festivals—their contributions are certainly suspicious. Mayolo and Ospina's allegations remain valid in such cases, wanting to criticise productions that feed the film industry. Here photojournalism as a genre might stand close to documentary film. Many photographers have been accused of compromising their ethics for the sake of their aesthetic gaze; one of the most famous cases being Sebastiaõ Salgado in the nineties. The largest annual awards for photojournalism tend to follow a similar path to documentary film awards, where hedonism often triumphs over truthfulness and ethics. Similarly with NGOs, which have developed their own small industry of the image, there is a tendency to present visual campaigns with questionable content.

In the case of television networks, the ethics of filming others is out of control. It is impossible to carve out a space for reflection on a delicate subject such as this in the business of television, in which images circulate at the speed of light, 365 days per year, 24 hours per day, with content that is multiplied via hundreds of television channels. In news reports, wars are condensed into a few images, which are unable to account for the events. Then comes the football news where the reporter smiles after the triumph of his local team. An Islamic terrorist attack is followed by a set of wonderful male chauvinist ads, immediately after which we are provided a fast countdown of the poorest nations worldwide. The constant clashes and saturation are such that we consider ourselves lucky to find a TV channel prioritising neutral information delivered by a professional team of reporters. We cannot aspire to informative reports and montage of impeccable ethical value, or hope that Africa may suddenly be portrayed beyond three limited themes. This would be asking the mass media to do the job of good independent filmmakers and committed photographers. Although ideal, this would certainly be utopian. Our TVs might explode as we scrutinise current media vis-à-vis the idiom of *Pornomiseria*.

What will take place during the coming years, in terms of an ethical representation of the least favoured people, remains a mystery. We live in an audiovisual era of great speed, of unstoppable image proliferation and an excess of imagery. It becomes progressively more difficult to follow strict and rigorous ethics as images melt into themselves and collide. It will be the duty of the spectator to find filmmakers producing coherent works that are faithful to the world surrounding them, but these figures keep falling deeper into obscure niches. At the same time, it is also possible that in light of the major socio-economic changes taking place, for example in Africa, such societies will come to represent themselves more, gain visibility, voice and empowerment, and create new cultural and artistic expressions without the need to be seen through the eyes of others.

Next pages: Frames from the film *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty), 1977

Film still from *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty), 1977

Interview with Luis Ospina by Ángela Bonadies

Ángela Bonadies In an interview you mention that *Agarrando Pueblo* (The Vampires of Poverty) was meant to be a fragment of a longer film based on one of [Russian poet and Futurist Vladimir] Mayakovsky's writings. What happened to the initial idea?

Luis Ospina *Agarrando Pueblo* was initially conceived as a segment within a feature-length film about cinema, *El Corazón del cine* (The Heart of Cinema), where fiction and documentary would blend together inspired by a Mayakovsky script with the same title. I believe this writing is also known as *Encadenada por la pantalla* (Chained by the Screen).

Carlos Mayolo was a great admirer of Mayakovsky, of his poetry, his cinematographic projects, and his vigorous personality. If I'm remembering correctly, the book that introduced Mayolo to his cinematography was called *Mayakovsky and Cinema*. We even anticipated having an epilogue for *Agarrando Pueblo* based on this.

In my archives I found the following scheme for the film:

EL CORAZÓN DEL CINE
Fiction-Happening in four parts with a prologue and an epilogue

Prologue. A sociological investigation of the phenomenon of cinema.
El Corazón del Cine.
Agarrando pueblo.
Pura Película.
Ladrones y Policías.
Epilogue. A sociological investigation of the phenomenon of cinema II.

Epigraph:
For you cinema is spectacle

For me – a view of the world

Cinema – conductor of movement

Cinema – innovator of literature

Cinema – destroyer of aesthetics

Cinema – fearlessness

Cinema – sportsman

Cinema – distributor of ideas

Cinema is ill, capitalism has dazzled its eyes with money. Cunning producers take it for a walk. Make revenue. Move hearts with tearful arguments.
This must end.

Vladimir Mayakovsky,
Kino-Foto Magazine (1922)

Prologue:
Cashier. Ticket sales. Ticket lines. Major business. Survey-type questions.

"Why do you go to the movies?" or "What is cinema to you?" for example.

The journey of empty reel tins, from the distributor to the movie theatre. An interview with the film

projectionist (The Captain) while film is being loaded. A montage of film paraphernalia, posters, photographs, stars, etc.

First Segment: EL CORAZÓN DEL CINE. (Adaptation of Mayakovsky's script with the same title.) This segment closes with the question: "Why won't cinema occupy itself with Life?"

Second Segment: AGARRANDO PUEBLO. (See episode attached, AGARRANDO PUEBLO). Ends with the shot of a suitcase full of empty reel tins. The title of a third segment is displayed.

Third Segment: PURA PELICULA. (A thriller episode about cocaine trafficking). To be written. This episode ends with a closed-case legal-type scene where the detectives discuss the destiny of the characters). A television parody. The title for a fourth part is displayed on TV.

Fourth Segment: LADRONES Y POLICIAS. (See script, previously titled VA A VENIR VISITA.)

Epilogue: A conclusion to the prologue investigation.

LO The full project didn't come into being for various reasons. One of them was our lack of funding for the development of a feature-length film of such scope. The second reason was our inability to integrate all chapters into a single piece. A few of the prologue scenes were shot and their film negatives now rest in my archives at Patrimonio Filmico. When we shot *Agarrando Pueblo* we decided that this segment could stand by itself and didn't need to be part of a larger project; even the Mayakovsky epigraph was cut out. The entire correspondence between Mayolo and I can be found in my book of complete works, *Palabras al Viento,* including our exchange about the film and some disagreements we had. A PDF copy of this book is available on my website www.luisospina.com under 'books'.

ÁB How does the notion of *Pornomiseria* resonate with you today, given the popularity of the term?

LO Mayolo and I invented this term in our short manifesto *What Is Pornomiseria?* I delivered this document as a mimeograph handout during the premiere of the film in Paris at the Action République theatre on 12 May 1978. This term is still valid. You can measure its currency by how much the film continues to travel to different venues after forty years. The term has even extended to other fields such as photography, fine arts, and literature, and it is almost a compulsory point of reference for any discourse dealing with an ethics of filmmaking.

ÁB How can we avoid vampirism?

LO Vampirism in filmmaking is inevitable. The photographic lens as well as the cinematographic camera 'feed' on the subject; they 'mummify' it and 'steal' its soul, whether we want it to or not. André Bazin already warned us of this with his famous essay *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* in 1945. One must analyse ethical schemes to avoid falling into the trap of *Pornomiseria*. The act of being filmed is one of the greatest gestures of generosity that a human being can make and it relies on you (the filmmaker) being faithful to that person, since it is very easy to betray it by manipulating the material so that it goes against that person.

ÁB What type of contract, verbal or ethical, was established with those who participated in *Agarrando Pueblo*?

LO The first part of the movie is completely improvised. We envisioned it as a happening where we'd face people using our camera. There was no verbal contract then; it would have prevented us from obtaining such 'real' scenes. Mayolo and I have continuously stated that *Agarrando Pueblo* functions as an antidote against the *cine miserabilista*, a genre that exploits misery as if it were a commodity. You need some of the original poison to manufacture a cure, same as with any other antidote. The second portion of the film, set in a hotel and within one of the characters' properties, was fully scripted including dialogues and camera movements. The third part, the interview, follows the documentary format entirely. The film begins as a documentary, makes its way through fiction, and ends a documentary again.

ÁB Similar to you, other filmmakers also record 'the archive' and use it as material. They reference memory and the passage of time through the subjects and settings they reconstruct and evoke. How did the country and its social conditions change since *Agarrando Pueblo*?

LO This is a difficult question to answer in just a few words. To summarise things, I would say that my films have always dealt with the changes in our society and world through the twentieth century. Some of my films, such as *Andres Caicedo: unos pocos buenos amigos*, *La desazón suprema: retrato incesante de Fernando Vallejo*, *Un tigre de papel* and *Todo comenzó por el fin* are generational portraits spanning history from 1934 to the end of the twentieth century. All these films share a pessimism and cynicism that may be best communicated in the words of [Colombian novelist and filmmaker] Fernando Vallejo: "What used to work is now broken; what was bad has gotten worse."

ÁB You mention that filmmaking from and within the Third World consists of a search towards South American localities and a desire to lay bare our image of underdevelopment. Does this quest also entail working with a low budget and a limited production team?

LO There were no private or governmental funding opportunities when I started making film. We fought to make our films tooth and nail. Young people today have everything on a silver platter: everyone has access to a camera, editing software, and an unlimited supply of movies on DVD, internet streaming and pirate sourcing. [Brazilian director] Glauber Rocha's dream from the sixties has finally materialised: "To make movies you only need a camera in your hand and an idea in your head."

—All texts translated from the Spanish by Mayra Rodríguez Castro

Sign in Rio Galisteo bosque

From Trespassing to Home

Lucy R. Lippard

"Interpretation is critical, for history is a contest of stories."

—Estevan Rael-Galvez

I moved to the village of Galisteo, New Mexico twenty-five years ago after making my living as a freelance art writer housed in cold-water flats and inexpensive lofts in Lower Manhattan for thirty-five years. In 1993 my activist community was faltering and even the margins of the 'art world' where I had spent most of my adult life were no longer exciting. I taught part-time for several years in Colorado, where my maternal grandparents were raised. The American Southwest is certainly a state of mind all its own. My decision to live in rural New Mexico was sparked by a growing interest in place and the cultural landscape, as well as a love of hiking. I built a 16 x 24 foot house, off the grid, on an overgrazed pasture at the edge of the village of Galisteo (population around 260), where I knew a couple of people and began to trespass—both literally and culturally. Writing my book *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (The New Press, 1997) led to a fascination with local history, often dismissed as an old-age avocation. (I was born in 1937.) By then I had been living in Galisteo for four years and it occurred to me that I should practice what I preached in *The Lure of the Local.* Walking the local landscape, the ruins, rock art and traces of ancestral Pueblo peoples, was amplified by the stories told by the descendants of the Hispano families who had founded the village around 1814. This preoccupation led first to *Down Country: The Tano of the Galisteo Basin, 1250–1782* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2010), and then to some twenty years of spasmodic work on *Pueblo Chico: Land and Lives in Galisteo, New Mexico, 1814–2014* (now verging on completion). The following essay consists of excerpts from this in-depth history of a tiny village.

I write this looking out my workroom window in November with a certain awe at a post-Thanksgiving twilight. The familiarly ragged band of the Ortiz Mountains, featured in ads for the TV show *Longmire*, is a sharp black silhouette against a vast sky bleeding up from yellow to turquoise to blue to a dark grey blue. Venus is brilliant and alone in the southwest. How many former inhabitants of the Galisteo Basin have stopped in the pre-winter chill to contemplate this view before continuing tasks or comforts or trials in war and in peace? It is a cultural landscape that has become familiar, simultaneously enriched with the stories I have been told by those who value memories, and veiled by those I have not been told. From its inception, this book has been about the vortex of land and lives; about the ways the land reveals its coexistence with people; the ways people have changed it and the ways the land has in turn changed the people who lived here long enough to become part of it.

This book is based primarily on other people's memories, those of the descendants of the original settlers in the early 1800s, most of them *mestizos,* heirs of the Spanish colonisers and the indigenous colonised. They courageously settled this isolated valley amidst official neglect and threats of raids from nomadic tribes. In addition, I've listened to the memories of those who came later, Hispano and Anglo. I hoped to track the vortices of land and lives with relative specificity. But too many lives have already receded into the land. Few remain to tell the stories, and the accounts themselves are often too detailed, too contradictory and go too far back to be clearly recalled even within oral traditions. The land itself has the longest memory, harbouring traces of towns, trails, agriculture and other land uses that go back thousands of years. Like traditional New Mexico adobe homes, cultural landscapes are settled, lost, resettled, expanded when need requires, the old and new merging into each other until specific history is blurred by real life.

Landscape Studies or cultural/historical geography offers a context for social, aesthetic and scientific disciplines. I have to pay parenthetical homage to the peripatetic scholar and brilliant essayist/geographer J.B. Jackson, who lived just northwest of the Galisteo Basin. He defined the cultural landscape as 'a concrete, three-dimensional, shared reality' rather than just a detached view beyond where we huddle in our houses. He was criticised for being too neutrally involved in 'the multifarious details', which can indeed be seductive, as this book all too clearly demonstrates. But the details build up and finally illuminate aspects of local place that remain stubbornly hidden from the generalizers who normally control representation.

I was consumed with curiosity when I moved to Galisteo, and I soon became inextricably inundated by historical detail. I wanted to know everything about the place. George Henderson has warned: "… geographers are turning their attention to fine-grained, ethnographic approaches developed in anthropology and sociology in order to ferret out the hidden details of resisted, negotiated landscape." Remember, my partner keeps reminding me, you don't have to know *everything.* Despite his admonitions, I managed to create a morass of information; I often despaired of a book ever

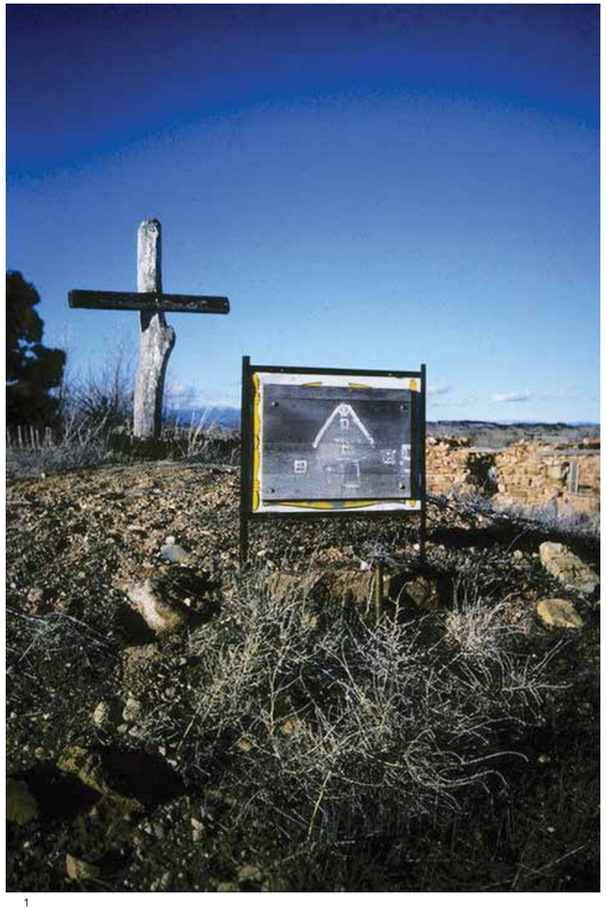
emerging from such chaos. Beneath the rubble of my research—cartons and drawers and files full of 'anything about the Galisteo Basin'—lies a layer of 'multiple truths' that have emerged from other people's memories. Research over almost two decades has been fragmentary and spasmodic, as other projects and making a living took precedence.

Historical facts are notoriously elusive. Putting this place into words has been for me part of the slow process of belonging, a commitment to intimacy that will never be fully consummated. The history of the Galisteo Basin is in flux, and I won't pretend to have the last words. The more you know about a place like this, the less (you realise) you actually know. My task has been to balance all of these sources, rather than to decide which one is 'correct'. Any text attempting to take in multiple viewpoints must be a collage, a patchwork of images. How do you overlay different world views and conflicting oral histories without obliterating everything? And without subjecting them to a dominant cultural overview, which amounts to forceable assimilation? The context doesn't exist for a nice, seamless narrative, so this book may not resemble a conventional history. Each family history is different; many conflict with others. My own memories are also suspect.

Years ago, a local man told me, "I wouldn't pay a dollar for a book on New Mexico by some New York writer or even *published* in New York…." I don't think he knew at the time what I did or where I was from, but he went on to warn me about my own investigations into local culture: "Nobody will tell you the real stories, and if they did, you couldn't print them." In many cases, he turned out to be right. So why forge ahead? Curiosity and self-indulgence on one hand, and on the other, a sense of obsessive responsibility to a place I love; a need to tell at least some of its story, no matter how fragmented and inconclusive. I have been encouraged in this project by some Galisteans who are angered by the lack of local Hispano history taught in the schools. They hope to remind educators of their responsibilities to people and place.

And then there are the historical documents themselves, purported to be more trustworthy than individuals' memories. New Mexico historian Marc Simmons has wisely observed: the value of every historical document depends on its accuracy and completeness of observation. Unhappily, faithful testimony is not the rule, since human beings are prone to falsify their statements, either deliberately or unconsciously. When to this impediment is added the fact that for any past event or period only a limited quantity of evidence is ever available, it will be seen how difficult it is for the historian to speak with confidence. The good scholar takes these limitations into account.

In order to understand this place, I have to shake off my own native geography, outwardly defined by my upbringing in New York, Maine, Louisiana, Virginia and Connecticut. As I write about Galisteo, I'm looking for the full fabric, a place in a landscape woven of natural, historic, and current events, or history up to the last lived moment. The village's past is integrally tied to its 'continuous present', as Gertrude Stein put it. Whatever the first impression of these vast spaces, this is in no sense a 'timeless' landscape. It is a landscape of many times that—once the history is known—can be experienced almost simultaneously. Which is the point of this book.



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1. Tony Anaya, painting (on a real estate sign) of the old church that once stood on this mound. 2. The 'new' Galisteo church (built 1882–84). 3. The 'old' Galisteo cemetery on The Hill. 4. Village of Galisteo from the west, showing former plaza and river to the east

These days, more than two centuries after its beginnings, the eastern Galisteo Basin would be unrecognisable to its earlier inhabitants. For more than 150 years, in the face of bad odds, the village—isolated by Indian attacks, then by treacherous roads, harsh topography, poverty, land loss and official neglect—was forced to be self-sustaining. Today the lush grasses for which the Basin was known in colonial and territorial days are short, patchy and dry. The acequias that nourished the small farms are long gone. Streams, footpaths, livestock and animal tracks—even light-footed coyote trails—erode into gullies. There are more *piñons* and junipers on lower ground because the grasslands can't hold their own any longer and trees are no longer cut down in large quantities for building materials and firewood.

While it still nestles amid shrinking ranchlands, the village of Galisteo is no longer rural, no longer a working landscape in any authentic sense. The fields where beans and alfalfa once grew when there was more water and the downcut creek was still accessible to the irrigation ditches have gone back to the weeds of drought-stricken nature. There are no longer any small farms or ranches. The few old men who maintained chili patches have passed on, although there are sporadic waves of interest in communal gardening among newer residents. Grazing is difficult even on the big surrounding ranches—now all tax-break spreads, ripe for development. A cow-calf pair can demand as much as 160 acres. Thousands of sheep once sustained the Galisteo Basin, but in my time, there have been no sheep in the area. I've seen an occasional steer being fattened up, a pet pig, goats, a few chickens, a pair of peacocks, a lot of outdoor dogs and doomed cats (coyotes and owls get them). Fewer and fewer horses pace small paddocks and fields in the village proper, some kept as valued tokens of the old days when the people still had their *ranchitos*.

Perceptions of the land may have changed almost beyond recognition in the last half century, but Galisteo is still embroiled in battles over land and water. Now they are less often about individual/family rights and more often about a small community opposing large-scale development and the extraction industry, fuelled by local political machinations. Through it all, the land remains, the land that newcomers may see as dusty, infertile, featureless, rock hard; the land that once provided for many people, whose spirits remain to haunt us.

In Navajo the words for one's home is "the place where that individual is walking around". When I first began to explore the Galisteo Basin, even before I moved there, I vowed to walk every inch of it, in search of the historical record written on the land itself, but also for personal, sensuous satisfaction. I wanted to know the place I had fallen for, with all its idiosyncrasies in all seasons, the way only walkers and lovers can. Like all relationships this one has been rocky (pun intended), not to mention losing a lot of earrings and nicking a lot of jeans and jackets ducking through barbed wire. The 'discoveries' have been personal as well as historical, and I'm always aware of how many others have 'discovered' the same places before me. The pleasures of walking the map remain, but I expected to be able to trek cross-country for the rest of my life, with relative caution, closing gates, not letting the dog chase stock, taking nothing but pictures. I had envisioned rattlesnakes, flash floods and lightning strikes as the greatest dangers. Not cowboys travelling in pickups armed with guns and ominous

reputations, or Vietnam vets in Blazers brandishing Uzis rumoured to be guarding the Zorro Ranch. I hadn't counted on the increasing hostility of ranchers and their surrogates to local trespassers who had for years been reluctantly tolerated. Nor had I counted on the increasing intrusion of new fences, driveways and 'ranchettes' straddling familiar trails.

I still walk the land where I have access, where I won't be arrested or shot at, but I can no longer look out my window after work and wonder what's up there or out there and decide that's where I'll hike today. I can, however, continue to learn about my immediate environs from those who were raised here. I've talked to old men who herded sheep for the *patron* as children. I've found their drawings and initials carved into rocks next to pre-European petroglyphs. Serapio Anaya recalled camping on top of Cerro Pelon in the early 1930s and crying, because from there he could see his village home—so near and yet so far, not to be visited for another month, when he took his laundry down to his mother. For me the Cerro is a place to hike, another world. I've tromped through the snow there, but I haven't had to sleep in it. For me it's a site of pleasure and for Serapio it was a memory of hardship.

When I began researching local history—first out of curiosity, then for the newsletter, and finally for this book—the courteous, reserved and often secretive village elders were bewildered as to why I would care about their family histories. They don't articulate it, but they justifiably wonder if it's really any of my business. When asked why I am so interested in their families rather than my own, I try to explain that my interest is in people *in place*, and my own family had never stayed long enough in one place to be interesting in that context. Sarapio Montoya kindly responded: "When you get old and sick, you may want to go back to your own country." (He may have meant my *patria chica*, my own little country—all you can see from the nearest high point—or just home. But I consider Galisteo my home.)

There are those local Galisteans who are resigned to the flood of newcomers from 'away'; those who abhor them … and those who are convinced that they will outlast them. There is an assumption that all Anglos are transient, while members of the old families maintain contact with the village through the church and family gatherings, even when they live elsewhere. When I was new in the village, the late José Ortiz y Pino III told me, "We don't worry about gringos—they come and they go. They don't stay. They get old and there's no one to take care of them and they go back to their roots even though they've sworn they'll stay here forever. We sit and watch them. No one's a threat to me. I know them better than they know me."

Ortiz y Pino's tight grasp on his family's and the village's histories has rarely been challenged. But the descendants of the other, often older, families, *la gente*, once exploited by the *patrón* family, are stepping up to reveal their own family histories. New obstacles arise. A friend who has been researching her genealogy found that some elderly male relatives were reluctant to tell their stories to a woman. Some people whom I have interviewed about the past like the idea of their histories being written down, for the future. Others are fearful of what that means—a throwback to the times when the legal process in New Mexico changed languages and so many were bilked out of their common lands and their cultural inheritances. Nothing good has come to them in writing, although *telling* is a different matter, generously proffered.

"Most educated people say, where is it written? Our people say, where is it *lived*?" A native *Nuevomexicano* said this to an artist working in another part of the state. Because lived experience—my own and others' – is important to me, I was able to interview many elders before they passed on. It was harder than I had imagined, not because of ill will, but for lack of common ground. Historian Ernest Bloch wrote about 'non-synchronisms', by which he meant "the coexistence of tradition and innovation in all people's lives; of different, even opposing cultures living alongside one another; of inequalities and tensions that sustain any social stability, even as they lay the groundwork for change". Native Hispanos and one rich and powerful old family, struggling and successful artists, wealthy newcomers who often don't last long—we all live in the same place, attend the same community gatherings, are often friendly, though we can be miles apart. But everyone has stories.

Some scholars don't trust oral histories because they tend to favour stories over specific dates and places, which can be frustrating for researchers to record or fix. The sense of time is flexible. The old Galisteo families adamantly prefer their own family histories, which often conflict with those of their neighbours, their relatives and the few extant documents. Because New Mexico is a poor state, and was slow to acquire the amenities of modern life, I have met villagers who remembered customs, beliefs and lifestyles that elsewhere had disappeared in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. I spoke to those who survived the Depression; I spoke to women who bore many children and worked as hard as the men. I spoke to those who were children in the 1920s and thirties and could remember a tight, supportive, culturally homogenous (if quarrelsome) community, and I have spoken to those who are disenchanted with present-day Galisteo, so unlike that of their childhoods. We all love 'our village' but its 'ownership' is an issue.

Over the decades, as the transition was made from rural to bedroom community, the proudly historic village has become an increasingly wealthy residential town. At community meetings, the pendulum has shifted from very local politics towards broader issues of planning, environmentalism and maintaining the village's 'character', which no one knows better than the old families who are nostalgic for the days of closer community despite a harsher economy. Not yet a suburb of Santa Fe (thanks to the ranchland that separates us from the highway 285 corridor), Galisteo maintains its own identity despite a similar influx of out-of-state retirees. Old houses are gutted to adapt to different lifestyles. New houses are built infrequently in the village proper. Both are marketed at exorbitant prices. A population of approximately 260—which includes children and elders and the Ranchitos de Galisteo subdivision with its high percentage of second homes—is hard pressed to provide the human power necessary to support the village's volunteer civic institutions: The Community Association, the Fire Department, the Water Board, Community Planning committees, La Sala Art Center, and the monthly newsletter, *El Puente*. New arrivals are greedily recruited for the eternally opening slots on the various boards that operate these organisations.

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1. A transformer, a dreaded sign of coming development. 2. Ancient (c. 1250–1500) petroglyph by Tano people on one of the crestons. 3. Right from top: Village home. 4. Curandero's 'office. 5. Former home of painter Agnes Martin with wrecked car in the bosque below. (She had it covered with branches so that it was almost invisible from above.)

The demographics of the Galisteo Basin and Santa Fe County have been changing, although New Mexico maintains the proportionally largest Latino population in the nation, and Hispanos have been described as 'legally white' but 'socially non-white'. "Hispano identity has mutated over the course of several centuries from *vecino* through Mexican, Spanish American, Chicano/Indo Hispano/*Nuevomexicano* phases, always in interaction and co-formation with other self-identified neighbouring populations, including Pueblos, Navajos, Apaches, Utes, Comanches, *Genizaros* (detribalized Indians), Anglo Americans, Mexican nationals, other Mexican Americans and Latinos," writes Taoseña anthropologist Sylvia Rodriguez.

As the rest of the country becomes browner, this often insular Indo-Hispano village has become whiter. Galisteo is now majority Anglo (a term that includes Caucasians, African Americans, Jews, or—anyone who is not Indian or Hispano) and Hispanos make up only around a quarter of the population. The old families maintain a profound attachment to their lost ranches, as do the Pueblo people who once inhabited the Galisteo Basin and still consider none of their ancient homes 'abandoned'. The younger generation, like all North Americans, seems less attached to its roots.

Language disparities are also disappearing. Unlike their elders, who spoke English as a second language, the younger generations often know little Spanish. Most of us Anglos of course, speak Spanish poorly, if at all. The advent of many contemporary Mexicans and Central Americans to the city of Santa Fe means even more Spanish is spoken in the supermarkets and everywhere around the capital, but the distinctions between *Mexicano* and *Nuevomexicano* are sharp. A Chicana neighbor raised in El Paso found most New Mexicans standoffish. A local man asked me if she was Spanish (Hispano) or Mexican (*Mexicano*)?

Although the elders are passing on and there are few young people and children in the village, there is still a village within the village. Hispano life, bolstered by tight family ties, flows on like an unseen current below the general civic flow. At a Local Ingenuity conference in the northeast, Graciela Esperanza, a community organiser from San Antonio, Texas, commented on the 'outsider's agenda'. The community, she said, takes tradition and goes on a political route with it; the outsider walks away with what the community has developed. Many communities have suffered, or enjoyed, a sequence of outsiders who arrive and announce "Here's what you need or should do. Lucky you, we can do it for you." The initial response, she observed, "... tends to be 'don't do us any favours.'" (A poster in my workroom backs this up: 'Nothing About Us Without Us Is for Us'.)

After I'd lived in Galisteo for more than a decade, I was told within a week, with casual frankness rather than hostility, that I would never belong here. This was not news. Having written extensively about what constituted the 'local'. I knew that I could never fully belong to a place I had come to so late, a place that differed so drastically from my own lived experience. Most contemporary North Americans move so often we're constantly trespassing in one another's home places. In New Mexico, in Maine, and other poor states where persistence and fortitude have been so important, you'll always be 'from away' or 'just off the bus' as Debbie Jaramillo, the forthright former

mayor of Santa Fe, liked to say. A telling aspect of the mini-diaspora shared by many of us who live where we weren't raised is the transitional phases. Over the years we slowly morph from tourist to visitor, to optimistic newcomer, to busy local—marked by that moment when you realise you're staying, you're stuck, you'd better get to work. My favourite definition of a local is 'someone who gives more than they take'. And the last stage, what Hal Rothman calls a 'neo-native', includes building memories, in for the long haul.

Most of my neighbours are, like me, refugees from 'back east', or Texas, or California, or the midwest. Some stay a few years and move on, having discovered, as someone put it, that "Galisteo is not La Jolla." Yet many of us newcomers have a fierce affection for this place. It is what we have been searching for. A number of Anglo families have been here thirty or forty years, even if their parents and children are elsewhere, while the founding families have been here 'forever'. We outsiders move to the Galisteo Basin thinking romantically of the past while ignoring its lessons and our own impact on the present and future. Those who were raised in Galisteo can feel what is called "primary nostalgia … felt for something once actually experienced." ("Imagined nostalgia". according to Arjun Appadurai, is when "consumers are induced to 'miss things they have never lost.'")

Even if the bonds to place are very different, we become deeply involved in the community, settle, and hope to die here. An elderly Hispana neighbour told me, "I shouldn't say bad things about gringos. Without them we wouldn't have a community centre, a fire department, a water system… or a newsletter." (Twenty-one years ago I founded and continue to edit *El Puente de Galisteo*, a four-page newsletter that appears monthly.) Of course these things were accomplished through the instigation, input, and participation of the shrinking Hispano community as well, even when gringo labor and gringo money tend to keep them going. Most residents try to practice what has been identified as three types of social capital important for collective action: "trustworthiness, networks, formal and informal rules and institutions", or the local equivalent, described by Sylvia Rodriguez—"*ayuda mutual, respeto, y confianza*".

Lack of understanding about how people choose to live, or are forced to live, has at times exacerbated the social divisions in Galisteo village. Yet this mobile population must take responsibility, even temporarily, for the land on which we find ourselves living together. We are all part of a cultural continuum that goes back over a thousand years to changing native tribes, Pueblo peoples, Spanish and then Mexican explorers and settlers intermarrying with local indigenous populations, and finally American entrepreneurs and homesteaders. It's a continuum with a lot of rough edges, or torn seams. The future of development in Galisteo may or may not obliterate the varied senses of place that exist today among the old families and more recent arrivals.

"Galisteo is very different from what we wanted it to be," said Mela Montoya. One middle-aged woman who was raised here and lives in Albuquerque told me she hated Galisteo and would never come back, even if she had her parents' house, because "the place had changed too much: It's too sad. It used to be just our own people… We worked things out. Now there are too many rules, and all these new houses."

Another woman her age told me she too 'hated' living in Galisteo now: "New people have ruined Galisteo, all those rules and regulations. Why can't they just *live* here?" An older man said it more bluntly "Galisteo's no good for nothing now." I'm not clear about what these rules are, aside from the community's contributions to the County's new Sustainable Land Development Code, but old families are justifiably proprietary. In a community meeting about land-use planning, the son-in-law of one local family, speaking, he said, for the Hispanic constituency as a whole, wondered why Anglo 'newcomers' (residents of the village from zero to forty years) had any right at all to plan 'our village'. Although these conversations were cordial, the changes referred to were clearly for the worse, and the changers, of course, were me and my ilk.

These comments reflect an ambivalence that is an integral part of New Mexico cultural exchanges. Many also stem from the painful experience of becoming a minority in one's ancestral place and divisions that are the legacy of the 1600s and the 1840s. They increase as newcomers arrive. Galisteo is usually a warm and generous little community with occasional mean-spirited moments. Resentment stemming from class inequities and loss of tradition surfaces from time to time. To live in such a village for a while is to understand how stubbornly tradition is embraced, even as it seems to be disappearing with TV and ATVs, social media, smart phones, and video games—all on top of ancient feuds and new scandals and the ever-present threat of outside invasion, met with anger or resignation. There have been occasional rashes of vandalism. In 2005 the target was the new bank of locked mailboxes; eggs were splattered on them and firecrackers tossed into the 'outgoing mail' slots. Around the same time, two of the tall windows of the Community Center were smashed; repairs cost some $1200. Later a grass fire was started near an Anglo artist's studio (perhaps just an accidental result of fireworks). A fence was destroyed by a drunken teenager who drove his truck through it. And so it sometimes goes. Although youths from a struggling family are often blamed for everything bad that happens, such events signal a more extensive rip in the social fabric.

"Change and growth cannot be controlled", writes Christina Nealson, "but they can be directed. Let towns define who they are and proclaim such. Then newcomers will know who they attempt to join." An attempt to explain who we were joining was made by Michael D. Anaya before he was County Commissioner. While living on the family ranch in Stanley, he adapted a 'Code of the West' to explain to rural newcomers "just how things work around here". Some of the advice was helpful: New Mexico is still a fence-out state: it's your job to fence cows out of your yard, not the rancher's to fence them in. Other advice was ominous: a dog chasing cows can be shot. Digging a well is no guarantee you'll find water. (I can vouch for that.) Urban services like garbage collection and neighbourhood police patrols are not available.

One of the hardest parts of joining a traditional community is seeing its flaws but respecting its identity enough not to try and change everything. Where should the line be drawn between 'progress' and a rush to change for the worse? Or can it be drawn at all? I find myself going case by case. In community meetings, one often finds oneself on the same side as virulent opponents on some previous issue, and vice versa.

Listening to each other isn't easy. Another community activist with whom I am often at odds once called me to say, "Well, hell has frozen over. We agree on something …" Her call did break some ice.

"You can't fight progress" is a popular if inaccurate assumption. (All change is not progress and most change is contentious.) Many native New Mexicans are resigned to change even as they deplore it. Many newcomers never expected any change at all in and around Galisteo and are incredulous at its rapid rate. Some move away when their views are blocked by another dream house, much like their own, illustrating the textbook 'drawbridge syndrome': everyone wants to be the last to move in. Yet despite the generally congenial coexistence, lively community events, and hardworking, relatively uncontentious planning meetings that characterise village life, it is not utopia. An old *dicho* warns: *Pueblo chico, infierno grande* (Small town, big hell).

All photos by Lucy R. Lippard

La Sala de San Jose de Galisteo (a century-old dance hall owned by the church), with volunteers gathering to begin its renovation as an art centre. Courtesy of La Sala de Galisteo Arts Centre

Timekeepers: The European Golden Age, the Mesoamerican Time of Darkness, and the New Dawn of Indigenous Peoples

Jorge Garcia

Those gathering to observe and enact the ‘cosmic dance’ between the Earth, the Sun, the Moon and Venus have begun to make history and measure time differently, again.

The ‘Monolith of the Stone of the Sun’ now in the collection of the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City was excavated on 17 December 1790 in the city’s main square, Zócalo, and is dated to the fifteenth century AD. First used by Aztec and other pre-Colombian peoples of Latin America, it is read for the counts of Sun, Moon and Venus as they move in relation to the Earth. Image Source: Creative Commons

The years between 1492 and 2012 are special years in our current era. In general, for most Indigenous peoples, this period represents 520 years of oppression and dispossession. By contrast, for European colonists and missionaries, it represents a period in which the 'modern industrialised and technological society' was born. It was their 'Golden Age'.

Based on the writings of the British historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto about 1492, we know of the expectations placed on the voyages of Christopher Columbus, and how the finding of 'new' lands surpassed those expectations.[1] Europeans were looking for trading routes to India, and instead they found an entire continent that with time became their land.

Miguel León-Portilla's *Vision de los vencidos* alternately explores how Mesoamericans reacted to the changes that the post-1492 era brought to their lives.[2] Anticipating a five-hundred-year period of oppression and dispossession, Indigenous peoples evolved strategies to survive that era and to safeguard their ancestral ways and knowledge. At the same time, they knew that this period would ultimately end, and that it would be announced by the passing of Venus in front of the Sun the way it did on June 2012. This moment marked the beginning of a new cycle known as 'the New Dawn of Indigenous Peoples', when a time of awakening began. This represents a period in which they would rise again to resume their destiny and shared intent to maintain the spiritual ways inherited from their grandfathers.

The period which began in 1492 is about recent history. The post-2012 era is about the future. Today we can look back at the changes that arose from the decisions and actions that were taken in 1492. Historical reflection alone would not allow us to fully understand, or to predict, how the next five hundred years will unfold. Clearly, the future looks grim. Climate change will continue to affect us. The destruction of natural habitats will continue to open more land for development. The systematic destruction of Indigenous peoples around the world along with their knowledge will continue to happen to the detriment of our civilisation. The systemic extermination of animal species and their habitats contributes to the loss of ecosystems. The irrational prospect of continuous war continues to drive human beings to the brink of exasperation, with so much chaos everywhere. Under our current system of time, we measure and understand changes that happen on Earth by the needs of materialist society, which is ruled by greed, dispossession and a never-ending longing for the creation of new markets at any cost. Speed is key to the high-frequency trading of Wall Street, which as we know fuels disastrous market crashes.

Mesoamericans—and for that matter, most Indigenous Nations of the Americas—had a more eloquent and profound way of understanding the passing of time.[3] Their concern was to live in close harmony with the deeper "spirit of their times", so they could withstand the persistent changes that occur on Earth.[4] In essence, they understood and were sensitive to the energies that comprised the conjunction of time and space. To understand the deeper spirit of their times, Mesoamericans focused on celebrating and honouring the earthly responses to the movements of the Sun, the Moon and Venus. They understood that changes on Earth were a result of the passing of time, as marked by solstices, equinoxes and Venus transits in front of the Sun. Their ultimate concern was to understand and strive to live in harmony with these cosmic events.[5] Timekeeping became how people were able to understand the times under which we, as human beings, evolve with the Earth, and timekeepers were the messengers.

1 Fernando Fernández-Armesto (1492), *El nacimiento de la modernidad*, Barcelona, Random House Mondadori, 2010.

2 Miguel León-Portilla (1959), *Visión de los vencidos. Relaciones indígenas de la Conquista*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autonoma, 2005. Trans. Ángel María Garibay, *The Broken Spears. The Aztec Account of the Conquering of Mexico*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2011. Note the literal translation of León-Portilla's title is 'Vision of the Defeated'.

3 Indeed, this may also be said of other Indigenous peoples and cultures outside the Americas—Aboriginal Australians, various Indigenous communities in Africa and Asia, and the Sami of Norway, Sweden, Finland and parts of Russia.

4 Indigenous cosmology is based not only on the understanding of calendar counts, but also on the energies that are present in those calendar counts. These energies were part of spiritual understanding that prefigures what the psychoanalyst Carl Jung referred to as "the spirit of the depths", as opposed to a more mercurial "spirit of the times" or *zeitgeist* that changes between generations and according to shifts in social dominance. For Indigenous peoples, understanding this *deeper* "spirit of the times" meant conceiving of time beyond materialistic needs and maintaining a connection between worldly events and those in the cosmos. See C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2009, p. 119.

1492: The Beginning of Our Modern and Recent History

In our modern history, 1492 is a crucial date. It is the year Columbus sailed off to find new trading routes. It is the year the humanist, philosopher, astronomer and Catholic priest Marsilio Ficino promulgated the ideas of the Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro (Virgil), who in the first century BCE had written of the Golden Age of the Roman Empire. By 1492, at the height of the Italian Renaissance, that 'Golden Age' became the 'Golden Age' of the West. A quarter of a century later, in 1519, when Cortez arrived on the Peninsula of Yucatan, the 'Golden' legacy of the Roman Empire was re-established.

For Mesoamericans, the arrival of the Europeans marked a time of Darkness. 'Darkness' for Mesoamericans, however, did not necessarily mean dark as in atrocious,[6] but rather dark as in part of a time of transition—a cosmic time of introspection, a time for looking inward. For Mesoamericans, Venus, the morning and evening star, was the messenger of this shift.

In his final speech given in the city of Tlatelolco in 1521, just before he went to encounter Cortez, Cuauhtémoc, the last Speaker of the Mexika people, said: "*Totonaltzin ye omotlatihzinoh, totonaltzin ye omixpoliuhtzinoh, ihuan centlayohuayan otechcahuilih*." [Our sacred energy has already been well hidden, our venerable Sun dignifiedly disappeared his face, and in total darkness deigned left us.][7] The Mexika, like many other Indigenous Nations of Mesoamerica, venerated this period because above all, it promised the return of Quetzalcoatl.[8] This was not the return of Quetzalcoatl promoted in modern history books, which claim that the Aztecs were expecting the white Quetzalcoatl coming back from the East to reclaim his kingdom, and that they mistook the Spanish Conquistador Cortés as his herald. This was a fiction invented to make Mesoamericans seem confused and superstitious. Rather, the returning Quetzalcoatl was actually Venus's passing in front of the Sun on 26 May 1518, and then again eight years later in 1526. These Venus transits told Mesoamericans that the times and their way of life would change. For Mesoamericans, the arrival of the Spaniards confirmed a larger understanding they already had about the tendency of events on Earth to mirror major events in the cosmos.

Mesoamericans were neither confused nor superstitious; they were very clear about what this 'new' time meant for them in cosmic terms. Mesoamericans came from a long line of stargazers and timekeepers. They were city builders, astronomers, engineers and statesmen. They knew what the arrival of the European colonists and missionaries meant, not only in terms of their painful and disastrous encounter, but also more importantly, in terms of the effects that those Venus transits would have on a way of life they had been cultivating for thousands of years. Once the conquest

5 This statement is not intended to say that Indigenous peoples were peaceful, but rather that they were more in tune with the Earth and its dependence on the effects that the Sun, Moon and Venus had on the climate and growing seasons. Their protocols and cosmology were holistic and ingrained within their warrior societies.

6 This statement is not intended to say that the conquest of the Mesoamerican continent was not a horrible event for the millions of Indigenous people who were raped, killed and dispossessed, but rather that for Mesoamericans the conquest was far more than simply an earthly encounter; it was a time marked by the crossing of Venus in front of the Sun, which indicated a cosmic time in which their knowledge would be safeguarded until the new time—the New Dawn—when their knowledge would once again resurface and people would continue with a way of life Europeans had interrupted with their arrival.

7 Tlacatzin Stivalet, *Anáhuac 2000: lo pasado y lo presente proyectados hacía el porvenir*, Mexico City, Ediciones Aguila y Sol, 1990. Anâhuac is the ancient Aztec name for Mexico City and literally means "near the water". This and subsequently cited passages, which appear in Nuhatl and Spanish in Stivalet's book, were retrieved from a October 2007 post by Xihucoatl, which contains their English translation, entitled "Ultimo message de Cuahtemoc" [Last message of Cuahtemoc] http://http://www.azcatl-tezozomoc.com/foros1/showthread.php?tid=3426 accessed 26 February 2018.

8 Quetzalcoatl represents the East. Venus emerges from the East as a morning star. Venus is believed to bring precious knowledge, both as a morning and evening star, about the changes that take place over a much larger scope of time. It is hard for modern society to understand the calendar counts of Venus because the understanding of time has changed. People now believe that time is money, whereas in most ancient civilisations time was part of a sacred hoop of life.

ended, the Mesoamericans retreated to their homes, where they would faithfully await the time when they could resume their cosmic journey, cultivating all the while the harmony they saw in the stars.

To know and to have this deep understanding of time, Mesoamericans kept detailed calendar counts related to the movements of the Sun, the Moon and Venus. For them, it was essential to understand how these three celestial bodies impacted life on Earth. Mesoamericans knew that this time of Darkness, although painful and devastating, was a time of cosmic realignment pronounced by the passage of Venus in front of the Sun, and that a reversal would be signalled when that same transit series repeated in 2004 and 2012, some 478 years later. For Mesoamericans, those 478 years were a time of "cosmic hibernation".[9] Cuauhtémoc reaffirms in his speech that, "*mach tictomachiliah occeppa mohualhuiliz, ma occeppa moquizaltiz ihuan yancuican techmotlahuililiquiuh*." [We certainly know [that] again it [the Sun] will deign to return, that it will rise again it will have it well to come out, and that it again will come to enlighten us [about our journey on this earth]].[10] Mesoamericans believed that they were the Children of the Sun. The Sun served as a guide for their vision and for their intent. For them, the journey of the Sun in the wintertime was a journey that would test the intent of the Sun to return to the North and become strong and powerful like an Eagle, which represented the act of having a vision. The conjunction of Venus and the Sun represented a longer span of time during which they would have to keep their faith and way of life almost hidden so that the European colonists and missionaries would not eradicate their spiritual ways. So the passage of Venus in front of the Sun in 2012 marks a time when the Sun "would come out again to enlighten us".[11] This cosmic event marks the beginning of a period when old knowledge re-emerges and flourishes—a time when people of the Americas reassert their destiny and uphold their responsibility as the Children of the Sun.

Mesoamericans, like many other tribal people from the American continent, believed that our responsibility as human beings is to maintain the order we see in the skies. To this end, Dr Geraldine Ann Patrick Encina states:

> "I believe that the *haab'*—the yearly count of 365 [days]—is the synthesis of the cosmovision and the conceptualisation of time-space, that captures, in its articulation with the *Tzolk'in*, the becoming cyclic and tidy of celestial events, and by principle of equivalence, Earthly processes and events."[12]

The lives of Mesoamericans revolved around celebrations. For Mesoamericans, everything in the natural world had a spirit that needed to be honoured to have balance. The solar and lunar calendar counts helped them to maintain a close understanding of short spans of time, while Venus helped them to maintain an understanding of longer spans of time. The only way that Mesoamericans could stay in tune with these time spans was through spiritual ceremonies that honoured them and their effects on Earth.

If we look at the advent of the year 2012 in the same way that we look at the invasion of the American continent, in terms of the simple and inevitable encounter of the cultures of two continents propelled by the adventurous voyages of a sailor who thought he could find new trading routes, we might neglect the views and the profound teachings of those who understood these events as part of the deeper spirit of their times. In this analysis, Mesoamericans were not just passive victims of greed and ignorance; they continued their cosmic journey, and for much of the past 478 years, became 'riders' of their own faith during a time of Darkness. In spite of the cruel and devastating genocide committed on this continent, Mesoamericans, like all other Indigenous Nations, found consolation and strength in their faith, because, as Cuauhtémoc said, "We certainly know that again [our Sun] will deign to return, that it will rise again, and that again it will come to enlighten us."[13]

The cycles of time that the Mesoamericans maintained for thousands of years would give them a different understanding of the changes that took place with the advent of European colonisation, which imposed secular and religious ideas, seemingly at odds with and disconnected from the environment, and therefore the total opposite to the Mesoamericans' way of life. Mesoamericans were preoccupied with the correlation between the movements of the Sun, the Moon and Venus with respect to life on Earth; these movements gave them a sense of direction and guidance. For Mesoamericans, correlating time and cosmic events was part of a 'cosmic dance' that allowed people to be in harmony with the cosmos. As opposed to the denatured philosophical and religious approach of Europeans, Mesoamericans had a faith based on concrete cosmic events that had an actual effect on life here on Earth. European religion, through its Judeo-Christian doctrine, became monotheist in nature resembling the idea of an absolute monarchy. In comparison, Mesoamerican spirituality was based on images that resemble the multiple natural energies that had effect on the human experience. As a result, a lot of the images that we know now were not necessarily considered 'gods', but rather the representations and connections with inherent traits of the human condition. Quetzalcoatl, for example, was known as the representation of the precious knowledge that the human experience could have through the connection to old aged knowledge. Tezkatlipoca—the smoking black mirror, the energy of the North—was understood to be the representation of the subconscious. Xipe Totec, the energy of the West, was seen as the energy of transformation because the rain and the winds represented it from the west. Finally, the energy of the South, represented by Huitzilopochtli, the hummingbird, was the representation of the human intent. For Mesoamericans, it was not just a world of religion, but rather a world of human and spiritual aptitudes that needed to be understood to connect our worldly life with that of the spirit world enclosed in the movement of the stars close to the earth. They were, after all, people who were highly dependent on the Earth's climate to survive through hunting and growing seasons. Their main collective mission was to ensure that the count of time was done properly, so that they could understand the times to come. For Europeans, those 478 years were a time of expansion and discovery, involving multiple attempts to tame or transform natural processes rather than obey them, to the great detriment of the environment. For Mesoamericans, those years were a time of darkness and desolation. In a larger context, too, they were a time for cosmic hibernation. To continue living on this Earth, Mesoamericans understood keeping time and its associated celebrations to be fundamental, striving always for a harmonious dance—like the one they observed in the sky—in the movements of the Sun, the Moon and Venus.

9 I owe this term to my good friend Patrick Toomay, who having listened to my desperate way of explaining the sense of darkness that was expressed in Cuauhtemoc's last speech, encapsulated it as a "cosmic hibernation", which it indeed became. What happens in such a time of cosmic hibernation? Venus is somewhat like yin and yang; its course carries dual, opposing, but complementary energy forces. In the case of the eras explained here, 1492 became a time of Darkness, while 2012 was a New Dawn. Venus is the messenger of new beginnings, of a new cosmic time.

10 Xihucoatl.

11 Xihucoatl.

12 Geraldine Ann Patrick Encinia, *Cuenta Larga en función del Haab' y su relación Venus-Luna: aplicación en Chichén Itzá, 1 de Mayo,* vol. 13, no. 5, 2013, http://www.revista.unam.mx/vol.14/num5/art05/. My translation from the Spanish original: *"Considero que el haab'—la cuenta anual de 365 [dias]—es la síntesis de la cosmovisión y la conceptualización del tiempo-espacio, donde se plasma, en su articulación con el Tzolk'in, el devenir cíclico y ordenado de acontecimientos celestes, y por principio de equivalencia, procesos y eventos terrenales."* The *haab'* was the 365-day count of the solar calendar; the *Tzolk'in* represents the 260-day lunar calendar.

13 Xihucoatl.

2012: The End of the World

These days, the year 2012 is remembered as the year in which the world did not end. The cataclysmic expectations that people held were based on misinterpreted Mayan prophecies exploited by books and Hollywood films. These misinterpreted prophecies amplified the Christian notion of a world-ending apocalypse to come. Approaching the close of 2012, people wondered if the Mayans were right—if "the year 2012 would indeed mean the end of the world."[14] In fact, the Mayans made no such prediction.

For the Mayans and many Indigenous Nations, the close of a specific cycle such as the one in 2012 was more of a time dedicated to tuning their lives towards a better understanding of cosmic changes. For mainstream society, such cosmic time has little meaning. In contrast, for Indigenous peoples for whom traditional and sacred knowledge is still alive, cosmic time is closely associated with the understanding of time and space as it relates to the lives of people in our communities, with our traditions, our culture and way of life, and most importantly, to our responsibility to maintain the sacred connection with everything that exists here on Earth and beyond. The passage of Venus in front of the Sun in 2012 marked the return of the precious knowledge encapsulated in cultural traditions that reaffirm the fact that in the end we are all cosmic beings.

People have maintained timekeeping to preserve the sacred connection with time and space that our ancestors created, joining the energies present on Earth with the movements of the Sun, Moon and Venus as givers of life. Their goal was to continue searching, not for cities of gold, but rather for the sacredness that exists in preserving, respecting, and honouring who we are and where we come from. Timekeeping was not merely an act of maintaining almanacs or counts of time—of allowing representations to govern life—but focused on the time and space of human existence, understood as relating directly to the Earth, the Sun, the Moon and Venus. In this process of continually evolving reflection and relation, representations act as suggestive scores that allow people to have a better understanding of the past, present and future. Our people aimed at understanding, through timekeeping, how we relate to each other and to the cosmos in the interest of the development and preservation of life. Maintaining this sacred connection meant that people had to continue moving with the *Sagrada Forma* [Sacred Form], which is understood not as a static entity but as a dynamic of associations—a sense of how we are all connected to everything there is. It was always imperative that we understood what this connection meant so that we could continue a way of life rooted in the teachings of our Mother Earth and the guidance of our Father Sun. Our life in community, our dances, our songs and our families are all part of an extended kinship that sustains the sacred ways of our people.

2012: The New Dawn

On 23 May 1526, Venus crossed in front of the sun; 486 years later, on 6 June 2012, Venus crossed in front of the sun again. This most recent passage marked a time of cosmic change known to many Indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere as the 'New Dawn of Indigenous Peoples'. In mainstream society the conventional belief was that the year 2012 would mark the end of the world. For Indigenous peoples, it marked a time in which ancient knowledge would re-emerge to provide guidance and understanding. This cosmic event encouraged us to continue following in the sacred steps of our ancestors. As greater understanding of the New Dawn was gained, Indigenous peoples began to organise efforts to reunite those from the North and South. Numerous activities were coordinated including the proclamation of The Prophesy of the Eagle and the Condor, which occurred in Quito, Ecuador, in 1990. Following that event, in the year 2000, the Decade of Indigenous Peoples was organised, culminating in a continental meeting in Teotihuacan, Mexico. The reigniting of the Continental Fire by the Mayans in Guatemala happened in 2004, and the Haudenosaunee/Mohawk condolence ceremony, which honoured Mohawk Elder Jake Swamp's dream of bringing back the Peacemaker,[15] was held at the Mississippi Headwaters in June 2012. These efforts have supported the coming together of Indigenous peoples up and down the hemisphere. In addition, multiple ceremonies and meetings have taken place to fulfil the need to reinstitute ancient alliances and rekindle sacred continental fires. Periodic continental runs, which have served as a reminder that we are all connected, have taken place every four years since 1990.[16]

In 2010, as part of this process of reconstituting ancient knowledge, a group of Indigenous peoples began organising around the understanding that the year 2012 marked the coming of the New Dawn, as Cuauhtémoc had foretold us. As part of this process, timekeepers and traditional leaders from communities across the Americas convened a meeting in North America in September 2013, in order to better understand this New Dawn and its meaning for the future of Indigenous peoples. Issues of Indigenous calendars and the importance of maintaining lunar and solar ceremonies at their appropriate times were discussed. The main purpose was to resolve to continue specific efforts that will help re-enact ceremonies and ways of life that have been largely ignored and are in danger of disappearing.

Timekeepers: The Vision for the Future

Our vision of the future is to work towards the understanding and reimplementation of Indigenous creation stories, teachings, principles and values related to the wisdom held in ancestral Indigenous calendars from the Americas. Our mission is to bring back to people, especially those from traditional communities, the philosophy and knowledge of time-space for 'good living'.[17] This action will enable the development of new forms of leadership that will embody the principles and values of the New Dawn as it relates to Indigenous life. In this way, we hope to realise the vision of Cuauhtémoc, who in 1521 predicted the return of our precious knowledge in the form of Quetzalcoatl, to illuminate our path so that we may continue the task of creating harmony through our dances, our songs and our ways of life on this Earth.

14 This comment came from an American man with whom I was travelling on a flight from Mexico City to Dallas, Texas, sometime in 2010–11.

15 The Peacemaker was an Onondaga Indian who brought peace to the great six nations under the Iroquois Confederacy, or the Haudenosaunee nation from the US Northeast.

16 Indigenous peoples of the Americas have organised the Peace and Dignity runs which involve runners from every corner of the continent, beginning somewhere between Patagonia and Alaska, and meeting at a designated place in the middle.

17 'Good Living' refers to the Andean term *'Sumak Kawsay'*, which calls for an understanding of 'good living' in comparison to 'living well'. For more information on *Sumak Kawsay* see: http://bit.ly/2oCsj9Z

Living root bridge ecosystem, 2013, Nongriat village, India
Photo by Sanjeev Shankar

Growing Cultures, Cultivating Attention

Megha Ralapati

There is more than one way to nurture the living root bridges of Meghalaya. Observe extra caution if using them to cross to some place ‘beyond the art world’ as we, the individuals, understand it.

A peculiar ficus tree is native to the southern part of Meghalaya, the northeastern Indian state, from which rise the mighty snow-clad Himalayan mountains. The *ficus elastica*, also called rubber fig trees, evolved to live in this area, which experiences extreme wet weather for much of the year. Heavy monsoons and flash-flooding are regular occurrences, which make life for the Khasi and Jaintia tribes who call this region home at times unpredictable and highly vulnerable. The massive ficus plants, however, survive and thrive under such conditions. Powerful weather forces constantly shape, reshape and sculpt their thin, pliable roots, which anchor the trees securely to uneven, sometimes steep surfaces.

Like the trees, humans in the region seek to sustain life in such wet conditions. Adaptation is essential to their survival as a people. Locals must have observed the trees’ unique tendencies to bend along with weather patterns, rather than resist them. As tall skyscrapers are often built to sway along with the wind, the rubber trees of Meghalaya demonstrate a physical nimbleness that locals recognised. The result of this attention is a brilliantly holistic system for human navigation of ever-changing, often dangerous terrain on foot. Here, the Khasi and Jaintia have developed an original design and construction process for a series of bridges connecting otherwise isolated rural areas. While we don’t know exactly when the practice began, living root bridges persist as a community based, ecologically-adaptive process of building. Over decades, people coax malleable, tender tree roots by hand across rivers and streams that are otherwise difficult to traverse.

What follows is an ostensibly simple process of weaving roots when they are young and most tender, which maximises their load-bearing capacity in maturity. Once roots take hold in the soil of an opposing riverbank, it’s a matter of time, usually one or two generations, for them to fortify to the point of bearing human weight. A beautiful thing happens among some trees, in which two or more independent ones grow together just by living in close proximity to each other or touching. Inosculation, the process when two trees become one, has been embraced by the human bridge builders,

encouraging the plants to further bolster the strength of their constructions. Once mature, living root bridges are incredibly robust under the harshest of conditions and become host to other plant and animal life. This is symbiosis of the highest order: among humans and trees, among these and smaller forms of life.

Of course, trees have been processed for wood all over the world for the age-old practice of bridge-building. Living root bridges are different because as the name indicates, they are living, growing and evolving alongside the humans and other life forms in their proximity; these organisms exist in an ongoing state of living together and caring for each other. Weaving tree roots to create bridges doesn't superimpose an unnatural state on the plants. Instead, in ideal conditions, one of these bridges sustains and flourishes in bridge-form just as a healthy tree would, constantly renewing and strengthening itself as secondary roots germinate and commit themselves more deeply to the earth.[1]

In periods of emergency or extreme weather, living root bridges provide essential infrastructure for connecting disparate populations. They model resilience and interdependence among life forms of vastly differently scale. This is not an individual practice but a collective one, which, through its implementation, can be understood to nourish the community and larger ecosystem. Because bridges take decades to mature and can live for centuries, the practice of aiding their construction must be passed down between generations through the processes of making-together and learning-together. One generation begins a structure that only its grandchildren will be able to use. No one author claims the bridge; in fact, the practice explodes the concept of enjoying the fruits of one's individual labour. Bridges are built as a tool (and gift) directed towards the future, so long as the deep attention required for their cultivation can last a lifetime. As a form of weaving, it's also a craft practice essential to the collective life of a community.

Is this a new form of making? A new approach to creation? Dare I say, a new way of making art? Imagine an art object not easily commodified and monetised, which does not circulate—either through the art market or the international biennial circuit—because it only exists in specific environments and for a singular context. Consider living root bridges as the highest form of social practice. It goes without saying that the architects themselves are unconcerned with the circulation of their work or photo credits. They're unbothered by the boundary between art-making and survival strategy; the line between care and creation.

Despite their grandeur and sophistication, the bridges were never built to be seen by any form of public outside those who utilise and nurture them. In fact, it's daunting and dangerous to even catch a glimpse, and those interested rely on a few photographs to study this animate architecture. Where exactly does art live inside these majestic structures?

I met an artist several years ago who initially drew my attention to these wondrous constructions, and I was fascinated by his efforts to anchor the roots of a creative practice as deeply as the bridges themselves. Sanjeev Shankar describes himself as an architect-artist-scientist-explorer. He has been so moved by the bridges that, for years, he has cultivated a regular practice of spending time in Meghalaya to observe, meditate and participate in the process, to understand how a community can labour together through an intergenerational practice of sharing, weaving, learning.

His goal in studying living root bridges is, in part, to share the knowledge developed in this remote region with others living in similarly wet terrain or with those in entirely different climates, affirming the fundamental connection between humans and our climate. The research also provides a model for his work, which spans architecture, contemporary craft practice, photography, public sculpture and academic scientific inquiry. Shankar views the practice of building living root bridges as deeply philosophical, particularly in its collapse of the separation between people and nature, art and life practice. This philosophy, in turn, nourishes his own practice as a long-term, sustained

1 "Cherrapunjee.com: A Dream Place", Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort, http://www.cherrapunjee.com/living-root-bridges/

2 Relayed in email correspondence with the artist, 13 February 2018.

3 Ibid.

form of learning and producing. He considers the time frame for art projects as necessarily extended and prolonged in order to fully understand the context in which they are taking place. He seeks to develop ideas, which can evolve and be maintained over generations, resisting notions of efficiency, speed or ease of transmission. Nothing about this process is fast or simple to communicate. In fact, it is this slowness and slipperiness that appeals to Shankar.

Shankar's own artistic and design projects attempt to achieve these philosophical and fundamental aims. *Yoga Temple* (2016) is a functional structure that Shankar designed, housed within an eco-focused wellness resort located in a wet, tropical region of southwest India. It is meant to provide local and visiting populations both a sacred and secular space for contemplation, meditation and prayer. The monolithic stone architecture references traditional South Indian temples, and the particular clay roof tiles allow light to filter into the space, which references the yogi's long journey seeking enlightenment. The process of creating *Yoga Temple*, Shankar writes:

> [E]volved through an open search for understanding the essence of 'yoga', which is a Sanskrit term for 'union'. As a spiritual and ascetic discipline, the ultimate aim of yoga is enlightenment and emancipation. The human body transformed by yoga appears free not only from defects but also from its actual physical nature achieving a sensation of lightness and an equilibrium.[2]

Far from the high-traffic, quick-turnover yoga studios familiar to those of us based outside of the subcontinent, the space Shankar describes has been designed to enable the emancipation of the spirit and dissolve the separation between subject and object,[3] between *us* and *them*, human and natural world. Shankar continues to visit the site, to learn how it lives within its surroundings and how it is used so as to understand the work's success. Another structure he has devised functions as a suspended canopy composed of hundreds of metal tiles, fashioned from discarded and reclaimed cooking oil cans. Perforated and painted crimson by hand, these tiles create a system, which provides cooling shade when installed in a sunny location. At night, once the sun has receded, electric lighting visits the canopy through pinholes dotting the surface of each tile to create the complementary experience—a softly illuminated space for people to be together. The built structure embraces them, yet never blocks their access to the fresh air. Shankar named this public sculpture, completed in 2009, *Jugaad*, a Hindi term for a smart and resourceful solution to get the job done. Similar to the Spanish term *rasquache*, it refers to the idea of creating the most from the least. *Jugaad* means making something new from what was already there; it is the essence of invention.

On meeting Shankar, I was struck by how seamlessly artistic, scientific and spiritual impulses were woven together in his approach to making. His hybrid practice seeks to merge traditional knowledge, including craft practices like weaving with contemporary techniques to create new designs that positively impact their environment. In 2014, when I invited him to spend several weeks in an urban, research-focused residency I organise in Chicago, I was especially excited to work with an artist from India who was largely uninterested in the undulations of the South Asian art market or critical praise bestowed upon artists by tastemakers from the subcontinent or from the West.

Having lived in large international cities, Shankar had immediate reference points for Chicago, and during his time in residence, he re-examined his prior works seeking the potential for local grounding and relevance to this new city. At some point, he proposed a one-hundred-year project cultivating a living root bridge at the Chicago Park District, using a plant indigenous to the prairie region that could be similarly cultivated and nurtured by a community for the appreciation of a future generation. The proposition was initially met with confused amusement, some vague interest, followed by general bewilderment, then crickets.

During an evening organised for Shankar to meet a few other artists, he generously cooked the group a meal and insisted we eat in the dark to ensure closer communion with our experience of the ingredients—their taste, texture and fragrance—and with each other. Without using electric lights, I believe I did feel more closely connected to the meal, despite being confused about what I was putting into my mouth. This was not,

I believe, the intended experience, though we might ask about the possibility to guide our own (or others') attention differently.

Over time during the residency, I began to feel Shankar's frustration with our need for project time frames, meeting structures (most meetings last one hour, which felt to him too short to communicate ideas properly), and general rapid pace. I sensed that he longed to return to a place unburdened by such constraints and felt much more at ease in environments where the perpetual ticking of the clock is neither seen nor heard.

Might this absence of the clock be the measure of tradition or the meter of ancient wisdom we seem to be more and more drawn towards? Artists like Shankar have developed contemporary practices, modelled after older and fundamentally different paradigms for making. Perhaps we are all more curious about knowledge nestled deeply in the natural world and inside our own physical bodies. Yoga practice, for example, in many parts of the West is as decoupled from its ancient inception as can be imagined. It's been corporatised, commercialised, commodified into consumable pockets of time for the over-worked, over-stimulated, over-intellectualised population to experience an hour of respite, physical or mental. Despite the disconnection from traditional practice, this has widespread benefits. Humans have a deep need to feel connected to their physical selves and to the earth. Regular proximity to the earth (or floor) is critical to our wellness. The more our lifestyle alienates us from a sense of groundedness, the more we hunger for it.

Similarly, there is knowledge in our physical selves, which yearns for connection with others. This naturally happens at key moments; during sex or during childbirth, our bodies perform in a way that is deeply linked to our hominid ancestors and our future human descendants. This profound connection traverses eras and cultures, but much of how we craft our daily experiences discourages our corporeal memory of these relationships. Our interconnectedness is, unfortunately, at odds with the expansion of our virtual selves, despite what Facebook insists. The forms of contemporary life seem more and more focused on the needs of the 'individual'. They shape a singular vision of the 'self' decoupled from its community, from its ancestors, or from a collective. And upholding this illusion of being an 'individual' carries a heavy burden. Perhaps, relying on the genius of the singular artist is also becoming too much to bear. We need alternatives, which may reveal themselves in the future form of ancient practices. The archaic notion of deep interdependence may offer respite from the shackles of being an 'individual', whose experience is the result of their labour or who has successfully pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. The fallacy of performing as an 'individual' is the ultimate handicap, perhaps relieved by the prospect of collectivity.

I'm convinced that Shankar is onto something in his attention to living root bridges as a practice of co-creation in its fullest sense. However, his own return to the forest, which involved full-time relocation to Meghalaya last year, feels akin to the pursuit of Timothy Treadwell, Grizzly Man himself, from Werner Herzog's eponymous documentary. Treadwell not only sought some form of truth by living in close and ill-advised proximity to the Alaskan grizzly bears he so admired, it seems that he also ultimately wished he could become one of them. Shankar's long-term relocation appears to manifest a similar desire. Is this withdrawal from a society too focused on individuals to one of complete collectivity, or is he an artist-ethnographer committed to documenting and disseminating indigenous practices?

Regardless of the answer, I wonder if there is another way. Can we learn from this beautiful model without becoming part of it? Consuming it? Can we admire it from a distance, living in our own worlds and still integrate the impulse into our own practices? For a long time, I only understood living root bridges through the lens of Shankar's work. He, after all, was my conduit to learning about this unknown, unknowable practice. Yet now I feel that I can continue to meditate on this practice from afar and perhaps without Shankar's work to mediate for me. I admire his attempts and his own creations, but I have my own impulse to create and cultivate with the bridges as a guide. Can I build my own attention for this model of interdependence? Is it possible for the bridges to be as much a part of my own desire for invention as they have been for the artist who helped me discover them?

Jugaad day view, 2008, Delhi, India
Photo by Sundeep Bali

Andreas Embirikos with Matsi Hatzilazarou, *Untitled*, c. 1938-40, Benaki Museum

Page 146: Vlassis Caniaris, *Untitled (Mailbox)*, 1965, Vlassis Caniaris Archive

Modernising Joy-Making Mourning
Select Theses on Contemporary Greek Culture*

Yorgos Tzirtzilakis

A geopolitical crossroads may be the best place to articulate the enduring beauty of mixed feelings.

* Part of a general research project on *Sub-modernity in Contemporary Culture in Greece.*

The Letterbox: Melancholia

There is a widespread impression that the Greeks are a happy people. This is probably yet another stereotype resulting from the anthropological traits of judgement, which became entrenched and captured the Western imaginary. This idea was often linked with a specific perception of fun and a mixture of authentic grassroots, craftiness, Dionysianism, narcissistic showing off and contempt for rules, as epitomised by the Zorba myth.[1] It is worth noting that Nicos Kazantzakis wrote *Zorba the Greek* amidst the hardships of the German Occupation (1941–1944). But is it really so? In his novel *Stou Hadjifrangou* (1963), Kosmas Politis, one of the writers of the 1930s generation, focusses on the apparently opposite yet also complementary trait of *melancholia*. In the book, Politis comments on the relations between Jews and Greeks, starting from "the sad old affair [of Jews], which evolved over the centuries into a tragedy for the chosen people. So much that they became obsessed, amidst their persecution, with the idea that God chose them to carry the sins and the suffering of all humanity. This is perhaps why they are the most melancholy people on Earth. Next come the Greeks: another chosen people, let's say, only they carry just their own sins. Now, as always. And they are very heavy."[2]

This drastic view of Greeks as one of "the most melancholy people on Earth" certainly places our subject in a different context from the Zorba myth. In any case, the differentiation must not be seen as negligible, especially in view of the fact that it resorts to a concept (melancholia) that most people avoid: from "the sins and the suffering of all humanity" we go to the more atomocentric notion of "just their own sins". How can we understand more fully the cultural implications of this *Greek melancholia*, which politis presents as both identity and destiny?

I must make it clear in advance that *melancholia* should not be confused with the depression to which the Western consumerist societies are particularly prone through the abolition of differences (in-difference), the abundance of false 'liberations' and the constant losses which are not accompanied by separation. I do not propose to exhaust you with definitions around such a demanding subject, on which there is a large bibliography. I shall only summarise the main points: The most usual reaction in our time is to treat melancholia as a negative thing which we must shed, because adherence to the object of a loss prevents reconciliation with the special nature of the present. This attitude has its roots in antiquity, when melancholia (the *melaina cholè* or black bile of the Hippocratic tradition) was first associated with illness and the theory of the four humours, specifically with the inrush of black bile into the bloodstream. During the Middle Ages some of these traits of disease were replaced by those of genius and poetic inspiration, after which came the idealisation of melanchaolia by the Romantics.[3] In the late nineteenth century, melancholia returns with its double role as both mental illness (psychiatry) and pleasure (spleen), via aesthetics and artistic expression.

The core of the matter lies in two seminal texts, of which one is attributed to Aristotle; the other to Walter Benjamin. The interest of the former, entitled *XXX.1* (from the *Problemata* series),[4] lies in the fact that it links the 'melancholic' with the '*perittós*', i.e. the one who "exceeds the normal, disproportionate, unusual, abundant, excessive"

1 Dimitirs Papanikolaou claims that Zorba "condenses the tendency to create a recognisable, uniform popular culture and the anxious effort to turn this into a national culture for a supranational audience": "Για μια ενιαία λαϊκή κουλτούρα", *Ta Nea*, 24 November 2007. See Dimitirs Papanikolaou, "Ο Κακογιάννης, ο Ζορμπάς και ο Έλληνας", *The Books' Journal*. 12, 2011. Kazantzakis wrote the novel in 1946; it was translated in English as *Zorba the Greek* by Carl Wildman in 1952, and made into a film by Michalis Kakoyannis in 1964, with Anthony Quinn in the starring role.

2 Kosmas Politis, *Στου Χατζηφράγκου. Τα σαραντάχρονα μιας χαμένης πολιτείας*, Athens, 1963, p. 276.

3 A typical work is the monumental *Anatomy of Melancholy* written by Rober Burton in the early seventeenth century, where melancholy is treated not as a disease but as a main constituent of civilisation which defines a type of personality. However, Jean Starobinski makes a useful clarification in his *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie, des origines à 1900*, Basel, 1960. "In the distant past, once persistent fear and sadness were detected, there was only one diagnosis. Modern science, however, would make the distinction among depression, moodiness, bipolar disorder (manic depression), schizophrenia, neurosis, stress, paranoia, etc.". See Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, New York, Scribner, 2001.

4 Aristotle, *Problemata XXX.1* 953a10-14, trans. E.S. Forster, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. II, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, 1984.

and translates as 'exceptional', 'eminent': "*all those who have become eminent […]are clearly of an atrabilious temperament* Ὅσοι περιττοί γεγόνασιν άνδρες […] μελαγχολικοί όντες". Melancholia here is a passion for the '*perittó*', not in the current meaning of 'useless' but as something beyond 'normal levels', which leads human drive into a state of imbalance. Apart from this definition, which touches upon the constitutional ambiguity of the issue, for the first time here melancholia, 'mania' and 'ecstasy' are linked with an individual's *creativity*. The melancholic's changeable mood—from introversion to eloquence, from agitation to withdrawal—enables him to transcend his *given self* and become *another*. Many years later, Walter Benjamin in *Trauerspiel*[5] connects melancholia with the negligence (acedia) of Cronus which causes people to deviate and makes them 'apathetic, indecisive, slow'. Slowness (which characterises also Cavafy's poetic mood[6]) is a staple trait of a melancholic temperament; its pathology includes also an asymmetrical feeling of superiority, gaucheness, a propensity to daydreaming and rowdiness, indecision, wavering, double talk, secretiveness, baffled feelings and the tendency to project its inner torpor as misfortune.

The claim that some of these last traits can be seen in contemporary Greek culture might seem far-fetched, but they are certainly found in the pathology and the anthropological typology of the crisis. Benjamin, in any case, does not underestimate the *productive significance* of melancholia once it is linked to *experience*—and hence to hope—and allows you to reflect and perhaps to metabolise inventively your losses and your 'lost centre'. Therefore, he treats melancholia as a creative drive; this is the hidden political core of modernist civilisation. In any case, among the beneficial effects of melancholia we should include the liberation of the artistic and critical act from the constraints of optimism and the linear interpretation of things.

Consider Vlassis Caniaris: much has been written about the political awareness and the social aspect of the oeuvre of this leading figure of the '1960s Generation', which gradually became emblematic of anti-dictatorial resistance. I believe that such a reading of his work is restrictive; what Caniaris sought in the relation of *art* and *politics*—and what interests us today—lies closer to mysticism, as we can surmise from his *Untitled (Mailbox)*, a 1965 work which curator Nadja Argyropoulou retrieved from obscurity. Two years earlier, Pierre Restany, speaks of a '*dimension très particulière du psychisme individuel*', which sets Caniaris's art firmly apart from the ventures of the Nouveaux Realistes in Paris or New York's Pop artists.[7] If this attitude matters to this day, it is because it differs from the politically and ideologically engaged versions of art (the 'left-wing melancholia', which is heavy-hearted from routine, as Benjamin wrote[8]) and introduces us into the melancholy replacement of *expectations* by *disillusionment*, which is ultimately the psychological realm of *entropy*.

Allow me to quote a few excerpts from Restany's chain of remarks: "'Caniaris is a reserved man […] one of those who dig into their solitude like a termite into his wood', who in the second half of the 1950s made some 'huge paper collages covered with a thin layer of white plaster, the surface interspersed with multiple tears and the occasional splash of sad colour.' Later, this 'sad colour' gave way to 'found objects, almost debris […] On a certain level of conscience, it is today equally difficult to be Greek or Irish. It has never been stressed how the centuries of enslavement, Turkish or British,

5 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), trans. John Osborne, introduction by George Steiner, New York, London, 1977. See Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn*, New York, Picador, 1980.

6 "My work, I'm very careful about it, and I love it. / But today I'm discouraged by how slowly it's going. / The day has affected my mood. / It gets darker and darker. Endless wind and rain. / I'm more in the mood for looking than for writing." ("Pictured", in C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. George Savidis, Princeton, 1992). Cavafy gives a poetic definition of melancholia in "Melancholy of Jason Cleander, Poet in Kommagini, A.D. 595". It goes: "I turn to you, Art of Poetry, / because you have a kind of knowledge about drugs: / attempts to numb the pain, in Imagination and Language. / It is a wound from a merciless knife. / Bring your drugs, Art of Poetry– / they numb the wound at least for a little while." Ibid.

7 Pierre Restany, "Notes analogiques pour un portrait de Caniaris, artist grec contemporain" (1963), in ed. Emmanuel Mavrommatis, *Vlassis Caniaris*, Grecia, XXXXIII Biennale di Venezia, Athens, 1988, p. 78.

8 Walter Benjamin, "Linke Melancholie. Zu Erich Kästner's neuem Gedichtbuch" (1931), ed. Hella Tiedemann-Bartels, *Gesammelte Schriften III: Kritiken und Rezensionen*, Frankfurt, 1972, pp. 279–83; and "Left-Wing Melancholy", reprinted in Anton Kaes, eds. Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994.

made those two old countries with the pungent perfume forget themselves altogether, after they had been forced to swallow their shame and accept the bastardising. The Absurd had been established there even before their wretched independence. […] Following its destiny, Caniaris's imagination encountered reality on its social level which is less refined; on the level of all miseries but also of all courage and all will to survive." So here is why the 'relics' of Caniaris encounter the ancient fragments, and his work becomes an allegory for destruction, acquiring the character of "the ruins in the sphere of things."[9] Once "the nihilistic energies of the modern era" have made "everything a ruin or fragment—and therefore collectible",[10] it is ready to be incorporated within an artwork.

An artist of his intellectual rigour and mildly didactic orientation would find it hard to permit himself to publicly admit to such a melancholic attitude. Nevertheless, his work acquires for Greek culture the importance that Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920) had for Walter Benjamin, who wrote about Klee: "Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet."[11] Caniaris's fragments are the *unconscious of post-war Greek culture*, a kind of art machine which helps us stand up against the other 'machines' which determine our relation with the world, the soul and the body; with everyday life, desire, the economy and death. This is neither a 'refuge' nor "the romantic coasts of escape".[12] These are by nature *mystical* and *political* works which portend the end of modernity (which 'never began') and the spectral presence of the ruins of industrial culture and unruly urban sprawl.[13]

Honey and Wax: Joy-making Mourning

In 1915, Sigmund Freud associated *melancholia* with *mourning* and introduced a crucial differentiation. Melancholia is described as a narcissistic identification with the lost object, whereas the 'work of mourning' is about accepting and processing the loss. Furthermore, *mourning* allows us to go back to its archaic roots and specifically to the Homeric *penthos*, where we find a broad spectrum of evidence which has been examined both by classicists and modern theory. It is worth looking at some different renderings of this ancient word into modern Greek which reflect, among other things, the context and the cultural perception. Thus 'πένθος άλαστον' (*Odyssey* α΄, 342) becomes 'haunting sorrow', 'heavy sorrow', and 'great grief';[14] "πένθος έχοντα" (*Odyssey* η΄, 218, 219) is 'myriads of pains' and 'sorrows', 'my heart is torn' and 'burden in the soul'; and 'πένθος αμέτρητον' (*Odyssey* τ΄, 512) becomes 'immeasurable sorrow' and 'countless torments'. The list of the different ways of translating *penthos* in modern Greek is suggestive: καημός (longing), βάσανο (torment), λύπη (sadness), βάρος στη ψυχή (weight in the soul), etc. As Nietzsche informatively adds in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "How else could a people so emotionally sensitive, so spontaneously desiring, so singularly capable of *suffering*, have been able to endure their existence, unless the same qualities, with a loftier glory flowing round them, manifested themselves in their gods. The same impulse […] also gave rise to the Olympian world, in which the Hellenic 'Will' held before itself a transfiguring mirror."[15] In addition to Nietzsche, other philosophers, anthropologists, classicists, historians and psychoanalysts examined the importance of the rituals of *lamenting*, *mourning*, *death* and *separation* not

9 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 178.

10 Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn*.

11 Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" (1940), in eds. Rolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I:2, Frankfurt 1974, pp. 691–704. English translation by Dennis Redmond: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm

12 Restany, "Notes analogiques pour un portrait de Caniaris, artist grec contemporain," p. 78.

13 See on this subject Yorgos Tzirtzilakis, "The exquisite corpse. Modernism and site-specific art. The Case of the Athens Conservatory", in ed. Daphne Vitali, *Expanded Ecologies. Perspectives in a Time of Emergency*, Athens, 2009, pp. 43–50; also "Psycopaesaggi. La psicosi del paesaggio nella cultura greca contemporanea", in ed. Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, *Il luogo [non] commune. Arte, spazio public ed estetica urbana in Europa*, Barcelona, Rome, 2005, pp. 150–3.

14 These are, respectively, from the translations of Argyris Eftaliotis (1932), Nikos Kazantzakis-Ioannis Th. Kakridis (1965) and Dimitris Maronitis (2009).

15 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Ian Johnston, Vancouver Island University, revised 2009: http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/tragedy_all.htm

only in ancient tragedy[16] but in the folk tradition of the mid-Byzantine years and in the islands and rural areas of Greece in more recent times. In the sixth century, however, a complex concept emerged to add a new dimension to the perception of mourning; it was one of the seminal texts in mystical Orthodox literature, written by an Anchorite of the desert, John Sinaites or Climacus. The book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*,[17] is a scholastic anthropology of Eastern monastic life with mystical elements such as those we find in the hesychastic texts of *Philokalia*. Step 7 of *The Ladder* defines the special mixed concept of 'joy-making mourning', which differs from both the *taedium vitae* and the *tristitia* of Western theology.

The term has been misused for a long time, so we need to be careful. First of all, this is no mere shared presence of the two ingredients of this complex concept but a literal fusion achieved through their mutual tension. The two manners converge, as mourning refers to joy and joy refers back to mourning, and along the way they alternate. The ascetic author of *The Ladder* provides the definition in the very first paragraph: *Joy-making mourning* "is a melancholy of the soul, a disposition of an anguished heart that passionately seeks what it thirsts for, and when it fails to attain it, pursues it diligently and follows behind it lamenting bitterly".

There is an impressive parallel between this last sentence and Jacques Lacan's description of 'painful pleasure', or *jouissance*,[18] whereby *desire* and *pleasure* can never be satisfied because they depend on a *scarcity*. The term *'jouissance'* expresses the transgression of the principle of pleasure, i.e. the 'strange satisfaction' derived from something painful but also conversely, 'the pain derived from satisfaction'. One would say that we have here a paradoxical transfer of this strange dialectical relationship from eastern theology to psychoanalysis. Yet what seems strange is the paradox of joining *joy* with *mourning*, the 'blissful and gracious mourning' with 'celebration' and the 'spiritual laughter of the soul', as it appears further down in the *The Ladder*: How is it possible for "inward joy and gladness [to] mingle with what we call mourning and grief, like honey in a comb"?

This is certainly a special theological and monastic concept[19] of eastern Christianity which points to a hermit's quest for the divine tension of a 'furious love', hence we should not arbitrarily ascribe any secular character to it. Nevertheless, its emergence and spread in this particular region of the eastern Mediterranean has to do with a mixed feeling (that echoes the Homeric '*ammixas*') and a more general anthropological behaviour which we should not omit to evaluate. I add here that in the *Ladder* the 'joy-making mourning' is contrasted with *acedia* (from the Greek word for lack of care and interest), which afflicts the ascetic monks in the Orient's deserts and *sketes* and, according to Walter Benjamin, re-emerges as *ennui* among sophisticated nineteenth-century urbanites.[20]

It is worth noting that both Freud[21] and other studious treatises[22] examined the connection between *joy* and *melancholy*, but it was Italo Calvino who gave it a clever definition when he spoke of 'levity': melancholy is a form of sadness which has acquired levity and humour; a form of the comical which has lost its weight (the legacy of Boccaccio and Rabelais). But if we wish to be precise, we must credit the

16 Margaret Alexiou, *Lament in Greek Tradition*, Cambridge, 1974, Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Olga Taxidou, "Modernism and Hellenism: Aspects of a Melancholy Sensibility", in ed. Dimitris Tziovas, *Greek Modernism and beyond*, pp. 11–23; and Olga Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity and Mourning*, Edinburgh, 2004.

17 John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid, Norman Russell, New York, Paulist Press, 1962.

18 "The result of transgressing the pleasure principle is not more pleasure, but pain, since there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear. Beyond this limit, pleasure becomes pain, and this 'painful pleasure' is what Lacan calls *jouissance*". Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 93.

19 John Climacus describes the transition from fear to joy in *The Ladder* as follows: "Tears over our death produce fear, but when fear begets fearlessness, then what a joy comes dawning!"

20 Ennui is closely interrelated to Baudelaire's concept of *spleen*, which occurs of course in the title *Paris Spleen* (trans. Louise Varèse. New Directions Publishing, New York, 1970). Walter Benjamin devoted a whole section of *The Arcades Project*—Convolute "D"—to the problem of *boredom*. He thus recognised that boredom is a fundamental component of modern life and of its urban phantasmagoria. But also in his writings of the 1920s and 1930s Benjamin utilized a number of terms almost as synonyms—*Langeweile, ennui, taedium vitae, acedia*—often in connection to Baudelairean *spleen* and *melancholy*. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993, pp. 3–28. On *acedia, tristitia, taedium vitae*, see 4ff. Agamben points out that Heidegger uses the *filiae acediae*, evocative of patristic studies.

21 "All states such as joy, exultation or triumph, which give us the normal model for mania, depend on the same economic conditions. What has happened here is that, as a result of some influence, a large expenditure of psychical energy, long maintained or habitually occurring, has at last become unnecessary, so that it is available for numerous applications and possibilities of discharge […] All such situations are characterised by high spirits, by the signs of discharge of joyful emotion and by increased readiness for all kinds of action": Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 1917.

22 Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, London, Nelson, 1964.

Yannis Tsarouchis, *The Memorial Service, Sketch for an Outdoor Wall Painting*, 1947, pigments with animal glue on canvas,
28.3 x 37.8 cm, Yannis Tsarouchis Foundation, inv.no. 1007
Courtesy of Yannis Tsarouchis Foundation

paternity of this correlation to the Arab doctors and philosophers of the Middle Ages, who transmitted the ancient sources to the West: when humour combines with blood, it produces symptoms of laughter and happiness. To the Persian doctor and philosopher Avicenna, laughter and happiness are a *mixture*, a *karma*—resulting from the Aristotelian *krasis*—and it is above all a *bleeding* one. Yet more important for our subject is the remark of Ishâq ibn Amrân who, extending the Hippocratic approach, discerns in the attitude of 'ascetics' a pathological side which he links to disorders involving the passion of love: "We find many ascetics ['*religiosos*' in the translation of Constantine] and pious men succumb to melancholic delusions, because they greatly fear God and are afraid of his retribution; or because they passionately desire Him… . They succumb to worry and frantic desire similar to that of someone in love, so that the activities of the soul and the functions of the body are completely corrupted."[23]

As we come to the contemporary age, however, the interpretations shift completely. In one verse of his Ανακομιδή [*Removal of Relics*] (1961), the polymath, writer and painter Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis proposes a different perspective: "Mourning means victory and vibrant joy." A few years later, Savvas Michael,[24] an essayist specialised in revolution theory and the messianic drive, claimed that *The Great Eastern*, the eight-volume surrealistic erotic opus of Andreas Embiricos, is in effect a 'processing of the mourning' he felt after he was absurdly held hostage by the Organisation for the Protection of the People's Struggle (OPLA) at Krora, Boeotia, in December 1944. Moreover, a psychiatrist who takes an interest in literature, Epaminondas Aslanidis, associates 'joy-making mourning' with the work of Embiricos and claims that the mixture of mourning and enthusiasm leads to a kind of 'divine fury' or 'masked melancholia' which turns 'the fear of death into an urge for life': "Man cannot speak or think, cannot even dream without the paternal laws of language, that is, without the restoration of loss and damage through mourning."[25] In this way we have the 'proper integration of the intrapsychically fragmented mother' (i.e. the past[26]) and, above all, the radical differentiation between *charmolypi* (joy-making mourning) and *lypomania* (griefmania).

Kairos: Is there a Pessimism of Strength?

While I am in no way seeking any metaphysical *continuity*, it would be useful to compare the cultural practice of 'joy-making mourning' with the notion of the alleged 'Greek serenity' (*Heiterkeit*) as described in 1764 by J. J. Winckelmann, who linked 'ancient Greek art' with the 'temperate climate' in a region situated between the cold North and the scorching South. The 'alleged serenity' is another complex concept, an *alloy*, a *'krasis*' like those which flourish at the borderlines of 'krisi'". This is why Winckelmann associates it with *geography* and with *kairos* (weather and time[27]), turning it into a primeval element which is increasingly hard to recognise; we can only suspect its presence.

The same is true of the Apollonian/Dionysian dipole that Nietzsche examines in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in whose second edition he added to the title an explanatory *Hellenism and Pessimism* (1886). Nietzsche writes: "Is pessimism *necessarily* the sign of collapse, destruction, of disaster, of the exhausted and enfeebled instincts—as it was with the Indians, as it is now, to all appearances, among us, the 'modern' peoples and Europeans? Is there a pessimism of *strength*? […] A basic issue is the relationship of the Greeks to pain, the degree of their sensitivity—did this relationship remain constant? Or did it turn itself around?"[28]

Nietzsche's answer seems to arrive further on with the "strange mixture and ambiguity in the emotions of the Dionysian celebrant", where "that pain awakens joy, the jubilation in his chest rips out cries of agony".

I do not think I need to say much more to demonstrate that mourning is among the genealogical traits of Greek culture. What does this mean? It means that Greek culture has become accustomed—for historical, social, anthropological, geopolitical and other reasons we saw—to a succession of separations. In short, it has had to process a series of *losses* which—although we are loath to admit it—define its peculiar *political condition*. Seferis described our emotional response to this loss using the allegory of the 'empty pedestal', the 'pedestal without a statue' which literally adds an enigmatic void, an incomplete interface, a passage.

This is not about withdrawal, about a springtime melancholy (which Nikolaos Gyzis depicted as a 'symphony' in 1886), about the idealised 'merciless light' of the Mediterranean 'Secret Sun' or about a mourning for the 'lost centre'; it is the fact that this 'centre' is transitory, being at the threshold. That's exactly what makes it *strong* by giving it a agile political stance or, if you will, this is the *strength of its weakness*. The major peculiarity of cultural production in Greece lies here and not in the references to antiquity (as the 1930s Generation believed) and other 'innovations' which were sought later.

So can we ascribe the overall character of contemporary artistic production to the coexistence of the *mournful* ('moments of sadness') and the *lustful* ('moments of bliss')? For all the reasonable reservations one might have, my answer would be affirmative, on condition that we do not stop at these concepts in themselves but take also into account the ways in which they manifest themselves through a series of permutations, blocks, assemblages, connectors and behaviours.

One can gain better insight into the Greek culture after one has been initiated in such ambiguous hybrids as 'bitter smile', 'tragelaugh', 'tragicomedy', 'alleged serenity' and, of course, 'joy-making mourning'. The prolonged *ambivalence* and *vagueness*—which are sometimes seen as part of the anthropological roots of the modern Greek idiosyncrasy (and hence of the current crisis)—spawn the unresolved disturbances and tensions around which the famous issue of *cultural identity* is built. Today we can surmise that this much-desired identity can only exist in a state of constant uncertainty and irresolution. What I mean is that it remains desirable exactly because it is essentially unfeasible, incomplete and irresolute. The more unattainable it is, the more we yearn for it.

23 Constantinus Africanus, *De melancholia*, cited in Angus Gowland, "Burton's *Anatomy* and the Intellectual Traditions of Melancholy", *Babel*, 25, 2012, pp. 221–257, fn 21; see Danielle Jacquart, "The Influence of Arabic Medicine in the Medieval West", in *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science*, ed. Roshdi Rashed, London, Routledge, 1996, III, pp. 963–84.

24 Savvas Michael, *Πλους και κατάπλους του "Μεγάλου Ανατολικού"*, Athens, 1995; *Μορφές του Μεσσιανικού*, Athens, 1999. Michael claims that all three concepts of romanticism—*pessimism, sorrow* and *fear of death*—can be seen in the oeuvre of Embiricos. In her text "Το πένθος της ιστορίας. Σχεδίασμα ανάγνωσης των μυθιστορημάτων της Ρέας Γαλανάκη" (1998), Ανεξακρίβωτη σκηνή, Athens, 2001, pp. 233-250, Gina Politi focusses on the relation between mourning and history.

25 Epaminondas G. Aslanidis, *Ο Ανδρέας Εμπειρίκος και η χαρμολύπη*, Athens, 2001, pp. 16, 26.

26 Ibid.

27 The meaning of the word '*kairos*' in Greek is ambivalent. It means *weather* and also *time* and *opportunity*. The ancient Greek meaning of *kairos*—what we call 'opportunity' today—manifests itself as the ideal balance among the parameters in a situation. It is the moment which is linked with the *time* imposed by the state of affairs. It is worth noting that Winckelmann never had the opportunity to set foot on the Greek peninsula, despite devoting his life's scholarship to Hellenism.

28 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 34, 38, 61.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the Turkish people via a FaceTime call on CNN Türk, amid the so-called attempted coup, 15 July 2016

How to Maintain a Burning Story?

Ayse Çavdar

When a self-appointed narrator-in-chief attempts to govern Turkey.

Once Raw, Then Cooked, and Burned in the Market[1]

Stories bring people together. Since ancient times, people have sat down around a fire and told stories to each other. This habit is one of the most substantial ways to maintain both individual souls and the soul of that particular human assembly. Stories people tell each other make the unknown universe a place to live where the hierarchy of the collective and individual has an order according to clear guidelines.[2] The most popular and durable stories have a fundamental point in common. It is not the narrator but the hero(ine) who belongs to another time and place, disconnected and thus benevolent. The heroes of cherished, recognised and human-gathering stories are rarely (directly and physically) fully known to the narrator or anyone else in that assembly. There must be two reasons for this phenomenon. The first is that acquaintances, orators and listeners are all mortal and imperfect beings. Thus, their existence cannot be as mighty as to transmit the moral of the story.

The second reason must relate to the sovereignty of the narrator over the story. If the protagonist of the story is in the assembly, the narrator's hegemony becomes vulnerable. In this case, there is no way to avoid disputes about the storyline and the moral of the story.[3] Thus, not being directly witnessed, the stories of heroes, distant in the sense of both time and space, are as generous and flawless as the fire enfolding the assembly. Gods, mythological creatures, ancestors with their timeless and integrated sagas open space to ordinary humans to enjoy their time in a painfully temporary present.

1 From the the most famous Anatolian Sufi, Mawlana Jelaleddin Rumi: "I was raw, I was cooked, I burned." For him, being raw means being worldly, full of profane desires. The Sufi path is the place to be burned with the love of God. Then, the Sufi gets burned, cleaning her/himself from the dirt (load) of the profane world. However, especially in the past three decades, in many schools of divinity in Turkey, Sufism is conceptualised as a tradition misguiding Muslims by offering to get rid of their worldy desires. This is a very old discussion. And it is interesting how this curious discussion arose while Islamist rule has extended from the religious domain to the state and society.

2 Christina Pratt, *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism, Volume II*, New York, Rosen Publishing, 2007, p. 473.

3 There is another reason for that phenomenon: "The unhistorical character of popular memory, the inability of collective memory to retain historical events and individuals except insofar as it transforms them into archetypes" Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return,* trans. Willard R. Trask, New York, Harper and Row, 1959, p. 46. However, this reason is at the same time a consequence of the perspective above defined. The inability and the fear to face its incomplete story could be the cause of the "unhistorical character of popular memory". It is a very long and painful discussion regarding the politics of memory. Taking memory as a branch of rhetoric just like it was in the ancient world, the term 'memory' and the act of remembering becomes even more controversial. See: James Fentress and Christopher Wickham, *Social Memory,* London, Blackwell, 1992, p. 11. From this point of view, the complete story of the dead ancestor or the timelessness and placelessness of the fantastic protagonist puts a distance between the protagonist and the listener and protects them from the imperfections of the present. This instinct must also be one of the ways to maintain the moral of the story of the damages of the time.

Right now in Turkey, in fact for a while, there is an authority aspiring to be the sovereign narrator of the future and attempting to change the story of the country. Being like a bridge over troubled waters, which no longer flow between East and West, South and North, Turkey is trembling from this attempt. The fire on the bridge is getting out of control. That is why, instead of bringing the people of the bridge together to listen to each other, the fire seems to burn their stories.

Novel Stories on the Bridge

A couple of years ago, while I was still living in Istanbul and researching the problems between refugees and host(ile)s in the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city, something very odd happened. Strolling in one of the areas, I stopped to talk to a shopkeeper and asked: "Could you suggest to me any other person to speak to about this matter?" He responded: "Yes, there is a guy in the second shop over there. He is a religious guy, but you can still trust him." I thanked him and stepped out of his shop towards the other shop he had referred to. For a couple of seconds, his sentence echoed in my mind: "He is a religious guy, but you can still trust him." It was not, "he is a religious guy, you can trust him." The 'but' and the 'still' altered everything. Did it mean, "religious guys are not trustworthy, but he is an exception"? Really? Since when? I visited the religious guy. He was a kind man, as his neighbour said, but I felt ashamed because of the conversation that had taken place just minutes ago. I did not ask anything about religion or religiosity. That information was still too fresh for me. On my way home through Kurtuluş (Tatavla), a neighbourhood near the famous Gezi Park, I tried to reflect on that short but loaded sentence: "He is a religious guy, but you can still trust him."

Another memory emerged, from almost one year prior, right after the Gezi Park protests. I took a bus from Tatavla to Eminonu. At the second stop, a guy in religious costume (a green cap in his hand, a white and long robe, and baggy trousers in light green, probably a member of the Naqshbandi order called İsmailağa) took the same bus and sat on the seat next to mine. After a couple of minutes, we passed by Gezi Park and Taksim Square. It was a horrible sight, with machines hurrying to clean up the remnants of the resistance. I could not stop myself from saying out loud what I thought: "Look at this. How shameless they are in destroying everything. Is this Taksim Square, an ocean of cement?" The guy responded: "What is wrong?" I said: "Everything. They brutalise everybody to keep their corruption hidden. This view is just a reflection of what they do while governing the state. They destroy everything and cover it up with cement." The guy asked: "What corruption are you talking about?" I listed a few big incidents. He responded calmly, "What is wrong with that? Everybody steals, even the *Evliya*s (Muslim saints)."

I know only of one great *evliya* in Muslim/Sufi history and his act of stealing from the rich to give to the poor. He is Abu Dhar. Ali Shariati, the Iranian Muslim revolutionary thinker, wrote about him to provide an example of the emptiness of private property.[4] His rebellion against Khalifa Uthman (the third khalifa after the Prophet Muhammed) was a call for justice. However for Uthman, Islam was all about "ceremonies, external show and the pretence of piety and sanctity". Shariati conceptualises Abu Dhar via Pascal's definition of God—*God is the axiom of the heart, not of the intellect*—and Proudhon's 'extreme socialism'. So, the guy sitting in the bus with me must have been thinking that Erdoğan steals from the rich to feed the poor, just like Abu Dhar. Is this true? While I was thinking in this way, he repeated the slogan produced by the supporters of Erdoğan, "Yes, they (Erdoğan and his guys) steal, but they work, too." This slogan continues with some evidence mostly about the public services. "Hospitals are better now. They build bridges and roads. Before him, all the streets were covered with dirt. Workers were striking all the time …" Then, the sentence ends with references to some particular policies: "Look, our veiled daughters can go to university and work everywhere. And, we can freely send our kids to *imam-hatips* (religious vocational schools)."

4 Ali Shariati, *And Once Again Abu Dharr,* Chicago, Kazi, 2012.

5 Recent statistics published on a pro-government newspaper website confirm that 409 women were killed in 2017, in most of the cases the perpetrators were relatives: https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2018/01/02/violence-against-women-rises-sharply-in-turkey-409-women-killed-in-2017

6 Yildiz Atasoy, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey,* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 91.

Most of the hospitals are privatised, and the state subsidises private investors in the health sector with tax breaks. That's why everybody can go to whichever hospital they want to without paying cash. But services in those hospitals are not free. The public pays the cost. When it comes to bridges and highways, the same model applies. All those infrastructures are built by private investors endorsed by the government. They profit both from the state and from the ones who have to use the roads and bridges. This means that everybody pays for those private highways even if they never use them. The education system is a dramatic failure. However, the number of religious vocational schools has increased because most of the secular schools have been converted to religious ones. The workers cannot strike, as labour unions have been quashed for many years. The veiled women, finally, are free to go wherever they want. However, the violence against women increases every day while the percentage of the female workers decreases dramatically. Yes, the veil is free, but not the women.[5]

However, I am sure the guy sitting next to me would not listen to any of these arguments. As a researcher dealing with middle-class religiosity, I am familiar with how such discussions flow. Talking about the numbers or the apparent failures in the public sphere and in services would not change his mind. The debate would end, "He (Erdoğan) is a religious guy and serves religious people. That's why nobody likes him." He would just ignore any evidence challenging the story. Is this because he thinks that he is the hero of this story? No, this is not the reason. Something more is at stake. He sees himself as the initiator of the winning party. This old guy knows very well that he is not the hero, but the one who authorises him. In this way, he does not take any risks. The hero will fight against everybody (for him) and our guy in the white robe will not suffer any wounds. This scenario provides something more than satisfaction. In the end, he is the one changing the faith of everybody by just voting for the hero. There is only one catch. He needs to ignore the facts and all the criticisms regarding his hero. The weird aspect of the story is that even if he listens and accepts all the counter-arguments I listed above, it does not make any sense to change his mind. His response would be concise: "My daughter, everybody stole everything until now. Why is it a problem when Muslims do?" Does he mean, "Why do you expect something better from my hero? He is no different. He represents nothing better." This acceptance must be the worst form of the prevailing pessimism. Is this pessimism causing the guy I talked to before to think that religious people are not trustworthy? Religion and the religious persona were not like this before. No, this is not nostalgia. Something about religion has been dramatically changed in just a couple of decades. A couple of decades ago, in the textbooks (of our compulsory classes of religion), it was written that Muslims are the ones everybody can trust. The nickname of Muhammad was "Muhammad-al-Emin", (Muhammad the Trustworthy). How and when did this guy in the green cap give up this story to adopt a new one about the "thieving *evliyas*"?

The Near (Hi)story of the Present: The Market as Heaven

Starting in the 1980s, the religious circles of Turkish society began to engage in the market mechanism more than ever thanks to the 'neo' version of economic liberalism. The passage to this version of economic liberalism began with a coup d'état in 1980 packaged under the ideological title of Turkish-Islamic synthesis.[6] The state needed religious circles and communities for two reasons: First, they could be the best counterforce against the leftist ideas increasing among youngsters who 'dared' to fight against social and economic injustice. Secondly, religious families were the warehouses of the new consumers of the liberalising market mechanism. There was another 'privilege' coupled to these religious communities, which has not been accounted for at that time. While the whole state apparatus and the economic institutions were jolted by the 'rites of passage' of the liberalising regulations, the religious brotherhoods were providing safe shelters of trust among their entrepreneur members. The sheik was not only a spiritual leader but also a business mediator among the devout: "Trust your brother! Do not cheat your brother! Help your brother! Muslims should blanch each others' shame." What about outside the brotherhood? With a new fashion started in the late eighties, the outside of the brotherhood became *Dar al-Harb*, the house of war.

Dar al-Harb is better understood when it is conceptualised along with its antonym, *Dar al-Islam*. *Dar al-Islam* means the house of Islam, the place in which the Islamic code of conduct (and of the market, too) rules. These Islamic rules are inclusive of the banishment of *riba* (interest) in any form along with typical ethical codes like "do not cheat anybody", "be just in waging" and "keep your promises and contracts". The *Dar al-Harb* is the house of war, in which Islamic rules are not operative for Muslims. In *Dar al-Harb* anything works as long as it benefits the Muslim(s). The *riba* is free, so violating contracts, being unjust in waging, cheating if you can. It is not easy to get big benefits from an Islamic market because of strict regulations, while *Dar al-Harb* provides endless freedom for the believers. Two Islamist intellectuals, Sadreddin Yüksel, a Naqshbandi molla and Hüsnü Aktaş, a radical writer, separately declared Turkey as *Dar al-Harb* soil. Although their original intention was to provoke Muslims against the secularist laws of the state, by adopting the idea, many brotherhoods and individuals used *Dar al-Harb* as a cover for their deeds in the market mechanism. In short, the idea of *Dar al-Harb* (initially stemming from Sunnah sharia) liberated Muslims from all Islamic rules of conduct allowing them to become perfect players in the liberal market mechanism.

Meanwhile, the guarantor role of the state became weaker and weaker, along with other institutions like labour unions, chambers, and more. In the economic sphere, religious brotherhoods used the advantage of not being regulated by any law (since they were not officially recognised) and embraced any opportunity to provide 'food' to their members. They built networks of trust to ensure limited but secure domains to move into. It was like revisiting the course Introduction to Capitalism 101, though religions are not new to the market. For an extended period in the history of humanity, religion was *the* market, until the market became *the* religion.[7] In this new phase, religious brotherhoods created small (parallel) markets within the market, and in this way, they converted their 'webs of virtue' into virtual webs of market ideology. In this new phase, the border of the community was the border of trust in the market. This also explains why they are not at peace although they believe in the same god and religion.

In the mid-nineties the religious communities had a wide-ranging opportunity to carry an Islamist party (Refah Paror Welfare Party) into government. The promise of the Welfare Party to pious masses was profoundly universal in direction: prosperity and vertical mobility. The trick was about the audience of this commitment (in line with the idea of *Dar al-Harb*): this promise was not for all but only for the pious crowds and thus conditional. The condition is evident: you need to be a devout Muslim to receive your part of this joyful pledge. That was the transformative aspect of the Islamism of the Welfare Party. In the political language of the Welfare Party, the working class was no longer the working class, but the poor. Vertical mobility was not from working class to middle class. There was no time for that. It should be from poor to rich! And for that, you needed a considerable capital. Religion was there as the most legitimate asset being claimed by nobody but Islamists.

By that time, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP or Justice and Development Party) had become the umbrella of diverse and contesting Islamisms of Turkey and established control over them. The hegemonic project of the AKP and various similar Islamisms changed and transformed within the framework of collaboration and confrontations with each other and the non-Islamist actors of the political sphere. Let's summarise this transformation with a metaphor adopted from Sufism: Islamism in Turkey, before the nineties was raw; then cooked in the nineties in the fire of (neo)liberal market capitalism; and finally burned within the heart of the political and economic state apparatus of the AKP period.

A Revolutionary Iftar Right After the Gezi Resistance

It was a couple of weeks following the Gezi Resistance in 2013. Anti-capitalist Muslims made a call for an open iftar (the dinner to break the fast during Ramadan) in

7 Remember the first sentence of the famous and very short essay by Walter Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion" (Fragment 74): "One can behold in capitalism a religion, that is to say, capitalism essentially serves to satisfy the same worries, anguish, and disquiet formerly answered by so-called religion." *In Religion as Critique: The Frankfurt School's Critique of Religion*, ed. Eduardo Mendiata, New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 259–62.

the famous Istiklal Street. The name of this particular dinner was the 'Iftar of the Earth' referring the Anatolian tradition to eat on the floor making a circle around a little table. In such a setup everybody can see each others' faces while sharing food. For years, pious and poor Muslims, as they represent the migrants coming from the villages to the city, have been portrayed around such dinner settings. Most participants of this 'Iftar of the Earth' were secular people who participated in the Gezi Resistance. This was not a surprise as the Anti-capitalist Muslims' call for iftar had already been an attempt to reappropriate the Gezi Park and Istiklal Street after the resistance. People brought some newspapers and food to make their earth tables. In a couple of minutes, the length of the table reached the entire length of Istiklal to the Taksim Square (next to Gezi Park).

However, there was another setting there in front of the Atatürk Cultural Center. It was the call for iftar by the Beyoğlu Municipality, the local administration of the area. It is true that the municipality organises iftar every year, but it was the first time they located this official iftar in the square. That's why I name this second iftar the contra-iftar. The organisation of the iftar did not have any resemblance to the pious Anatolians portrayed in the movies or books. It was more like the Republicans criticised by Islamists for being too Western in the past: big tables covered with white satin fabrics, chic chairs for the elites. Most of the guests were bureaucrats and famous actors and actresses. Around their circular tables, they looked onto the Atatürk Cultural Center, the Marmara Hotel or the stairs of the Gezi Park.

Right before the call to prayer (*ezan*) marking the break of the fast, the strangest thing happened. An armed police vehicle stopped the flow of the 'Iftar of Earth' as it was about to surround the contra-iftar. The 'Iftar of Earth' kept its Istiklal direction. And the armed vehicle was not enough to hide it from view. The world and the story were upside down. The centre, the square

An afternoon in Taksim Square during the Gezi uprisings, June 2013
Courtesy of Yasar Adanali

was occupied by the contra or official iftar organised by the municipality at the behest of the Islamist party, while the secular resistants of Gezi Park were breaking their fast around a table on earth organised by the Anti-capitalist Muslims.

The story of the AKP and the hegemonic project of Islamism ended symbolically right there. The increasing violence of Erdoğan and the AKP is the first evidence for that end. Erdoğan and the AKP try to maintain their story via some synthetic additions calling back Abdülhamid II or referring to the Ottoman Empire's 'just' colonialism. However, these artificial additions do not seem durable in the fire.

Erdoğan and his team are trying to keep up with violence not only within the country but also abroad. That trust is the last piece of the networks of trust that pious Muslims have created together to survive in this infamous bridge over the troubled water named Turkey. However, it seems there is nothing left in the hands of devout Muslims after having sacrificed faith in each other in order to gain advantages in malfunctioning market conditions and then having created a 'hero' like Erdoğan to protect their new domain in the eponymous market. Is violence an appropriate tool to keep a story alive although it is unable to carry a moral? Is it imaginable to kill all those who believe neither the story nor the moral of the story? Is it possible to maintain a story without a moral? What if the violence itself is the evidence indicating that the story no longer exists?

The Kitchen

Ángela Bonadies

Ángela Bonadies, *The Kitchen*, 2018, Video 8:34 min.
Courtesy of the artist

What are the biggest challenges for us women, who work in and with art, particularly in the country I come from, Venezuela, which finds itself in a profound crisis?

Machismo: deeply rooted, powerful and practiced by women and men.

Homophobia: by which, if you are not a womanly woman or a macho man, you are a pitiful and even disgusting individual.

Conservatism: as the protagonist of Lampedusa's Il Gattopardo states, everything changes so that everything can stay the same—or worse.

Abuse of Power: do what I tell you or I will destroy you. A country in which might is right.

Opportunism: which invites complicit silence, autocensorship and corruption.

Clientelism: the one from whom benefits are obtained is forever favored.

Militarism, caciquism, caudillismo and paternalism: the cult of the man that has weapons and power.

The Paradox: in a country where the women are the ones who take care, provide for and educate the children, the men are the ones who make decisions.


Let's talk about art... The national museums are instrumentalised as they respond to state politics, not to creative liberty. If there


five dollars resist? Two years ago, a friend quit her position as a curator in the Museo de Bellas Artes. For eleven years of work

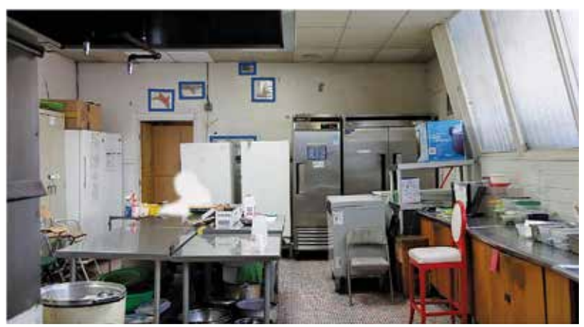

it will surely be less tomorrow. In the national museums, there are no policies for acquisitions or for supporting artists. There is


publications. The National Library of Venezuela is not up to date and in its entrance, we can see printed pictures of the president.


is resistance among some employees, the question remains: To which point can an employee who earns a monthly salary of


her liquidation was 400 dollars, equaling 1,500,000 Venezuelan bolivars. Today, January 2018, this equals six dollars, and


no established wage scale for artists. There are no grants for artists, professors or students. There are neither art critics nor art




It is a cult of personality and not of culture. The Bolivarian government took possession of the state, the institutions, the media,


the museums, the hospitals, the electoral council, the militia, the factories, and destroyed them. They took possession of the left

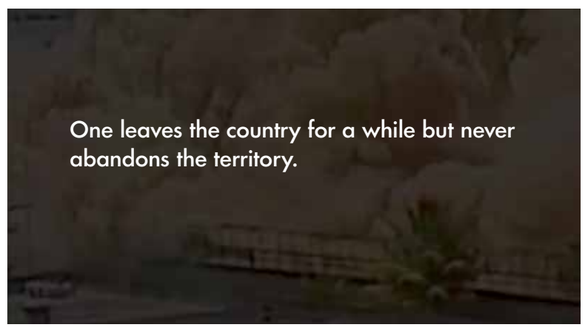

government, dressed as leftists, succeeded to have followers all over the world. The government acts like an evangelical pastor


abroad and not all of them live well. Others who left come back through increasingly closed doors.



discourse in order to have international support. As in Aesop's fable of the wolf disguised in sheep's clothing, the Bolivarian


who offers salvation through fear. The binary and totalitarian language of fear. Today, nine out of ten Venezuelan artists live

The End and the Beginning

Wisława Szymborska

After every war
someone has to clean up.
Things won't
straighten themselves up, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble
to the side of the road,
so the corpse-filled wagons
can pass.

Someone has to get mired
in scum and ashes,
sofa springs,
splintered glass,
and bloody rags.

Someone has to drag in a girder
to prop up a wall.
Someone has to glaze a window,
rehang a door.

Photogenic it's not,
and takes years.
All the cameras have left
for another war.

We'll need the bridges back,
and new railway stations.
Sleeves will go ragged
from rolling them up.

Someone, broom in hand,
still recalls the way it was.
Someone else listens
and nods with unsevered head.
But already there are those nearby
starting to mill about
who will find it dull.

From out of the bushes
sometimes someone still unearths
rusted-out arguments
and carries them to the garbage pile.

Those who knew
what was going on here
must make way for
those who know little.
And less than little.
And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass that has overgrown
causes and effects,
someone must be stretched out
blade of grass in his mouth
gazing at the clouds.

from *Miracle Fair: Selected Poems by Wisława Szymborska*, translated by Joanna Trzeciak. Used with permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton & Company

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Ieva Epnere, *Pyramid-Shaped Stones. Fogo Island* (2017). Black and white photograph. Image courtesy the artist.

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Chicago, November 7, 2018

RADICAL CONVIVIALITY AND SHARING: OTHER KNOWLEDGES ARE POSSIBLE

As an art space, discursive platform, eating and drinking spot, njangi house, space for conviviality, S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions and constructs of the West and non-West, primarily to
under- stand and negotiate between, and obvi-
ously to deconstruct the ideol- ogies and
conno- tations eminent to such
con- structs. For this, it seems appro-
priate to invoke, con- voke or deploy the cosmogenic powers of artists and artistic practice
to guide us. On this journey,
S A V - V Y
Contem- porary engages in
what Pag- et Henry would call the
“poetic power of artistic practice”
to “un- name and re-name,
to de-in-
stitute old selves and establish
new ones, and to si-
lence im- posed voices and reclaim lost ones” in an effort to resolve the “crisis of entrap-
ment.”[1]

Be- ing conscious of its base’s geography and history of power, S A V V Y Contemporary has defined as one
of its focal points the urge to deliberate, experiment and experienciate on issues of conviviality and
hos- pitality. Taking into consideration the rise of xenophobic and racial violence, widening gaps in class and economic
realities, re- vamped hegemonial structures over the last years and decades, the necessity to reflect about hospitality seems
to be more important than ever. Derrida sees in the concept of hospitality an ambiguity that stems far back from its proto-Indo-European etymological
derivation, which encompasses the words “stranger”, “guest,” but also “power”.[2] This power gradient inherent in the concept of hospitality is at the root of
what Derrida called:

an essential “self limitation” built right into the idea of hospitality, which preserves the distance between one’s own and the “stranger,” between owning one’s own property and inviting the “other” into one’s home.[3]

It is to this end that S A V - V Y
Contem- porary active- ly and
perfor- matively tries out strategies
of ignor- ing, abro- gating,
neutral- iz- ing those dis-
tances and imped- iments between
the self and the ego, the self and the other,
or basically ne- gat- ing the existence of self and other, as categories of differentiation. A possible
method of re- aliz- ing the aforementioned is through radical conviviality and sharing.

S A V V Y Contemporary is a
space for epis- temological diversity.
A space that em- bodies and
screams out Boaventura de Sousa
Santos’ postulation that “Another Knowledge is Possible” and vying to his arguments that there is no social justice without global cognitive justice. As de Sousa Santos states, the exclusions, oppressions and discriminations produced by global capitalism have not only had economic, social and political effects upon the world, but have also had detrimental cultural and epistemological effects.[4] Thus, the urge not only to acknowledge the diversity of epistemologies, but to resist the tendency to universalise Western epistemology as the alpha and omega.

1 Henry, Paget: Ramabai Espinet and Indo-Caribbean Poeticism, in Marina Banchetti and Clevis Headley (eds), *Shifting the Geography of Reason: Gender, Science and Religion*, Cambridge Scholars Press (2007).
2 O’Gormann, Kevin: Modern Hospitality: Lessons from the Past. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 12 (2), 2005, pp. 141–151.
3 Caputo, John D.: *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York, Fordham University Press 2002), p. 110.
4 de Sousa Santos, Boaventura et al.: *Opening Up the Canon of Knowledge and Recognition of Difference*, in Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed) *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, London Verso (2008).
5 Haraway, Donna: Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives, *Feminist Studies* 14.3, 1988, p. 582.

It is here that Donna Haraway’s concept of “Situated Knowledge,” implanted within the context of Feminist Theory, also comes in very handy. By moving away from what she calls “god-trick,”[5] i.e. the all-seeing eye of Western science that considers itself the omniscient observer, Haraway offers the image of the embodied, complicated, actively seeing eye, which is a split and contradictory observer. Haraway’s argumentations for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims resonate in our practice. So we appropriate proposals on viewing from a body – always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, against the view from above, from nowhere, or from simplicity – and
we push this further to what I will like to call “Associated Situated
Knowl- edges” or just “Associated Knowledges.” While viewing
from these bodies, one also puts them in relation, association
and companion with each other and their sociopolitical
ecology. In so doing, one not only puts the bodies, but also
their embodied knowledges, histories, memories in association.
In this respect, art and exhibition-making act as catalysts.

At S A V V Y Contemporary we celebrate this plurality
of epistemologies as we articulate knowledges as a means
of decolonising the singularity of “knowledge,” in line
with Lewis Gordon’s reflections on the coloniality of know-
ledge, when he points out that the mere

formulation of “knowledge” in the singular already situates the question in a framework that is alien to precolonial times, for the disparate modes of producing knowledge and notions of knowledge were so many that knowledges would be a more appropriate designation. Unification was a function of various stages of imperial realignment, where local reflections shifted their attention to centers elsewhere to the point of concentric collapse. On their way, those varieties of knowledge coalesced into knowledge of the center, and successive collapses of centers under the weight of other centers led, over time, to the global situation of the center and its concomitant organization of knowledges into knowledge.[6]

6 Gordon, Lewis: Shifting the Geography of Reason in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence, in *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1 (2), 2011, pp. 95–103.
7 Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm: *The Philosophy of History*, (tr. J. Sibree), 1858, p. 99: “At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – that is in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitionary phase of civilization; but, as is Nahoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History.” Re-echoed in a *Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop*, Senegal, on July 26, 2007:
“The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history. The African peasant, who for thousands of years have lived according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, only knew the eternal renewal of time, rhythmed by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words.In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress. In this universe where nature commands all, man escapes from the anguish of history that torments modern man, but he rests immobile in the centre of a static order where everything seems to have been written beforehand.”
8 Kant, Immanuel: *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime* (1764), Trans. John T. Goldthwait. University of California Press, 1961, p. 110–111: “Mr Hume challenges anyone to cite a simple example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality; even among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to capacities as in color.”
9 Banchetti-Robino, Marina Paola and Headley, Clevis Ronald: Charting the Shifting Geography of Reason, in *Shifting the Geography of Reason Gender, Science and Religion*, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007.
10 Rosch, Eleanor; Thompson, Evan and Francisco J. Varela: *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, MIT Press (1991), pp. 172–173.
11 Irobi, Esiaba: The Problem with Post-Colonial Theory: Re-Theorizing African Performance, Orature and Literature in the Age of Globalization and Diaspora Studies, in *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, Vol. 2 / No. 1, 2008.12 Galeano, Eduardo: Euro Everything, in *Mirrors: Stories of Almost Everyone*, 2009.

S A V V Y Contemporary’s efforts are thus to produce antidotes to the epistemicidal activities that have been practiced all over the globe, by accommodating and celebrating knowledges and epistemic systems from Africa and the African diaspora, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, but also Europe and North America. In so doing we have chosen to explore other mediums that embody and disseminate knowledges like the body, music, storytelling, food / eating, performativity of different kinds e.g. dance, theatre, performing and performance art, etcetera in an effort to swim against the Enlightenment conception of reason. By so doing, we scout out possibilities of escaping the vicious and violent cycle of re-referencing historical and philosophical assumptions and postulations that found their way and were fundamental in the construction of the other that was needed to establish a European age of reason. Examples of these foundational perpetrators of epistemicide and othering would at best find a spot in footnotes of S A V V Y Contemporary practice.[7,8]

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As Banchetti-Robino and Headley point out, the idea of embodiment of thought – as it was outlined in feminist critiques – intimates the prospect of relocating reason in the corporeality of the thinking subject, rather than
in some disembodied
and im- material realm.[9]
It is for this reason
that S A V V Y
Contemporary sees
itself
as a
per-
for-
mative

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