THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS
VOLUME 10

LITERATURE

Edited by Léopold Lambert
August 2014

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INTRO

ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVES

The idea that architecture can be created through narrative is popular in some academic circles. It seems a fruitful approach to the discipline as it unfolds an important imaginative field. It also envisions a resistance to various forms of architectural teleology, since fiction is usually based on the dysfunction of the environment in which it is set. For this reason, we could go as far as to affirm that fiction operates in contradiction to the traditional design method. The word *literature,* however, is not often pronounced by the people who seem to promote this creative method. The following texts intend to think of literature as a powerful field of ideas that translates to other creative disciplines. This translation should never be literal, and for this reason, some fictions that evoke architecture — Franz Kafka's and Jorge Luis Borges's labyrinths, for example — might be paradoxically more difficult to properly translate than less immediately spatial novels. The following texts do not propose any translation of their own but rather offer a humble toolbox in order to do so. This volume also constitutes an opportunity to archive the four texts written for the first event of Archipelagos (Brooklyn, November 2011), an non-institutionalized gathering of people conversing around a given topic. The first event was dedicated to literature and four architects were invited to talk about four authors they chose (Kerouac, Artaud, Dostoyevsky and Pessoa) in the first half of the event, while the second half consisted of an open conversation generated by the presentations.

01

BY REVEALING THE EXISTENCE OF OTHER WORLDS, THE BOOK IS A SUBVERSIVE ARTIFACT

This chapter reconstitutes the small presentation I was invited to give by Carla Leitão for her seminar about libraries and archives at Pratt Institute. The talk was trying to elaborate a small theory of the book as a subversive artifact based on six literary authors whose shared characteristic is that they dramatize their own medium, the book. The predicate of this essay is that books are subversive — and therefore suppressed by authoritarian power — since they potentially reveal the existence of other worlds.

In the series "Julius Corentin Acquefacques, prisonnier des rêves," Marc-Antoine Mathieu explores and questions graphic novel as the medium he uses for his narratives to exist, and therefore to acquire a certain autonomy as soon as they have been created. In reusing the constructive elements of drawings within the narrative (preparatory sketches, vanishing points, framing bars, anamorphoses, etc.) he creates several layers of universes that include our own. He thus makes us wonder if our reality couldn't be the fiction of a higher degree of reality.

It is not coincidental that Mathieu uses the terminology of the dream, since dreams constitute our daily experience of an-

other world within the world. Here, the nightmare consists in that the main character, Julius Corentin Acquefacques cannot distinguish what is a dream, what is his reality, what is the reality of these other worlds he can see for short instants, and eventually what is the reality of his creator, the author himself.

In *The Trial,* written by Franz Kafka and published in 1929, the book as an artifact is not literally present. However, the existence of other worlds within the narrative can be found in the fact that the version we know is the one assembled by Kafka's best friend, Max Brod, who re-assembled the chapters of the unfinished book according to his own interpretation, against his friend's wishes. Kafka wanted the manuscript to be burned. In an attempt to enhance the text's rationality, Brod starts the narrative with the scene where K., the protagonist, learns that he will be judged for a crime he ignores. This section is followed by K.'s experience of the administrative labyrinth and the story ends with K.'s execution. In *Towards a Minor Literature*, Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze criticize this order, cannot seem to accept that such chapter about K.'s death has been written by Kafka and eventually consider that this event is nothing more than an additional part of the character's delirium or dream within the story. As I say in a text entitled "The Kafkian Immanent Labyrinth as a Post-Mortem Dream" (see chapter 16), my own interpretation consists in starting with this 'last' chapter in which K. is executed, thus attributing the following delirium to the visions that K. experiences before dying. In other words, K. never really dies for himself, even though he dies from the point of view of others. His perception of time exponentially decelerates, tending more and more towards the exact moment of his death, without ever reaching it: this is the Kafkian nightmare.

The fact that one can count at least three ways of assembling

the ten chapters written by Kafka allow the existence of several parallel worlds that share the same elements but present different meaning. This is how we can understand the Kafkian labyrinth.

Jorge Luis Borges, whose relationship to Kafka is self-evident, is also well-known for his quasi-Leibnizian (see Chapter 18) invention of an infinity of parallel worlds through books. *The Library of Babel* is the most famous example. It introduces an infinite library containing every unique book that can be written in 410 pages with 25 symbols. At the end of this short story, Borges adds that this library could be contained in a single book, which will be introduced later on in *The Book of Sand*: a book with an infinity of pages. What is to be found in infinity seems to be indicated in the story *The Secret Miracle* (1943). The following excerpt demonstrates Borges's work and life:

> Toward dawn he dreamed that he had concealed himself in one of the naves of the Clementine Library. A librarian wearing dark glasses asked him: "What are you looking for?" Hladik answered: "I am looking for God." The librarian said to him: "God is in one of the letters on one of the pages of one of the four hundred thousand volumes of the Clementine. My fathers and the fathers of my fathers have searched for this letter; I have grown blind seeking it." (Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*: *Selected Stories and Other Writings*, Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. NY: New Directions Books, 92.)

Readers of Borges know that he lost his sight a few decades after he wrote this story. What was this God that he was looking for in the many books of Buenos Aires National Library?

Which kind of Kaballah did he create to find an esoteric meaning in the mathematics of profane scriptures? Perhaps he had a glance of the infinity that he decribed for many years and became blind to pay for it.

It is one thing to comprehend the infinity of contingencies that Borges presents, but it is another to fathom it fully. Such transcendental understanding could correspond to an encounter with what deserves to be called God. Borges gives us the chance, one more time, to experience such an encounter through his story *The Garden of Forking Paths (*1941) which describes a book where the infinite combinations of worlds exist in parallel:

> "Here is Ts'ui Pên's labyrinth," he said, indicating a tall lacquered desk.
> "An ivory labyrinth!" I exclaimed. "A minimum labyrinth."
> "A labyrinth of symbols," he corrected. "An invisible labyrinth of time. To me, a barbarous Englishman, has been entrusted the revelation of this diaphanous mystery. After more than a hundred years, the details are irretrievable; but it is not hard to conjecture what happened. Ts'ui Pên must have said once: I am withdrawing to write a book. And another time: I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth. Every one imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing. The Pavilion of the Limpid Solitude stood in the center of a garden that was perhaps intricate; that circumstance could have suggested to the heirs a physical labyrinth. Ts'ui Pên died; no one in the vast territories that were his came upon the labyrinth; the confusion of the novel suggested to me

> that it was the maze. Two circumstances gave me the correct solution of the problem. One: the curious legend that Ts'ui Pên had planned to create a labyrinth which would be strictly infinite. The other: a fragment of a letter I discovered."
> Albert rose. He turned his back on me for a moment; he opened a drawer of the black and gold desk. He faced me and in his hands he held a sheet of paper that had once been crimson, but was now pink and tenuous and cross-sectioned. The fame of Ts'ui Pên as a calligrapher had been justly won. I read, uncomprehendingly and with fervor, these words written with a minute brush by a man of my blood: I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths. Wordlessly, I returned the sheet. (Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*: *Selected Stories and Other Writings*, Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. NY: New Directions Books, 25.)

In 1962, Philip K. Dick writes a novel entitled *The Man in the High Castle* which dramatizes a uchronia for which Franklin D. Roosevelt died before ending his first mandate of President of the United States, thus replaced by an isolationist President who refuses to engage his country in the second World War. The Nazis conquer Europe, while the Japanese army colonizes East Asia including Siberia, and eventually both combine their forces to invade the USA. Dick's novel takes place in United States under nippo-nazi domination. A book entitled *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy,* written by a certain Hawthorne Abendsen, describes a world in which the Allies won against the Axis. The book is forbidden, as it allows the depiction of another reality than the one imposed by colonial empires:

> At the bookcase she knelt. 'Did you read this?' she asked, taking a book out. Nearsightedly he peered. Lurid cover. Novel. 'No,' he said. 'My wife got that. She reads a lot.'
> 'You should read it.'
> Still feeling disappointed, he grabbed the book, glanced at it. The Grasshopper Lies Heavy. 'Isn't this one of those banned-in-Boston books?' he said.
> 'Banned through the United States. And in Europe, of course.' She had gone to the hall door and stood there now, waiting.
> 'I've heard of this Hawthorne Abendsen.' But actually he had not. All he could recall about the book was — what? That it was very popular right now. Another fad. Another mass craze. He bent down and stuck it back in the shelf. 'I don't have time to read popular fiction. I'm too busy with work.' Secretaries, he thought acidly, read that junk, at home alone in bed at night. It stimulates them. Instead of the real thing. Which they're afraid of. But of course really crave. (Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962.)

The ban on books depicted in Dick's uchronia brings us to worlds in which books have been definitely suppressed from society. In the well-known *1984*, written in 1949 by George Orwell, the only remaining book is the dictionary of the Newspeak whose editions become thinner and thinner as the language is subjected to strict progressive purges. Language, allows the formulation of other worlds, which can be punished as thought crimes. The Book is not destroyed literally but its principal material is voluntarily made scarce:

‘The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,’ he said. ‘We’re getting the language into its final shape — the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we’ve finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words — scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.’

He bit hungrily into his bread and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, then continued speaking, with a sort of pedant’s passion. His thin dark face had become animated, his eyes had lost their mocking expression and grown almost dreamy.

‘It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn’t only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take “good”, for instance. If you have a word like “good”, what need is there for a word like “bad”? “Ungood” will do just as well — better, because it’s an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of “good”, what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like “excellent” and “splendid”

> and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already. but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words — in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s idea originally, of course,' he added as an afterthought. (George Orwell, *1984*. New York : Signet Classics, 1949.)

The quintessential narrative dramatizing the destruction of books is *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) by Ray Bradbury. In this story, firemen are not people in charge of fighting against fire, but on the contrary, those in charge of burning books that have been banned as the principal element of discord and inequality within society. Fahrenheit 451 (233 degrees Celsius) is the temperature at which paper burns. Books allow writing to remain archived for eternity, and carried from place to place, but they are fragile because their main material, paper, is vulnerable to the elements, fire in particular. François Truffaut, who released a cinematographic adaptation of Bradbury's novel in 1966, showing a copy of *Mein Kampf* in his film, insists that a resistance movement that would save the books from fire could not possibly judge which books deserved to be kept and which one could be left to the institutional purge.

In the play *Almansor* that he wrote in 1820, Heinrich Heine makes the following tragic prophecy: "Where we burn books, we will end up burning men." On May 10, 1933, the Nazis, recently elected at the head of the executive and legislative power in Germany burned thousands of books, including Heine's, which do not fit the spirit of the new anti-Semitic/anti-communist politics. About a decade later, they will industrially

kill eleven million people in the Holocaust.

Among the books burned in 1933, were ones written by Marx, Freud, Brecht, Benjamin, Einstein, Kafka but also books by the father of science fiction, H. G. Wells. This illustrates the will of the third Reich to annihilate any vision of the future that was not compliant with the one elaborated by the Nazis.

In many European languages, book burning ceremonies are called "autodafé" from Portuguese *Acto da Fé*, act of faith. Autodafés were common during the Spanish and Portuguese inquisition. Books listed on the Catholic Index — the list of books forbidden by the Church — and heretics were burned in vast rituals of authoritarian religion. In 1933, Joseph Goebbels, minister of propaganda of the Reich, mobilized hordes of students who collected, confiscated and burned the books listed as subversive. An important element in the principal autodafé of May 10, 1933 in Berlin was that the rain was preventing the flames to burn the books so that firemen had to pour gasoline on the books to set them ablaze. This significant 'detail' may have influenced on Bradbury for *Fahrenheit 451*.

The books are agents of infection from the point of view of an authoritarian ideological power. Their authors place in them the germs of subversion that are then spread to whoever read them. If, as Michel Foucault insisted, knowledge is power, so is imagination. The virtual access to other worlds via books is the possibility of a resistance in a given reality. Because of that that, books have to be protected at any price. They constitute the archives of a civilization as much as they are the active agents of vitalization of a society that accepts the multiplicity of their narratives.

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02

JACK KEROUAC: THE ROOMS, THE DIORAMAS, THE MAPS BY SOFIA KRIMIZI

JACK KEROUAC: THE ROOMS, THE DIORAMAS, THE MAPS ///
By Sofia Krimizi (written for and presented at The Funambulist event *Four Architects Four Writers* on November 22, 2011 in Brooklyn)

All quotes are from Jack Kerouac, *On the Road,* New York: Penguin Classics, 2008.

On the Road is a novel published in 1957 and written in 1951 by Jack Kerouac, on a 120-foot long roll of semi-translucent teletype paper. This scroll allowed Kerouac to continuously feed a typewriter and, for three consecutive weeks, write without interruption a single-spaced text that he later edited in pencil.

On the Road attempts an American version of the French — or at least European — flânerie, the aimless experiential wondering in the urban landscape, here organically operated at the scale of the continent, where each state is a neighborhood to cross, a threshold and a destination simultaneously. Kerouac puts together on that continuous scroll a stroll across the United States, for a lack of a better word

or a real equivalence in English to the word flânerie, where one is allowed not to know or even not want to know where one is heading. America unrolls in four parts of the book, a fifth takes place in Mexico. The parts form a series of rooms with no transitions, no corridors, no hallways, becoming a distorted palace of Versailles where one changes direction only when there is no more depth to expand upon, no more rooms to visit in that direction:

> "There she blows!" yelled Dean. "Wow! Made it! Just enough gas! Give me water! No more land! We can't go any further 'cause there ain't no more land!" (page 169)

The "shaken Frisco" (San Francisco) signals the edge of the continent, a magnet that drags Sal Paradise (Jack Kerouac's alias) across the country several times in the sequence captured by the book. Once on the other side of the continent, New York, Chicago, New Orleans are the sirens that will pull him back *On the Road*.

The Car, the Speed, the Girl, the Danger, the Road

This *roman à clé*, where the lived journey lies under the façade of fiction, allows Kerouac to synthesize the fragments of his own travels with Neal Cassady (Dean Moriarty in the book) around the United States in an imaginative order.

Marking the beat generation, Kerouac initiates a new kind of a literary genre that will borrow its rhythm from jazz.

The Rooms, the Dioramas, the Map

Attempting a tripartite structure of spatial analogies, at times superimposed, I will talk about the frenzying scale transitions

within buildings, cities and states as the instrument Kerouac utilizes to accelerate an already impetuous plot, scrutinize and penetrate, and finally situate operations on a very carefully transcribed field-map of the continent.

The Rooms

Kerouac's version or even better vision of the American *flânerie* is very particular because of the scale of the continent. In *On the Road*, America is structured and thus manifested, I would even dare say drawn on the scroll, as a series of chambers that Dean and Sal enter and exit again and again. No paragraphs, no chapters, no breaks — solid movement, a unique kind of metastatic roaming from the New Jersey living room to the interior of the metallic shell — the car, the desert (again a room), the diner, the highway, the garage, the hotel room, the bus and so on.

The hint that we are allowed in order to understand that the room has changed, that the action has moved from one chamber to the next, is the shift in scale. There is first an indication of the scale of the room, the set that will host the pending action and then the actual description of it.

Three fragments:

> The greatest ride in my life was about to come up, a truck, with the flatboard at the back, with about six or seven boys sprawled out on it. (page 22)

> I moved with Roland Major in the really swank apartment that belonged to Tom Gray's folks. We each had a bedroom, and there was a kitchenette with food in the icebox and a huge living

> room where Major sat in. (page 40)

> At dawn my bus was zooming across Arizona desert- Indio, Blythe, Salome (where she danced); the great dry stretches leading to Mexican mountains, Flagstaff, clifftowns. (page 103)

Everything is understood, rendered and thus captured as a continuous interior, the vehicles, the houses, the bars, the restaurants. Even the actions set in the desert or on the open highway are composed in a way that suggests a dome, an invisible surface that wraps, contains and delimits the event. The way several of these exterior spaces are defined through their physical but also transcendent boundaries alludes to Kerouac's religious upbringing, so that one could draw parallels between the Christian imagery of the heavens as a roof of the earth:

> […] and one night just over Laredo border in Dilley, Texas, I was standing on the hot road underneath an arc-lamp with the summer moths smashing into it when I heard footsteps from the darkness beyond… (page 303)

> We stopped in the unimaginable softness. It was as hot as the inside of a baker's oven on a June night in New Orleans. […] For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze or sweatered me, but became me. [...] The sky was starless, utterly unseen and heavy. I could lie there all night long with my face exposed to the heavens, and it would do me no more harm than a velvet drape drawn over me. (page 294)

Kerouac himself said about *On the Road* mentioned: “it was really a story about two Catholic buddies roaming the country in search of God. And we found him. I found him in the sky, in Market Street San Francisco.”

God was found in the ecstasy of the urban environment and not in the openness of the wild but clearly defined American rural night.

On the Road is structured in five parts, each one divided in several chapters, both categories bearing numerical titles in the absence of a table of contents.

The fact that a Kerouac room can exist in two chapters, even spread to two parts of the book, emphasizes the *a posteriori* sectioning of the scroll- in order to allow very controlled and situated breaks in the rhythm, instant musical pauses would only destabilize not the narration itself but the impact of the dense and uninterrupted procession of events. Kerouac’s rooms are an invention whose impact can be traced in his following books, *Tristessa, Sartori in Paris,* and *Visions of Cody*.

The Dioramas

The introduction and description of the protagonists happens only through their natural habitat. Kerouac offers us the possibility to meet with the characters in a series of dioramas, their natural habitats, their bedrooms, living rooms, cars, pockets:

> On the wall hung a picture of an ugly old Cape Cod house. His friends said, “Why do you have that ugly thing hanging there?” and Bull said, “I like it because it’s ugly.” All his life was in that line. Once I knocked on his door in the 60th

> Street slums of New York and he opened it wearing a derby hat, a vest with nothing underneath, and long striped sharpster pants; in his hands he had a cookpot, birdseed in the pot and he was trying to mash the seed to roll in cigarettes. (page 144)

Kerouac is a collector of the human species, even if he accuses Dean in *On the Road* of being an urban biologist:

> The time was coming to say good-by to Victor, so Dean was taking the opportunity to have moments alone with him, inspect his park and get views on things in general and in all dig him as only Dean could do. (page 291)

The need to know what the question is, to understand the fragments of the world, the iterations of a human character, to find out the possibilities that our species allows, to interrogate the transcribed social order feed the curiosity in *On the Road*.

The city, any city is interrogated and depicted in the book the same way any of the protagonist are interrogated and described. The room of the city and the room of the person, built like a diorama, carry the same questions and share the same longing for discovery:

> I didn't know what to say; he was right; but all I wanted to do was sneak out into the night and disappear somewhere, and go and find out what everybody was doing all over the country. (page 67)

The Map

In *On the Road*, America is a map, the highway is a red line connecting dots, connecting cities, containing Kerouac's protagonists and Kerouac himself:

> It was my dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes. (page 11)
>
> It was night. We were pointed toward the American continent. (page 89)
>
> Somewhere behind us or in front of us in the huge night his father lay drunk under a bush. (page 234)

America being a map in Kerouac's mind and writing comes with an embedded directionality, a compass that points in front or behind, a constant measurement of the traveled distance and the miles yet to be encountered. The flee to disappearance, the getaway, the road are projected on the physical map of the United States, creating a rehearsal of the envisioned trip. The destination being as important as the trip itself, Kerouac creates a multi-scaled flanery, practiced and rehearsed on the map, executed on the 1:1 scale:

> In no time at all we were back on the main highway and that night I saw the entire state of Nebraska unroll before my eyes. A hundred and ten miles an hour straight through, an arrow road, sleeping towns, no traffic, and the Union Pacific streamliner falling behind us in the moonlight. […] Do you know there's a road that goes

> down to Mexico and all the way to Panama? […] Yes! You and I, Sal, we'd dig the whole world with a car like this because, man, the road must eventually lead to the whole world. Ain't nowhere else it can go — right? (page 231)

There is no other way than to exit the rooms of America by entering the mystic Mexican chamber. There is nor other way than to exit *On the Road* by returning to the first room to New York.

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03

FERNANDO PESSOA: HETERONYMS BY CARLA LEITÃO

FERNANDO PESSOA: HETERONYMS ///
By Carla Leitão (written for and presented at The Funambulist event *Four Architects Four Writers* on November 22, 2011 in Brooklyn)

Fernando Pessoa had more than 70 heteronyms (including orthonyms). Four of them, and then Fernando Pessoa, the orthonym, are particularly popular and important to understand his work and cultural context. Some heteronyms are related to each other in some fashion and will engage in conversations with each other. Pessoa did astrological charts or created biographical data, including birthdates for several heteronyms. Many heteronyms and orthonyms have an intrinsic, interior contradiction.

One of Pessoa's main known poems has more than 20 great translations and is called "Autopsycography" (trans. Richard Zenith):

> The poet is a faker
> Who's so good at his act
> He even fakes the pain
> Of pain he feels in fact.

And those who read his words
Will feel in his writing
Neither of the pains he has
But just the one they're missing.

And so around its track
This thing called the heart winds,
A little clockwork train
To entertain our minds.

Alberto Caeiro (1889-1915) is the poet who wants to see things as they are, who tried to avoid that thinking comes in between him and the act of "seeing". His main book is *The Keeper of Sheep*, the Keeper is himself, and the sheep are thoughts.

Several other heteronyms and orthonyms are, to some degree, apprentices, students or mentored by Caeiro, and maintain a continuing dialogue with him and his ambitions for poetry. The other four presented here most often are the cited examples and possibly the most prolific.

The age and name of Caeiro evoke Mário de Sá-Carneiro, a poet and very close friend of Fernando Pessoa who committed suicided at 26 (trans. Richard Zenith):

My gaze is clear like a sunflower.
It is my custom to walk the roads
Looking right and left
And sometimes looking behind me,
And what I see at each moment
Is what I never saw before,
And I'm very good at noticing things.
I'm capable of feeling the same wonder
A newborn child would feel

If he noticed that he'd really and truly been born.
I feel at each moment that I've just been born
Into a completely new world…

I believe in the world as in a daisy,
Because I see it. But I don't think about it,
Because to think is to not understand.
The world wasn't made for us to think about it
(To think is to have eyes that aren't well)
But to look at it and to be in agreement.

I have no philosophy, I have senses…
If I speak of Nature it's not because I know what it is
But because I love it, and for that very reason,
Because those who love never know what they love
Or why they love, or what love is.

To love is eternal innocence,
And the only innocence is not to think…

Álvaro de Campos (1890-…) is a compulsive writer. Both paranoid and attracted by the machines of progress and possible communication with them, he is, unlike Caeiro, very driven by the compulsion of 'feeling,' and is therefore interested in 'sensations' and 'drive.' He plays the most anguished part of Pessoa, his liminal ethical interrogations and desires (trans. Richard Zenith):

Triumphal Ode

By the painful light of the factory's huge electric lamps
I write in a fever.

I write gnashing my teeth, rabid for the beauty of all this,
For this beauty completely unknown to the ancients.

O wheels, O gears, eternal r-r-r-r-r-r-r!
Bridled convulsiveness of raging mechanisms!
Raging in me and outside me,
Through all my dissected nerves,
Through all the papillae of everything I feel with!
My lips are parched, O great modern noises,
From hearing you at too close a range,
And my head burns with the desire to proclaim you
In an explosive song telling my every sensation,
An explosiveness contemporaneous with you, O machines!

Ricardo Reis (1887-…) is a doctor and poet. His poems are often a reaction to Caeiro's refusal to engage sentiment, or feeling, but simultaneously fascinated by Caeiro's restrain. For this reason, Caeiro is disturbed by his own thoughts. For this reason, he is sometimes presented as the most lyrical and simultaneously classical of these three heteronyms, where the proper form of his poems often follows that of Greek and Latin odes. He is particularly concerned with poetic aesthetic, form, and ethics as a driving force (trans. Richard Zenith):

Example

Countless lives inhabit us.
I don't know, when I think or feel,
Who it is that thinks or feels.
I am merely the place
Where things are thought or felt.

I have more than just one soul.
There are more I's than I myself.
I exist, nevertheless,
Indifferent to them all.
I silence them: I speak.

The crossing urges of what
I feel or do not feel
Struggle in who I am, but I
Ignore them. They dictate nothing
To the I I know: I write.

Bernardo Soares is the author of *The Book of Disquiet,* and supposedly an accountant by profession, the book consists of a collection of thoughts fragments. As Judith Balso, puts it, he claims to be writing an autobiography, but this document lacks all facts, dates, names and history (trans. Richard Zenith):

The Book of Disquiet (excerpts)

Every time my purpose, under the influence of my dreams, raises itself above the quotidian level of my life, for a moment I feel as if I'm high in the air, like a child on a swing. Each of those times, I've had to descend to the city park, and know my defeat without war banners flying, with no sword that I might have strength enough to pull from its sheath.

[...]

For a long time — I don' know if it's a matter of days or months — I haven't written down a single impression; I'm not thinking, therefore I'm not existing. I have forgotten who I am; I don't know how to write because I don't know how to

be. Because of an oblique sleep, I was someone else. Knowing that I don't remember myself is waking up.
I fainted during a bit of my life. I regain consciousness without any memory of what I was, and the memory of who I was suffers for having been interrupted. There is in me a confused notion of an unknown interval, a futile effort on the part of my memory to want to find that other memory. I don't connect myself with myself. If I've lived, I forget having known it.
People say that ennui is a malady of the inert or that it only attacks those with nothing to do. But this illness of the soul is more subtle: it attacks who have a tendency toward it and forgives even less those who work or pretend to work (which, in this instance, is the same thing) than the truly inert.

[...]

There is nothing worse than the contrast between the natural splendor of interior life, with its natural Indies and its unknown lands, and the sordidness, even if it truly is not sordid, of the dayliness of life. The ennui of the brave is the worse of all.

[...]

Ennui is not the illness of the boredom of not having anything to do, but the more serious illness of feeling that it's not worthwhile doing anything. And being that way, the more there is to do, the more ennui there is to feel.

[...]

How many times do I raise my head from the account book where I am writing and where I work with my head empty of the entire world! I'd be better off inert, without doing anything, without

> having to do anything, because that ennui even if it's real, at least I'd enjoy it. In my present ennui there is no rest or nobility or well-being in which there might be ill-being: there is an enormous extinguishing of all made gestures, not a virtual fatigue of unmade gestures.

Fernando Pessoa himself is the author of *Cancioneiro*, which is a following of the *Canzioniere Petrarch*, and the continuation of a traditional form coming from troubadour poets. This is however still a semi-heteronym, not the real Pessoa, but merely "a mutilation of it," as described by him.

Many topics, celebrations and anxieties manifested in Pessoa's work resonates with philosophical questions of the twentieth century. I would like to propose that his work has very interesting relevance to the splitting of identity and the idea of virtuality and media as an extension of the body explored by Judith Balso and Alain Badiou.

I have compliled a list of these questions below.

Disquiet

Tédio (rough translation: tediousness, boredom) and disquiet (restlessness) are two terms difficult to translate, crucial to the interpretation and understanding of the poems of Pessoa and their heteronyms. Heteronyms elevate the perceptive and acting capacity of the poet, as well as forge connections to important aspects of metaphysics and ethics.

The Landscapes of the Soul and of Reality

In "The Overlapping Landscapes of the Soul and of Reality" (*Cancioneiro*), Pessoa focuses on the moment of perception,

evoking the concept of “landscapes ” to characterize the soul and reality, in order to describe the layering or overlapping process that happens between these two landscapes in the moment of perception.

Landscapes and Heteronyms

“I lack the money to be a dreamer.”

There is a clear difference between the landscapes, lifestyles and rhythms that color each heteronym and emerge from the poems. The heteronyms seem intrinsically shaped, linked and simultaneously longing for the specific space-time moments.

Caeiro, the Keeper, lives in the countryside, even though he has perhaps belonged once to the urban. He is a Keeper of sheep, without the sheep.

Campos often in the most noisy or overwhelming places of activity in the city, describes what it is to be in contact with it. Triumphal Ode reads as if it could have been written from the inside of a factory during working hours.

Reis, though urban, has time and isolation to perfect his poems. He could be imagined in a quiet studio — a doctor’s small medical office — working at his poems.

Soares works in a regular, boring job, from which he escapes into dreams that last entire days, loosing the sense of time and space.

Pessoa, the orthonym, is compelled to engage the same flaneur activity as Pessoa the poet, erring through the streets while thinking and writing in cafes.

These are the 4 to 5 figures of the escape of *tédio* (tediousness), the feeling of increasing inaction and desire to sleep, counterpart to romantic exaltation on the one hand and to the speed and sense of purpose of high modernity on the other.

Romanticism, Modernism

The main contextualizations of Fernando Pessoa's work propose that he occupies a singular place in the transition or dialogue between the cultures of thought of romanticism and modernism, influenced by discussions and discourses engaged by, for instance, John Ruskin. Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms suggest philosophical and artistic battles with concepts of perception, representation and ethics characteristic for the modernity of the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Metaphysics and the Multitude Within

Several analyses of Pessoa's poetry connect them to the philosophical discussion on metaphysics and existentialism, and the role they played in the development of artistic and political movements.

Judith Balso stands out for her unique insight on the potential contribution of Pessoa's work to metaphysical inquiry, evoking the possibility that his instruments — the poems and the heteronyms — act upon the bodies of metaphysics.

Balso focuses on the following aspects of Pessoa's work:
- poem and action vs poem and its separation from politics
- what the poem says without being uttered
- thinking Being as different from thinking Truths
- the multiplicity of being

The discussions on metaphysics are connected to the figure of Caeiro who calls for the need to get rid of a metaphysical inquiry and its insistence on seeing things behind things. Instead, we should consider things in their own existence, as existing. “Nature is parts without whole.”

Campos and Reis, being his most direct ‘students,’ develop two different approaches to his discourse. Campos is the most antagonistic of the two, presenting in his prolific, unconstrained style and thematic, a violent reaction to the dry absence of meaning in Caeiro’s work. They describe the experience of a perceived world which layers connections in several dimensions. His style evokes some characteristics of the romantic epic. Reis’s work is dominated by his fascination with Caeiro, reaction against the compulsiveness of Campos and predilection for form and aesthetics. While claiming it is impossible to avoid subjectivity, Reis says Man is himself a thing, saying he is as much a product of contingency and devoid of meaning as any other thing in the universe.

Balso proposes that this dialogue and confrontation are unique modes of claiming thinking as immanent to the poem, and the poem’s unique capacity to “radically critique metaphysics and continue to bear its ambition.”

It would be interesting to discuss Pessoa in the context of the work by Heidegger on “Being” and “Dwelling”, the discourse on the metropolis, *flaneur* behavior, the rehabilitation of the understanding of multitudes, and the influence of cybernetics in characterizing the spaces where thinking and action happen.

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04

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY: THE TYRANNY OF LOGIC, THE VOICE OF BLOOD, AND INNER DISHARMONY BY MARTIN BYRNE

FYODOR DOESTOIEVSKY: THE TYRANNY OF LOGIC, THE VOICE OF BLOOD, AND INNER DISHARMONY /// **By Martin Byrne** (written for and presented at The Funambulist event *Four Architects Four Writers* on November 22, 2011 in Brooklyn)

If you've ever seen a dog twitch and start in one direction, then leap a step in another only to finally bound away in a third direction, you've seen a glimpse into the Dostoevskian man's mind. He is no wolf, because he is domesticated, yet neither is he a sheep, because he resists his domestication. Perhaps a dog is not even an apt metaphor, but man himself, as he is one of the few creatures to be aware of the strangeness of his condition while also being acutely aware of his mortality and all that it entails.

In Fyodor Dostoyevsky's pivotal novel (essay, expose, pseudo-biography?) *Notes from Underground*, we are allowed a deeper insight into the feral mind that he creates, a loose framework for a number of his later characters. One might contend that this model reflects the insights — perhaps Dos-

toyevsky's own — into the recently birthed modern man . And as a testament of a state of transition within Russia and society at large, the insights he provides are at once conflicted and cogent, unnerving and liberating, filled with depth and marred by shallowness, brilliant and mad:

> To be sure, I won't break through such a wall with my forehead if I really have not got strength enough to do it, but neither will I be reconciled with it simply because I have a stone wall here and have not got strength enough. (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground,* New York: Vintage, 1994.)

Fifteen years prior to this 1864 publication, having participated in the literary circles of nineteenth century Russia, as an enlightened man of the times would do, Dostoyevsky published a handful of novels to mixed review. Continuing his moderate track of the enlightened self-interest, he also joined a group of intellectuals to discuss politics [an illegal act at the time] which would find him imprisoned, waiting to be put to death. One can imagine the horror of a man standing in the Russian cold, hands tied unmercifully with rough cord in front of a brick wall, thinking only that he had done as any enlightened man would and yet there he was. While reflecting on these infuriatingly conflicting circumstances, add the heady wave of relief when a messenger arrives to call off the execution, in lieu of a sentence to hard labor in Siberia. After an episode such as this, it doesn't take much to imagine how someone might walk away with a, lets say, idiosyncratic world-view. Meanwhile, during Dostoyevsky's sojourn in Siberia, the Crystal Palace is built for the London Expo of 1851, and a fellow Russian intellectual, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, publishes *What Is to Be Done?*, a novel praising "the ideals of materialism and the scientific perspective":

> Then — this is all what you say — new economic relations will be established, all ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude, so that every possible question will vanish in the twinkling of an eye, simply because every possible answer to it will be provided. Then the “Palace of Crystal” will be built. [...] In fact, those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated), but on the other hand everything will be extraordinarily rational. (Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done*? Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989)

To paraphrase a critic, the bile-inducing, bitter tone alone makes the novel. It drips. But how to fashion an argument against enlightened self-interest? How does one critique logic? At what point in your counter-argument, do you yourself use logic? What more can you do but tear yourself to pieces and scream ‘Can you not see?’ at the top of your lungs only to fall into a ragged sobbing heap? To Dostoyevsky’s credit, his scream has resonated.

Notes from Underground proceeds in more or less in this fashion, decrying the ultimate (and ultimate it is) short coming of the “rational process” while also falling prey to that rational process in trying to revoke its power. Needless to say, this cycle leaves the protagonist in a compromised position, even to himself. To say he becomes disillusioned does not do it justice. In rather backwards fashion, Dostoyevsky proceeds by illuminating his philosophy first, in a sort of back and forth with no one particularly present (as is his way) to be followed by several protracted anecdotes attesting to that philosophy,

which in the end, forms the content of the protagonist's life-style (if one were to presume that such a life could be styled.)

The predominant method of the opening section contains a philosophical argument presumably with Chernyshevsky and his ilk, the opposition voiced in short bursts by the character himself in order to propel his own argument along. But not only does he spend time taking on their voice, he also agrees with that voice. It is not unusual to come upon phrases such as, "Perhaps, you think, gentlemen, that I am mad? Allow me an observation. I agree…" or "I was lying from spite," to be contradicted by the character in either a burst of feeling, "… Ech!" or a strain of his own breed of rationality:

> Allow me to indulge my fancy. You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even it if goes wrong, it lives. (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground,* New York: Vintage, 1994.)

We can see that he can manage to make a rather lucid reasonable argument about something that is not inherently reasonable. Beyond that, it seems that he often recognizes this inequity, an imbalance, and spends a great deal of his energy fighting himself over it. Eventually he comes to the conclusion that one can only find pure being through the suffering of the day-to-day existence. One can approach pure being not through an emptying of the moment, but from the overflow of the moment, which causes suffering in its fullness. It is the source and substance of a conscious mind. Dostoyevsky can be credited with one of the most powerful gift an author can wield, assuming that he is kindred to this character.

What makes the work brilliant is that the character can manifest desires of the author in fulfillment of the philosophy and of the life lived based on this philosophy. Philosophy is not only the affair of the mind, but manifests in glorious madness through the fits of the body itself. To relinquish one's body to the travails of the tormented mind is to be so fully invested in the thoroughness of the thought as to render it sublime. This sublimity is exactly what the underground man has lamented whence his submission to madness is his personal elevation of himself back into the realm of the numinous. Through the fits and fights and conflict of his resistance of the rational, he has driven himself so far underground as to emerge from the other side on an elevated plane. The supreme and inexorable tragedy of this is that he is completely unaware of his transformation.

What one might find particularly interesting about his position, is that he is creating an intellectual reversal, where he has developed the kind of intensely acute perception of his surroundings and the operations of his consciousness. The nature of the reversal, then, is that he has broken the bonds of abstraction that the modern condition is imposing, and

has re-established a visceral connection to the world that was more common in pre-civilized societies, or wild animals. In this regard, the underground man has become feral. He has escaped the shackles of domesticity to reclaim his voice of blood, but with his intellect as his guide.

This voice of blood, as Nietzsche described it, is vividly seen in the section “A Propos of Wet Snow,” in which he recounts a series of anecdotes about his meager and miserly life. He aims to describe how that meagerness is the source of his consciousness; a consciousness that has been elevated above the average man precisely through he awareness of his mental anguish. He is, admittedly, rather self-aggrandizing. While these anecdotes have moments of interest, such as punching a carriage-driver for no apparent reason, it seems that the most telling piece of evidence of his tumultuous condition can be seen in the figure of Apollon, his servant. “But I will talk about that fellow, about that plague of mine, another time.” Throughout his stories, he frequently refers to his state of destitution willful, mind you and yet he insists on maintaining this completely unnecessary social convention, lest he drop to a lower social rank, one less befitting of such an enlightened man. Bordering on a farce, they often stand opposite of one another in prolonged staring matches, each one testing the temerity of the other’s existence, yet neither fully committing to any possible affront of the other.

> All at once, a propos of nothing, he would walk softly and smoothly into my room, when I was pacing up and down or reading, stand at the door, one hand behind his back and one foot behind the other, and fix upon me a stare more than severe, utterly contemptuous. If I suddenly asked him what he wanted, he would make me no answer, but continue staring at me persis-

> tently for some seconds, then, with a peculiar compression of his lips and a most significant air, deliberately turn round and deliberately go back to his room. Two hours later he would come out again and again present himself before me in the same way. It had happened that in my fury I did not even ask him what he wanted, but simply raised my head sharply and imperiously and began staring back at him. So we stared at one another for two minutes; at last he turned with deliberation and dignity and went back again for two hours. (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground,* New York: Vintage, 1994.)

At least, no affront outside of the norm, as the underground man repeatedly sets about verbally berating Apollon, even considering a slap. The total irrationality of maintaining a servant who has no work to do, yet refusing to set him free, and then becoming enraged that the servant did not directly request his monthly wages when they had been withheld (a mere seven roubles) is so warped and tangled, no other anecdote could approach the complexity of his plight. And then beyond that, he refuses to discuss it:

> But at that time I could not get rid of him, it was as though he were chemically combined with my existence. Besides, nothing would have induced him to consent to leave me. I could not live in furnished lodgings: my lodging was my private solitude, my shell, my cave, in which I concealed myself from all mankind, and Apollon seemed to me, for some reason, an integral part of that flat, and for seven years I could not turn him away. (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground,* New York: Vintage, 1994.)

At the crux of the issue, what seems to move this underground man is the refusal of predetermination. The tyranny of logic is that it leads you down only one path and from there all further actions can be predetermined with some relatively insignificant variation. Imagine walking down a hallway and knowing where all the doors are in that hallway and what is behind those doors. And this is your life. The tragedy of it is that you would walk down that hall and enter those doors, simply because you had no other choice. The underground man, however, chooses to sit down in that hallway. For a time. Then he'll run from room to room, flailing his arms and shouting, beating his breast, and then sitting down again.

Ultimately, what good is it to have seen this insight into the mind of the underground man? It seems to produce a number of things. First, and most importantly, flailing about has created the space for the possibility of alternative operation in the world. Beyond that, it offers an operation that can oppose any type of control. Granted, it is a purely reactionary operation, the resisting for the sake of resistance. But without that possibility, without that as the base on which other resistance might take place, the potential for blocking any resistance whatsoever becomes all the more possible and therefore all the more threatening. If that type of power system is not confronted every so often, its expansion is almost inevitable, as that is the nature of power, to grope and grasp and hunt for more.

The tragic side of that ealization is that in order to restrict the power of a fundamental ideology [because that is really what is binding us, the ideology; the actions of people are merely its arms] is that one must also be at war with oneself. What absolves us of that tragedy, however, is that the pain felt from constantly battling oneself, as the underground man claims, is that it creates a substantive consciousness. In the end, one

is brought to a question that ultimately may resound throughout all other future actions: is it worth the pain of consciousness to proclaim your existence?

It is not easy, nor is it rational, to petition for a willfully tormented world-view. But it is also impossible to proffer the advantages that the alternative provides. What we actually call into question is that which Dostoyevsky has already asked, and that is, which type of torment do you prefer? Would you rather struggle with the prevalence of the multitude of voices within yourself, or would you rather struggle to make sense of an increasingly insoluble condition that demands and requires your participation only in a certain form? What seems to be the outcome of Dostoyevsky's thought is that through either trajectory, we come to a similar conclusion, only if followed through to the fullest. This distinction is one that he makes infrequently, but it is of the utmost importance to his argument. One must derive his sense of the world from a fully-formed and fully enacted engagement with one's own mentality, as multiple as they may be. But to pretend, to falsify, that a singular mentality offers the best directive is to ignore the multiplicities and complexities of the modern condition that can never be truly understood unless one approaches the multipolar nature of consciousness.

"But I'm lying, I don't believe any of what I've just written…"

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05

ANTONIN ARTAUD: SACRED MATTER

ANTONIN ARTAUD: SACRED MATTER ///
(written for and presented at The Funambulist event *Four Architects Four Writers* on November 22, 2011 in Brooklyn)

The life and work of Antonin Artaud is so rich that there seem to be dozens of different approaches to them. Michel Foucault, for example, was greatly influenced by Artaud's experience in psychiatric hospitals, as well as the problematic power exercised by doctors. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as we will see later, based their book *Anti-Oedipus* on his concept of "body without organs." Several architects saw, in his very spatial description of his "Theater of Cruelty," an architectural embodiment of surrealism. His translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* as an anti-grammatical attempt about Lewis Carroll and against him was the topic of a number of academic papers.

The present paper is a materialist reading of Artaud's work. Before going any further, I would like to define here what I mean by "materialism": a philosophy of immanence that envisions the world as a whole entity, liberated from any exteriority — God or another transcendental figure — in which all things are continuously included in processes of interactions within the matter.

In that reading, the notion of sacredness appears obsolete; however, what is interesting in Artaud's materialism is that he reintroduces this very notion of sacredness, but understands it in a novel way for a Western author. In fact, influenced by his trip to Mexico during which he was initiated into the social life and rites of the Tarahumaras, he developed a poetry celebrating what we could inexactly call "forces of the earth." What Artaud recounts about his experience is centered on the consumption of peyote, a cactus whose ingestion produces trance. This experience greatly influenced him in this elaboration of what I called sacred matter.

Materialist Rituals

What is this sacred matter in Artaud's work? In *Heliogabalus, or the Crowned Anarchist*, published in 1934, Artaud mixes the traditional mediums of documentary and fiction to tell the story of this Roman Emperor who acceded to power when he was only fourteen years old and was assassinated four years later. In this narrative, Artaud describes life in the city of Emesa in Syria where Heliogabalus grew up, its market, its temple and more importantly its religious rituals:

> All around the temple, in multitudes issuing from huge black-sewer-mouths, stream forth the servants of the rites, as if born of the earth's own sweat. For in the temple of Emesa, this service entrance is below the ground, and nothing must disturb the empty space bordering the temple beyond the outermost wall. A river of men, animals, objects, supplies, victuals, originating in various corners of the commercial town, converges towards the underground passages of the temple, creating around its supply rooms something of the tracery of an immense

> spider's web.
>
> This mysterious intersection of men, of live or flayed beasts; of metals humped by a species of little Cyclops that only once a year sees daylight; of foodstuffs, of things fabricated –creates at certain hours of the day a paroxysm, a cluster of complaints and of noises, but it never actually stops.
>
> Below ground, butchers, bearers, carters, distributors –who emerge from the temple's depths and rummage around the town all day long so as to provide the greedy god with his four daily feeds- crowd past the sacrificial priests drunk with blood, incense and molten gold; passing the smelters, the timekeeper heralds, and the blacksmiths pinned inside their narrow cells the year round who leave them only on the prophetic day of the Pythian Games, also called Helia Pythia. (Antonin Artaud, *Heliogabalus, or the Crowned Anarchist,* New York: Solar Books, 2006)

Can you feel how Artaud's description is linked to the earth and not to the sky? He emphasizes the bodies — animal and human — the built environment — mostly underground — and the substances offered to a God who cannot be understood in a transcendental way. In fact, a bit further in the text, he explains that the word god here has to be understood as forces, or later solid manifestations of an energy whose heavier aspect is the Sun.

I go back to the previous question: what is sacred in his work? In fact, what is sacred for Antonin Artaud is the matter

produced by the body — blood, shit, sperm, urine, sweat, saliva — and expelled from it to nourish the rest of the material world. In *Heliogabalus*, he describes what happens to the blood of human sacrifices:

> beneath the temple of Emesa there is a system of special sewers wherein the human blood rejoins the plasma of certain animals.
>
> Through these sewers, coiling into broiling corkscrews whose circles diminish the further they descend to the depths of the earth, the blood of those sacrificed according to the needful rites will find its way back to the geological seams, the congealed cracks of chaos. This pure blood, thinned and refined by the rituals, and rendered acceptable to the god of the underworld, splashes the groaning deities of Erebus, whose breath finally purifies it. (Antonin Artaud, *Heliogabalus, or the Crowned Anarchist,* New York: Solar Books, 2006)

Artaud is far from idealizing this sacred matter and his books always carry their smells and challenge our common aversion to them. In *Heliogabalus* he evokes the mingled emanation of blood, sperm, sweat and menses, combined with that intimate stench of putrefying flesh and unclean sex rising from the human sacrifices as part of a violent spirituality. The bodies themselves become sacred after life ceases to animate them and they go back to the earth. Artaud insists on the ritualistic aspect of Heliogabalus's death: stabbed after having desperately plunged in a pit of excrement, his dead body is then thrown by the populace into Rome's sewers. The inversion of what is normally understood as sacred and what Artaud describesn touches its paroxysm.

The Body as a Machine and its Production

I evoked Antonin Artaud's influence on Deleuze and Guattari in the elaboration of their book *Anti-Oedipus*. This book is a counter-manifesto against the dogmatic model of Freudian psychoanalysis which constraints neuroses and deliriums to the triangle of "daddy-mommy-me." The unconscious — and by extension the body — is not a theater, it is factory they claim. A factory implies a production and that is why this text interests us regarding Artaud's sacred matter. What Deleuze and Guattari called "desiring machine" as a body continuously producing fluxes of matter is nothing else than the body Artaud celebrates in his writing. The very first paragraph of the *Anti-Oedipus* expresses this influence:

> It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. […] Everywhere it is machines –real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it. (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983)

If we continue with this assumption that the body is a machine, or rather an assemblage of machines, a factory, we can understand that Artaud is particularly interested in what he calls an overheated factory. He likes to talk about a perpetually explosive body from which matter erupts like lava.

In *The Theater and its Double*, Artaud draws a parallel between the diseased body, more specifically the plague-stricken body and what should ideally be the body of the actor in theater. Both of those bodies are for him a strong force that ends up in a spasm thus expelling violently the power from the body.

In his 1947 radio broadcast "To Have Done with the Judgment of God," he asserts that he has been sick all his life and he asks only that it continues. He does not deny the social status of the sick person, but claims it as the character who is able to extract the power of the body's production as he wrote in another text: "To emit the cry I empty myself. Not of air but of the very power of sound."

The power of sound is liberated the same way that a body shits, sweats, spits, or ejaculates. This leads us to understand the ambiguous sentence where Artaud explains that his entire work is nothing else than "his waste." From what we now know, such claim is clearly his confession of having reached his goal.

Conclusion: Towards the Constitution of a Revolutionary Body

In 1973, Guattari wrote a text whose title does not leave much doubt about Antonin Artaud's influence: "To Have Done with the Massacre of the Body." Guattari describes simultaneously how the body and its production of desire is continuously being hijacked and dispossessed by capitalism as well as the needs for a revolutionary body to be (re) invented. In the following excerpt, he calls on us to reclaim the property and freedom of use of our own body-machines of production:

> We can no longer sit idly by as others steal our mouths, our anuses, our genitals, our nerves, our guts, our arteries, in order to fashion parts and works in an ignoble mechanism of production which links capital, exploitation, and the family.
> We can no longer allow others to turn our mucous membranes, our skin, all our sensitive areas into occupied territory — territory controlled and regimented by other, to which we are forbidden access. (Félix Guattari, “To Have Done with the Massacre of the Body,” in *Chaosophy*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2009)

Capitalism exploits the production for another end than itself. By attributing a finality to the body that ignores the essence of its materiality, including the body itself, it recreates a transcendence similar to the one developed by monotheist religions. The constitution of a revolutionary body implies materialist practice of its capacities. Artaud shows us the way by inviting us to be the snake that music acts upon, as he feels and reacts to the vibrations of the earth through which sound is transmitted. As an architect, I would like to believe that the modification of the matter that we order can be thought in such a way that it acts as music. If this belief is founded, Antonin Artaud is probably the right person to follow.

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06

VAN GOGH, THE MAN SUICIDED BY SOCIETY BY ANTONIN ARTAUD

In 1947, one year after he left the psychiatric institutions where he spent nine years, Antonin Artaud writes a book in the form of an apologia of Vincent Van Gogh. According to Artaud, Van Gogh has been "suicided by society," like other visionaries who have been categorized as "mad." Fifteen years before Michel Foucault, Artaud affirms that the very-idea of madness has been created by psychiatric medicine and not the other way around. He accuses doctors and Van Gogh's brother Theo of not only ignoring, but actively suppressing the painter's artistic expression.

Artaud's invention of the adjective "suicided" illustrates the process of psychiatry. By having elaborated this medical method, society did not want simply to kill those that it could not assimilate, like it would do for prisoners, but it wanted them to acknowledge their vision as a pathology and therefore make them commit a social suicide.

Artaud's literary style is as powerful as it is untranslatable. An illustrative example is Artaud's repetition of the phrase "coup de pinceau" to describe Van Gogh's action. Artaud plays on the potential double meaning of the phrase. "Coup de pinceau" can simply refer to the painter's style, but the notion

of “coup” also involves the violence of a hit. What Artaud suggests is that each paint brush ‘strike’ by Van Gogh crystalizes the reciprocical violence between the painter and society.

Despite the impossibility to reproduce the full effect of Artaud’s own ‘ink strike,’ I attempted to translate a few excerpts here:

> Nobody ever wrote or painted, sculpted, modeled, built, invented, for any other reason than in order to exit from hell.
>
> Each paint brush touch/strike [coup de pinceau] on the canvas is worst than an event.
>
> As this is not for this world
> it has never been for this earth that we have all always worked,
> fought,
> screamed with horror, hunger, misery, hatred, scandal or aversion,
> that we have been poisoned,
> although we have been subjugated by it,
> and that we have eventually suicided ourselves,
> since aren’t we all like the poor Van Gogh himself, suicided by society!
>
> I see, while writing these lines, the painter’s blood red face coming to me, in a wall of gutted sunflowers,
> in a formidable blaze of opaque hyacinth embers and lapis-lazuli pasture.
> All that, in the middle of a bombing like an atoms meteoric that would reveal itself grain by grain,
> proof that Van Gogh thought of his canvas as a

painter, yes, and only as a painter,
but who would be,
through this very fact,
a formidable musician.

“What is it to draw? How do we manage to draw? Drawing is the action to create a path through an invisible iron wall that seems to be situated between what we feel and what we can. How should we go through this wall? It is useless to hit strongly, we have to sap this wall and go through it with a file, slowly and, in my opinion, with great patience.” (Letter by Van Gogh – September 8th 1888)

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07

“ MY DESIRE IS SOMEONE ELSE’S FICTION “

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 2: FOUCAULT]

In 48th issue (Spring 2012) of French journal *Multitudes* dedicated to the notion of “political counter-fiction”, Belgian sociologist Frédéric Claisse publishes an article entitled “Contr(ôl)efiction: de l’Empire à l’Interzone” (Control/Counter Fiction: From the Empire to the Interzone), which I cite below. As the title suggests, this article focuses on William Burroughs. His work is analyzed in Foucauldian optic of “society of control.” The first paragraph of the article introduces the stakes: the systematic suggestion of desire as an apparatus of control:

> « How long does it take a man to learn that he does not, cannot want what he ‘wants’ » (William S. Burroughs, *The Western Lands*). We have to understand the importance of the suspicion that Burroughs includes in these quotation marks: I am not the author of my desire; this desire is someone else’s fiction. The autonomy that I have been graciously granted, through the means of mass communication systems among others, is nothing else than a “trick” used by a control authority to make me think that my desires are actually mine when, really, they belong to it. Words carried by this authority are words of or-

> ders whose action program is simple: contagion and dependency. The experience of addiction granted the author of *Naked Lunch* a particular sensitivity to these processes that make us accomplices to our own slavery. Drugs gave him the general scheme of human relationships in the information era. Language itself is a virus. We are all intoxicated with injunctions that colonize our conscience and use us as a vehicle to go from one body to another.[1]

"[My] desire is someone else's fiction." Here, Claisse expresses what Guattari calls the capture of desire by capitalism. For Guattari and Deleuze, who were so attached to the notion of production of desire, the possibility that desire can be introduced from the outside is an infamy. "Never get caught in the dream of someone else," says Deleuze in his conversation with Claire Parnet. In this case, the way one gets caught in someone's dream is slightly different than the suggestion of desire described by Burroughs in *Western Lands*; nevertheless, the subjugation of one's body to a desire coming from the outside that one experiences in these two situations is comparable.

As Claisse notes, Burroughs thewriter and Foucault the historian/philosopher do not have an obvious connection; however, Burroughs' narratives often describe mechanisms of power with a precision similar to Foucault:

> At first sight, Burroughs does not seem to have conceived his writing as the place for a critique of advanced capitalism, or for a systematic investigation of the evolution of government techniques. In a certain way however, that is precisely

1 All quotes are my translation

> what he is doing. Burroughs' work is built on a revelation of the tight link between drug, commodity and control. *The Naked Lunch* preface does not leave any doubt about it:
> "Junk is the ideal product…the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy… The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk."

I once used this quote from *Naked Lunch* preface to introduce how Burroughs biomorphizes commodity into a sort of self-willing entity that governs our bodies. The advantage that Burroughs has on Foucault lies in the medium he is using: literature. This way — he was also influenced by the example of the drug — allows him to present the externality of someone else's desire or a commodity as a sort of internal virus or a leech. In this regard, Claisse points out that we should take Burroughs seriously when he says that the word is a virus:

> Here again, we need to invoke Burroughs as the hold of control takes, for him, an exacerbated form through the biological representation that he was making of his operatory mode. For the writer, there is indeed no doubt that the flow of signs that makes the new information and communication technology proliferate aims literally at the incorporation of injunctions of behavior routines. His proposition to consider the word as a "virus" is in no way a metaphor. Control is inseparable from language considered as "a separate organism attached to our nervous system."

One has the right to wonder how a writer can still write when he is convinced that words are inseparable from mechanisms of control. Burroughs has thus invented literary means to de-activate, or rather to subvert control that lies in words. The *cut-up* is one of these means of subversion, as we are re-minded in the article:

> *Cut-up* consists precisely in the intervention on the lines of association of words syntax by cut-ting and re-composing portions of text according to a logic comparable to objective randomness: scissors and glue act as revelators of meaning, unveiling the deep nature of selected texts, sug-gesting new relationships that could be exploited for all sorts of aims, literary, creative, political or even divinatory.

Just like Foucault, Burroughs does not think that we can think and act outside of the society of control. However, he dreams — not in the utopian meaning but almost in a literal meaning — of a world that would constantly challenge the intrinsic logics of the mechanisms of control. He describes this world in *Naked Lunch* and he names it: *The Interzone*.

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08

SHORT APPROACH TO THE NOTION OF COMMODITY FOR WILLIAM BURROUGHS AND KARL MARX

In the first pages of *Naked Lunch*, William Burroughs draws a powerful description of the logic involved in the drug trade. He uses junk as a "generic term for opium and/or derivatives including all synthetics from demerol to palfium" and defines it as "the ultimate merchandise." Indeed, the scheme he describes (see below) seems to be an exacerbated illustration of the logic involved in capitalism and the trade of commodities in general. The fact that he uses this term, junk, which also means any kind of object with no particular specificity, expresses his intention to blur the borders between these extreme products and more banal ones.

> I have seen the exact manner in which the junk virus operates through fifteen years of addiction. The pyramid of junk, one level eating the level below (it is no accident that junk higher-ups are always fat and the addict in the street is always thin) right up to the top or tops since there are many junk pyramids feeding on peoples of the world and all built on basic principles of monopoly:
>
> 1 Never give anything for nothing

> 2 Never give more than you have to give (always catch the buyer hungry and always make him wait)
> 3 Always take everything back if you possibly can.
>
> The Pusher always get it all back. The addict needs more and more junk to maintain a human form…buy off the Monkey.
> […]
> Junk is the ideal product…the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy… The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk. (William Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove, 2004.)

In this text, Burroughs anthropomorphizes — or, at least, 'biomorphizes' — the commodity in affirming that the merchant sells the consumer to his product. This method is also splendidly used by Karl Marx in his exhaustive and referential descriptions of the commodity in *Das Kapital*. In the fourth part of the first chapter of the first volume, where he exposes the fetishism triggered by the commodity, he pictures a table dancing ("als wenn er aus freien Stucken zu tanzen beganne") when it transfers from the status of useful object to the one of commodity:

> At first glance, a commodity seems to be something obvious and trivial. But its analysis brings out that it is quite intricate, abounding in metaphysical hairsplit- and theological niceties. So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysteri-

> ous about the commodity, whether we consider it from the point of view that it satisfies human needs, or that it first obtains these properties as product of human labor. The activity by which man changes the forms of the materials of nature in a manner useful to him is entirely accessible to the senses. The form of the wood, for instance, is altered when a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table is still a piece of wood, an ordinary thing which can be seen and touched. But, as soon as the table steps forth as a commodity, it changes into something that has extra sensory features attached to its existence. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities it turns itself on its head, out if its wooden brain come grotesque ideas, far spleenier than if it suddenly were to begin dancing. (Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, New York: Penguin Classics, 1992.)

Later in the same chapter, Marx even makes the commodities speak to make this point clearer: "Could commodities themselves speak, they would say" But the introduction of merchandise as its own entity — or rather as a multitude of individual entities — is also consistent with the understanding of capitalism as a complex system, of which humans are only a part. Materialist philosophy is a non-anthropocentric vision where the world exists independently from the interpretations made from it. As it is in *Naked Lunch*, this vision is both terrifying and paradoxically useful for us to know what part we are taking within it.

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09

WILLIAM BURROUGHS'S INTERZONE: THE SPACE OF THE SUSPENDED LAW CONTAINED IN THE THICKNESS OF THE LINE

This chapter is the synthesis of the conversation I recorded with Dr. Lucy Finchett-Maddock for *Archipelago* (The Funambulist's podcast) at the University of Sussex (Brighton) on October 30, 2013.

In the epistolary conversation that Lucy and I had in the first part of 2013 (see *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 04: Legal Theory*), we spoke about the collusion in Indian cities of eminent domains and what we called "immanent domains." Eminent domains reclaim an important amount of land to accommodate the conditions of life of the new Indian bourgeoisie, while *immanent* domain consists of numerous informal settlements that claim land for the bare urban survival of the lowest social classes of the country. While the eminent domain constitutes a strategical modification of the legal system in a spirit that we could define as a reminiscence of the colonial spirit, the immanent domain unfolds itself through the practice of the city and within an ambiguous interpretation of property within the legal framework. This immanent domain is what brought us back to Burroughs, and through him, the description of the Interzone in *Naked Lunch* (1959)

and *Interzone* (1989). The Interzone, as we discussed with Lucy, is both an international zone and a zone in which the law has been suspended. It was inspired by Burroughs's life as a fugitive in Tangiers, as well as his consumption of heroin that has been one of the objects of his literary work. Burroughs's descriptions of the Interzone reach a visual richness that even David Cronenberg was not fully able to imatch in his cinematographic adaptation of *Naked Lunch* in 1991:

> The physical changes were slow at first, then jumped forward in black klunks, falling through his slack tissue, washing away the human lines [...] In his place of total darkness mouth and eyes are one organ that leaps forward to snap with transparent teeth...but no organ is constant as regards either function or position...sex organs sprout anywhere...rectums open, defecate and close...the entire organism changes color and consistency in split-second adjustments. [...]
> The room seems to shake and vibrate with motion. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polyglot Near East, Indian races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized pass through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants grow out of genitals, vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of body) across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market. (William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, 1959.)

The comparison between Bangalore's informal settlements and Burroughs's Interzone in our conversation should in no way be perceived as a romanticization of the urban slums through a reading 'from the outside.' Rather, this comparison underscores what they both tell us about the law. The ambiguity of their legal framework corresponds to what we find in that which I often call "the thickness of the line," that is the geometrical paradox that makes the 'perfect' diagrammatic lines of the law acquire a thickness when they are incarnated through architecture. This space contained in the thickness of the line should not be perceived morally as it involves the two faces of the same coin: the suspension of the law, but also the loss of status of subject of rights for each body that inhabits it. Considering these two aspects simultaneously is a tool to avoid the traditional romanticization of these spaces. In some sense, this corresponds to the description of heroin in Burroughs's writings, which simultaneously offers a rich spectrum of additional perceptions while triggering an addiction that he expresses in the inversion of the anthropocentric consideration of the drug to the drugocentric consideration of the human, "the junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product," as we saw in the previous chapter comparing Burroughs and Karl Marx.

This addiction, understood as the subjectivation to a strong force from the outside, can be understood as the imprisoning of one body within the thickness of the line, a sort of immurement that prevents this body from re-acquiring his/her status as a subject of rights. The existence of interzones like Camp Delta in Guantanamo Bay, for instance, is precisely supplying spaces for such an imprisonment in the thickness of the line. The notion of rights is understood as something conventionally (i.e. by convention) given to a body as a member of a given society. It requires for this body to be clearly

visible within the diagrams established by the law, and this also includes the possibility for this body to accomplish illegal actions. After all, the law is not an element that attributes duty and freedoms, but rather, an apparatus that wants to be able to categorize each behavior as either "legal" or "illegal." Being "within the thickness of the line" precisely means not to be able to be visible within the diagrams drawn by the law since the very notion of thickness cannot be understood diagrammatically. What results from this 'invisibility' is this loss of status of subject of rights that is experienced by Burroughs's characters in the interzone, the inhabitants of the Bangalore's slums, Julien Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy, the Eritrean refugees trapped in the thickness of the Israel-Egypt border (see *he Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 04: Legal Theory)* and the prisoners of Camp Delta. The degree of choice for being in the thickness of line is different for each of these bodies; nevertheless, they all question the law in the way it unfolds upon the bodies and the way it materializes through architectural apparatuses.

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10

CORIOLANUS AND THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 11: CINEMA]

More than a historical figure, Caius Marcius Coriolanus is a legendary one. He was a Roman general in the fifth century B.C., and what belongs to history and what belongs to the myth about him remains unclear. This chapter will address his (hi)story without the doubts and precautions that a historian would need to systematically indicate when recounting the same story.

Coriolanus's story is brought to us by the 1608 play written by William Shakespeare. General Caius Marcius earns his name of Coriolanus by his glorious victory against the Volscian city of Corioli. Strengthened by this success, he is encouraged to run for Consul of Rome. Despite apparent support from both the Senate and the Plebe, he has to face riots from the latter. He finally publicly expresses his despise of democratic processes and exiles himself when he is condemned as a traitor. Later, he joins his former Volscian enemies and marches towards Rome. He remains insensitive to every request of his formers friends including his own wife, but finally accepts a peace treatise after being won over by his manipulative mother. Peace is signed between the Romans and the Volscians but Coriolanus is assassinated by the latter for his treason.

In 2011, actor and director Ralph Fiennes turned Shake-

speare's dialogues into a contemporary version of Coriolanus. The Elizabethan language, as well as the classical Roman names contrasts with the images of our world that recall the war in the Balkans and numerous internal political intrigues and manipulations in Western representative democracies. Both the play and the film — Ralph Fiennes chose himself to play Coriolanus — are sympathetic to the Roman general who remains faithful to his principles and his honor until he cedes to his mother and accepts death for it. The plebe is pictured as a versatile horde that can be easily manipulated by politicians who are after their own ambition. When we look at it closely however, Coriolanus is a perfect embodiment of fascism — of course, it is an anachronism to talk about fascism both for classical Rome and seventeenth century England — where the military realm and the political one fuse into a new form of sovereignty.

Fienne's film opens with news images — he uses the power of the televisual medium in modern democracies in an evocative way — of the state of emergency declared by the Roman Senate when the city is facing riots against the public requisition of grain storage and the scarcity resulting from it. The state of emergency or state of exception is concomitant to the state of war, when military and politics become a single mode of sovereignty. Once the state of exception is triggered, there is a systematic effort from it, to sustain itself in time. This is even more true in our era — that is why Fienne's movie is so timely — as the state of war is not as clearly delimited as it used to be in the past when the belligerents were defined by their belonging to a given nation or city. Nowadays, the so-called "war on terror" has blurred the limits in time of the state of war, and therefore of the state of exception. War can be continuous when it is waged against diffuse international groups of people whose sporadic killings are made for symbolic spectacle — a pleonasm — of entrenched nations and

do not have actual military effectiveness, since these groups grow as the (often hazardous) strikes against them intensify. Meanwhile, the continuous tension that sustains the state of exception is organized through media outlets that propose a unique imaginary built on the fear of loosing the *status quo*.

Coriolanus does not constitute the paradigm of the contemporary sovereign. His personality and his military principles are distant from the ones of our current 'leaders;' this is also true for his refusal to use the spectacular mediums — a scene of the film shows him addressing the people on a television set — to embrace his ambition. However, the problem is not one of the people but rather of the systems in which they operate. Coriolanus may not be a paradigm of the Western democrat politician, but he is a paradigm of the form of sovereignty to which we are subjected: a perpetual state of emergency where military actions — surveillance of populations, NSA — and politics work together to sustain the exception in time.

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11

DESTRUCTIVE BEAUTY: THE STENDHAL/MIZOGUCHI SYNDROME AS SEEN BY YUKIO MISHIMA

Sometimes, beauty reaches a level of intensity that can lead to pure pathology. The Jerusalem syndrome, for example, is experienced every year by pilgrims visiting the holy city. Overwhelmed by their emotions when experiencing the old city, their pathology is characterized by hallucinations, paranoia, continuous declamation of holy texts, as well as other symptoms. It is interesting to see that there is an inverse syndrome, experienced by a few Japanese people visiting Paris when they discover the extent of the discrepancy between what they were imagining the city to be, and what it really is. The Stendhal Syndrome, on the other hand, comes from the pathology experienced by the French author Henri Beyle also known as Stendhal when he was visiting Florence for the first time in 1817. Overwhelmed by the intensity of the works of art he was able to see almost simultaneously, he is said to have almost fainted and had hallucinations. This pathology, since then clinically recognized, kept his name.

The novel *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, written by Yukio Mishima in 1956 is a classic of 20th century Japanese literature. Its plot is inspired by events that occurred six years earlier, when the 500-year old Golden Pavilion in Kyoto had been burned down by a young Buddhist monk. Mishima depicts a

similar young monk, Mizoguchi, who develops a fascination for the Golden Pavilion as he is following his religious training. Throughout the book, Mizoguchi elaborates an interpretation of beauty that considers it as the main existential problem of one's life:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the first real problem I face in my life was that of beauty. At the thought that beauty should already have come into this world unknown to me, I could not help feeling a certain uneasiness and irritation. If beauty really did exist there, it meant that my own existence was a thing estranged from beauty. (Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, New York: Vintage, 1994.)

One can understand how this axiom about beauty can lead to a disturbing mix of fascination and paranoia. All through the novel, Mizoguchi remains obsessed by the beauty of the Golden Pavilion, to the point that the image of the building substitutes itself for the one of the two women with whom he tries to loose his virginity. He soon understands that he feels compelled to burn down the Golden Pavilion; not as a form of vengeance, but, rather, as a sort of work of art that would punctuate the beauty of the temple, express retroactively its fragility and create an acute feeling of the lost object. Mizoguchi thinks that there is no beauty in killing a man as killing a man always consists in accelerating his inevitable death; on the contrary, destroying a building that is supposed to remain forever constitutes a much stronger act and allows to pass from "a world that includes the Golden Pavilion" to "a world that does not include the Golden Pavilion."

I once wrote a text about how the iconoclast is not someone who does not understand art but, rather, understands it so

well that (s)he feels compelled to destroy it. Mizoguchi is one of those; the intensity of beauty that the Golden Pavilion triggers in him is so strong that he must burn it down. Before doing so at the end of the novel, he understands the secret of the Golden Pavilion's beauty in a passage that can be seen as an explanation of how beauty 'occurs,' and simultaneously how it is structured of "nothingness:"

> […] if one examined the beauty of the [pavilion's] details, one found that this beauty certainly did not end with any detail, was not completed with any detail, because, whichever detail one looked at, it held within it a hint of the beauty of the next detail. The beauty of each detail in itself was filled with uneasiness. This was because, while it dreamt of completion, it never attained it, but was enticed on to the next beauty, an unknown beauty. Each hint of beauty was connected to another hint of beauty, and so all those hints of beauty which did not exist became, so to speak, the theme of the Golden Pavilion. Such hints were signs of nothingness. Nothingness was the structure of this beauty. Thus, the incompletion of the details of the pavilion's beauty naturally hinted at nothingness, and this delicate structure, made of the thinnest lumber, shuddered in anticipation of nothingness, like a pendant trembling in the wind. (Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, New York: Vintage, 1994.)

The Stendhal syndrome, just as what we could call the Mizoguchi syndrome, reveals that such psychological syndromes are only a pathology because of the way they separate their "victims" from their world. However, just like madness, these pathologies have probably more to do with an acute percep-

tion of the world's hidden structures than with an actual loss of reason. The violence of such experience does not come from the syndrome *per se* but, rather, from the collusion of two 'worlds,' the world of the rational norm and the world of the sensitiveness. This chapter is not to promote one over the other, but rather to argue for a dialogue between the two, reason and delirium, as the construction of a relation to the world within a creative production.

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Originally published on August 18, 2013

12

THE FAUSTIAN PACT OF THE ARTIST: *HELL SCREEN* BY RYUNOSUKU AKUTAGAWA

Literature and cinema regularly question the metaphorical — sometimes literal — pact with dark forces that one makes to transcend oneself. The paradigm of the pact in classic German mythology is *Faust*, famously adapted by Goethe in 1808. Faust is a successful scholar accepting a pact with the devil giving him the access to unlimited knowledge in exchange for his soul. This scheme will be later re-interpreted by Honoré de Balzac in 1831 with *Peau de Chagrin* (The Magic Skin), which grants its owner a certain number of wishes but deteriorates after each one of them, at the same time as the health of the owner. More recently, the cinema of Darren Aronofsky seems to formulate a good affiliation to the Faustian Pact with films like *Pi*, *The Wrestler* or *Black Swan*. The latter introduces — through questionable visual effects — a dancer achieving the climax of her art to the detriment of her mental health. One can find a very similar narrative in the life of pianist David Helfgott dramatized in Scott Hieks' film *Shine* (1996).

There are a multitude of other examples, but I would like to go beyond Western culture to introduce *Hell Screen* (*Jigokuhen*), a short story written by Ryunosuke Akutagawa in 1918, a few years after he wrote *Rashomon*, adapted by Akira Kurosawa

in 1950. In *Hell Screen*, Akutagawa, in his own unique subjective narrative mode, tells a story, originally from the 12th century, in which an old cantankerous renowned painterat the court of Emperor Horikawa (late 11st century), Yoshihide is asked by the latter to paint a screen representing hell. , Yoshihide, whose ambition seems to be only equal to his cruelty, paints what he sees in his nightmares and complements these visions thanks to models forced against themselves to confront situations he creates. He chains one of disciples for many hours and makes a bird attack another in order to paint their terrified faces. Such Sadian situations are representative of a man who exercises full power over another to a point that the former considers the later as a mere body, in that case for artistic purposes. After a sum of similar event, one only thing is missing to Yoshihide to finish his painting. He thus asks the Emperor to burn a float for him with a woman inside to constitute the main element of this painting.

What Yoshihide does not know is that the woman chosen by the Emperor to test him is the painter's own daughter. When he realizes it, he is however so fascinated that he eventually does nothing against it and watches his daughter burning in front of him before finishing his painting and thus sacrifying his own family to his art. Once the screen is done, he hangs himself.

One can see that we are very far from the Torcello bridge legend in which a woman succeeds to trick the devil out of a pact she made with him. There is no escape from the contract signed by the artist with the dark forces of cruelty he entangled himself to. Where does our dedication to art stop? This question is even more problematic in this case as the artist is not the only one who suffers from his "pact".

In his conversations with Claire Parnet, Gilles Deleuze of-

fers his intuition according to which great artists are reporting something they saw that was “too great for them” and thus always renounce to a part of their health (mental one like for Sade, Artaud, Van Gogh, Nietzsche etc. or physical one like for Spinoza or Deleuze himself). Knowing that, a more ‘reasonable’ way to approach this problem might consist in a negotiation with these destructive forces rather than the absolutism of a pact. Maybe such thinking is however what condemns us to mediocrity!

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Originally published on January 22, 2013

13

DESEXUALIZING SADE: RELATIONS OF ABSOLUTE POWER ON THE BODIES FROM SODOM TO ABU GHRAIB

For the purpose of this chapter, I would like to distance Sade from sexuality. Of course, I do not mean that we should ignore the descriptions of sexual acts that populate his writings: there would not be much left! But, we should not follow the example of many commentators who described the taste that Sade had for the scandal and transgression against authority, in particular, religious — taste for which he spent 25 years in prison. In other words, I will not look at sexuality within its rules and norms, but rather, consider sexuality as a set of relationships between bodies.

Because of the extremely radicali nature of the sexual acts that Sade describes in his attempt to shock his readers, we tend to consider every sexual relation on the same level. They are, however, not the same in the *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) where they constitute an apprenticeship accepted by the student Eugénie as in *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (1787), where the main character is consistently abused, exploited and raped. Desexualizing Sade consists in keeping to ourselves our epidermic reactions to the examples where a body exercises an absolute power over another, which is often the case in Sade's narratives. One example is *The 120*

Days of Sodom (1785), adapted by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975).

The 120 Days of Sodom dramatized the kidnapping of forty two youngsters by four aristocrats — four fascists in Pasolini's version — in a German castle where the former are subjected to the most horrifying forms of sexual and physical torture by the latter. Three decades after the Holocaust, Pasolini's film adds a particularly unbearable historical dimension to the plot. The Italian filmmaker illustrates that we need Sade to think of the extreme power applied to a given body. In the 1950s, many intellectuals debated whether Sade's work had influenced in a way or another the Nazi deployment of systematic violence. In "Must we burn Sade?" (1951) Simone de Beauvoir answers "no" to the question/title of her essay. Questioning the responsibility of art for the construction of atrocious imaginaries is important. However, reflecting on the questions posed by the work itself seems more important.

The visual similitude between Pasolini's fictitious depiction of Salò and the photographs of the prison of Abu Ghraib in 2003-2004 are highly disturbing. In both cases, we can see naked bodies used as assemblage materials, prisoners held on leashes, oppressors' bodies touching and abusing oppressed ones: every action is ritualized in a religious manner where transcendence corresponds exactly to the absolute power of a body over another. Tortured prisoners are being stripped — I used this verb purposefully — of any form of rights on their bodies' fully appropriated by the torturers. One can doubt whether any American soldier or CIA employee who committed rape, torture and assassination on Iraqi prisoners read Sade or watched Pasolini's film. Yet, the unbearable fictitious work of these two authors help us to articulate our visceral anger when seeing real images. We need to be as close to fathom what the absolute power exercised on a

body constitutes — actually knowing it is either impossible or would make us loose any form of sanity. This difficult collective understanding is necessary to prevent the actualization of torture.

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14

THE PRECISE DESIGN OF TORTURE IN KAFKA'S PENAL COLONY

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 7: CRUEL DESIGNS]

The machine invented by Franz Kafka in his short story "In the Penal Colony" (1919) is probably the most famous torturing apparatus of the history of literature. Even Sade (see previous chapter) does not seem to have created such an elaborated piece of equipment in his meticulous descriptions of cruel acts.

The plot introduces a character visiting a penal colony in which he is invited to attend an execution of a soldier who disobeyed the orders he received. The entire first half of the story involves the executioner officer presenting the dreadful apparatus to the visitor with great enthusiasm, as this machine had been invented by his former master. The device is divided into three parts, the bed below, the inscriber above and, in the middle, the harrow. The latter is composed of multiple needles that draw a pattern on the back of the convict's body. The pattern is specific to the sentence attributed to the condemned person and, for this reason, it needs to be first set up in the inscriber. Once the machine is operating, the pattern is inscribed in the body of the convict for hours. The latter does not know his sentence and has therefore to learn it in his very flesh. When the visitor disapproves of this

execution, the officer frees the prisoner and takes his place on the machine, then dies in horrifying pain when the latter dysfunctions.

Several things are fascinating in this text. One of them consists in the detailed description of the execution apparatus itself. I feel compelled to transcript most of this description here:

> The needles are arranged as in a harrow, and the whole thing is driven like a harrow, although it stays in one place and is, in principle, much more artistic. [...] So, here is the Bed, as I said. The whole thing is completely covered with a layer of cotton wool, the purpose of which you'll find out in a moment. The condemned man is laid out on his stomach on this cotton wool—naked, of course. There are straps for the hands here, for the feet here, and for the throat here, to tie him in securely. At the head of the Bed here, where the man, as I have mentioned, first lies face down, is this small protruding lump of felt, which can easily be adjusted so that it presses right into the man's mouth. Its purpose is to prevent him screaming and biting his tongue to pieces. Of course, the man has to let the felt in his mouth—otherwise the straps around his throat will break his neck.
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> [...]
>
> Both the Bed and the Inscriber have their own electric batteries. The Bed needs them for itself, and the Inscriber for the Harrow. As soon as the man is strapped in securely, the Bed is set in motion. It quivers with tiny, very rapid oscillations from side to side and up and down si-

multaneously. You will have seen similar devices in mental hospitals. Only with our Bed all movements are precisely calibrated, for they must be meticulously coordinated with the movements of the Harrow. But it's the Harrow which has the job of actually carrying out the sentence."

[...]

The law which a condemned man has violated is inscribed on his body with the Harrow. This Condemned Man, for example," and the Officer pointed to the man, "will have inscribed on his body, 'Honour your superiors!'

[...]

As you see, the shape of the Harrow corresponds to the shape of a man. This is the harrow for the upper body, and here are the harrows for the legs. This small cutter is the only one designated for the head.

[...]

When the man is lying on the Bed and it starts quivering, the Harrow sinks onto the body. It positions itself automatically in such a way that it touches the body only lightly with the needle tips. Once the machine is set in position, this steel cable tightens up immediately into a rod. And now the performance begins. Someone who is not an initiate sees no external difference among the punishments. The Harrow seems to do its work uniformly. As it quivers, it sticks the tips of its needles into the body, which is also vibrating from the movement of the bed. Now, to enable someone to check on how the sentence is being carried out, the Harrow is made of glass. That gave rise to certain technical difficulties with fastening the needles in it securely,

but after several attempts we were successful. We didn't spare any efforts. And now, as the inscription is made on the body, everyone can see through the glass.

[...]

...two sorts of needles in a multiple arrangement. Each long needle has a short one next to it. The long one inscribes, and the short one squirts water out to wash away the blood and keep the inscription always clear. The bloody water is then channeled here into small grooves and finally flows into these main gutters, and their outlet pipe takes it to the pit.

[...]

There in the Inscriber is the mechanism which determines the movement of the Harrow, and this mechanism is arranged according to the diagram on which the sentence is set down.

[...]

The Harrow is starting to write. When it's finished with the first part of the script on the man's back, the layer of cotton wool rolls and turns the body slowly onto its side to give the Harrow a new area. Meanwhile those parts lacerated by the inscription are lying on the cotton wool which, because it has been specially treated, immediately stops the bleeding and prepares the script for a further deepening. Here, as the body continues to rotate, prongs on the edge of the Harrow then pull the cotton wool from the wounds, throw it into the pit, and the Harrow goes to work again. In this way it keeps making the inscription deeper for twelve hours. For the first six hours the condemned man goes on living almost as before. He suffers nothing but pain. After two hours, the

> felt is removed, for at that point the man has no more energy for screaming. Here at the head of the Bed warm rice pudding is put in this electrically heated bowl. From this the man, if he feels like it, can help himself to what he can lap up with his tongue. No one passes up this opportunity. I don't know of a single one, and I have had a lot of experience. He first loses his pleasure in eating around the sixth hour. I usually kneel down at this point and observe the phenomenon. The man rarely swallows the last bit. He merely turns it around in his mouth and spits it into the pit. When he does that, I have to lean aside or else he'll get me in the face. But how quiet the man becomes around the sixth hour! The most stupid of them begins to understand. It starts around the eyes and spreads out from there. A look that could tempt one to lie down with him under the Harrow. Nothing else happens. The man simply begins to decipher the inscription. He purses his lips, as if he is listening. You've seen that it is not easy to figure out the inscription with your eyes, but our man deciphers it with his wounds. True, it takes a lot of work. It requires six hours to complete. But then the Harrow spits all of him out and throws him into the pit, where he splashes down into the bloody water and cotton wool. Then the judgment is over, and we, the Soldier and I, quickly bury him.

Such a description reveals the subtleties of the design itself. The care that is put in accomplishing the machinist functions of the apparatus and the discourse to introduce them makes us recall those of an architect presenting his/her design. The hurtful characteristics of the design and the ethical issues

generated by them are not considered while the lubricated cogs of a machinist design that precisely accomplish the function that was thought by the designer is the primordial and obsessive object of fascination. The architect creates his diagrams while thinking of the way the latter will affect the bodies it subjugates. Once materialized, he will then observe it obsessively to confront his diagram and its effectuation. The more he will be satisfied by the realization of his plans, the more he will be comparable to Kafka's executioner and the absolute transcendence he embodies. Similarly, if his design is disapproved, he might subjugate his own body to his diagram in a sort of practice in which he is both sadist and masochist simultaneously.

What about this sentence inscribed in our bodies? Isn't it the inscription of the norm that Judith Butler evokes when she quotes *In the Penal Colony* to address the question of gender? Recalling Kafka's *Trial,* which was published later, but was written simultaneously, might be helpful here. In it, K. dies without knowing what he was accused of. Would the penal colony machine have executed him, he would have had the opportunity to "experience his sentence on his own body." Maybe his long slog in the labyrinthine administration of the judiciary institution can be compared to the numerous needles slowly inscribing his sentence in his body, to the final stab that eventually kills him. *The Trial* is indeed highly corporal and we could interpret it this way: the power of institutions captures the bodies through their architecture and does not leave them intact. They somehow inscribe something of the norm in the bodies' flesh, transforming each architecture into penal colony machines.

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15

MINOR LITERATURE

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 3: DELEUZE]

This chapter addresses the book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* published in 1975. In this essay, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari attempt through Franz Kafka's work, to create a manifesto for what they call a "minor literature." Minor, here, is of course ambiguous, as it can means secondary, from the minority, or related to a mine. They have always refused any form of transcendental judgment on a work, and they probably welcomed this term's ambiguity.

"The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation," write Deleuze and Guattari. Kafka's work develops these three conditions both in its contents and in its form. Kafka was part of minority within a minority: Jewish and Czech in a region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His writing — in German — particularly registers for Deleuze and Guattari in the following paragraph that concentrates the essence of the minor literature:

> We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature. Even he who has the misfortune of being born in

> the country of a great literature must write in its language, just as a Czech Jew writes in German, or an Ouzbekian writes in Russian. Writing like a dog digging a hole, a rat digging its burrow.
>
> And to do that, finding his own point of underdevelopment, his own patois, his own third world, his own desert. There has been much discussion of the questions "What is a marginal literature?" and "What is a popular literature, a proletarian literature?" The criteria are obviously difficult to establish if one doesn't start with a more objective concept — that of minor literature. Only the possibility of setting up a minor practice of major language from within allows one to define popular literature, marginal literature, and so on. Only in this way can literature really become a collective machine of expression and really be able to treat and develop its contents. (Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

I could insist on the political side of Kakfa that deconstructs transcendence and describes the power of immanence as I have in the past;[1] nevertheless, the notion of language is more important here, as it refers to the notion of revolutionary *becoming* that involves one or several people to continuously create a resistance against the normalized standard. Deleuze and Guattari express this will in two sentences:

> How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language? Kafka answers: steal the baby from its crib, walk

1 See the article "The Kafkaian Immanent Labyrinth as a Postmortem Dream" on thefunambulist.net

> the tightrope. (Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.)

This tightrope gives its name to The Funambulist, which, hopefully, carries the spirit of its minor becoming.

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16

THE KAFKAIAN IMMANENT LABYRINTH AS A POSTMORTEM DREAM

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 11: CINEMA]

In this chapter, I would like to discuss my interpretation of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* published after his death in 1925 and then adapted in a film by Orson Welles in 1962. *The Trial* has all the characteristics of a dream. The fact that Joseph K. is in bed in the first line of the novel — Welles even shows him sleeping in the film — is a clue that leads us in that direction. Just like a dream, the whole narrative is centered on his person and nothing seems to exist where he is not.

The dream consists of K.'s fantasies and fears that make this dream a nightmare. On the one hand, throughout the plot, K. gives orders and eloquent speeches that express a fantasy for power. In Orson Welles's film, the character played by Anthony Perkins, does not seem to have the skills to exercise this power; his screen presence is not charismatic. This paradox goes further with his surprising success with women who all fall for him so easily that it seems to be only be allowed through K.'s fantasy. We will find this fantasy again in *The Castle* (1926), Kafka's text whose main character shares the same name, K.

The text then becomes paranoid as each man becomes a

threat either to himself and his judicial case or to 'his' women who are all kidnapped by other men. Welles illustrates a "kidnapping" by a scene where a woman who was just seduced by K. is carried away by a magistrate in a very suggestive position that recalls Giovanni Bologna's classic sculpture *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1574).

The paranoia is also enunciated by K. during his audition in the court room, when he denounces a transcendental power persecuting him:

> There is no doubt," he said quietly, "that there is some enormous organization determining what is said by this court. In my case this includes my arrest and the examination taking place here today, an organization that employs policemen who can be bribed, oafish supervisors and judges of whom nothing better can be said than that they are not as arrogant as some others. This organization even maintains a high-level judiciary along with its train of countless servants, scribes, policemen and all the other assistance that it needs, perhaps even executioners and torturers. (Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, Prague: Schocken, 1999.)

This hypothesis of a transcendence 'ruling the machine' is the key question of *The Trial*. The literal theory of conspiracy is definitely the less interesting hypothesis. However, we can wonder if the bureaucratic system acquired its own transcendence that now escapes from any kind of human control, or if only the almost religious perception of this machine carries this transcendence when its functioning is actually operative only by immanence. Considered more closely, the two hypotheses appear to be the same. Such hypotheses bring us

closer to the interpretation of *The Trial* as a dream. It is not important whether the transcendence is real or only perceived as such, since the narrative is nothing else than pure perception without depth.

I have just evoked the notion of control, fundamental in the novel as in the movie. Kafka is the inventor of a new type of labyrinth. This invention stands far from the classical and transcendental paradigm of the labyrinth whose author, who looks at it from above, is amused by the confused bodies mistreated by architecture. On the contrary Kafka's labyrinth celebrates its immanence by including its author, lost, within the labyrinth. Kafka gives us a lot of clues in this direction. First, the name of the character, K., who can be associated with the author. Second, the policemen being punished by the machine they're serving, and third, the obvious absence of control from anybody over this system. However, Welles goes even further by playing the role of the lawyer himself. By doing so, he is able to create an additional event that celebrates the loss of control of the author over his work. In fact, the film incorporates the scene written by Kafka in which K. dismisses the lawyer from his service provoking the latter's fury and the desperation of the woman Leni. Since he plays the role of the lawyer, Welles dramatizes this moment of loss of control by representing the actor dismissing the director without ending the film. Transcendence is therefore dismissed, but K. then has to experience the even more frightening power of immanence.

The space of this labyrinth has therefore a fundamental importance and is expressed in a similar way by Kafka and Welles. Spaces are continuous and seem to be included one in another which accentuates the impossibility of an exit. The heterogeneity of architectural styles in the film (modern, neoclassic, gothic…) would seem to diminish the labyrinthine ef-

fect as they create locality; nevertheless, by being contiguous to each other, they maintain the feeling of a unique endless building with no exteriority. Claustrophobia, in this narrative, is not provoked by the smallness of spaces encountered but, rather, by their greatness, which expresses the weight of transcendence. When the transcendence is dissolved in the film, K. has to run away through a narrow corridor of lines that seems to absorb the character while he is chased by a crowd of frightening children whose laughs and screams accentuate the paranoia.

Kafka's labyrinth is considered one of the hallmark works of Modern Literature for reasons that are partially independent from him. In fact, he never finished *The Trial* and wanted it to be burned after his death. Max Brod, his friend and literary executor, not only decided to save it from fire but had to reassemble the disorganized chapters in an order that was probably not Kafka's choice. The labyrinth quite literally lost its author, replaced by someone else. This may explain why the last chapter seesm so inadequate: that may have been due to Brod, imposing an end while the whole narrative seemed to direct towards its infinity. Only infinity can prolonge the nightmare long enough to be worth of the definition of nightmare.

One could argue that death has to be present in order to tackle the question of freedom. The real freedom, as expressed in *The Trial,* occurs at the same time as the acceptance of the sentence, as we see it in the last chapter of the novel. *The Trial* is a disease that confronts K. to his imminent death and makes him freer than the man — called Block in the novel — whose trial's procedure (here, the disease) did not even start and who allowed himself to be humiliated by the lawyer. As Block points out in the same scene, "it is often better to be in chains than to be free." K. confronted this question after he almost fainted in the Court House and a woman, guiding him

to an exit, asked him: “Why don’t you go out? That’s what you wanted!”

Preparing this essay, I thought about the Kubler-Ross model published in 1969 that establishes the five behavioral steps of disease, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, which seem to match the narrative more or less accurately. However, it appears to me as a mistake to insist on this metaphor of the disease against the one of the dream as such a process implies a strict chronology which contradicts by definition the immanent labyrinth I have been presenting so far.

Death has to be thought in a non-chronological way, and the dream allows us to think about it in that way. In fact, death can be characterized by an absolute suspension of time that leads to a perceived infinity of dreams tending to death without ever reaching it. One could then draw curves of time as it is perceived by those who are subjected to it. When living beings would be characterized by a linear curve, dead beings would be characterized by an asymptotic function starting at the moment of their death.

Of course this hypothesis repudiates the last chapter of *The Trial* as such. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari evoke the hypothesis that this chapter was maybe a dream by K. somewhere in the middle of the narrative. Or, as I suggest, if the whole narrative is a dream, this last chapter might be, on the contrary, the only moment of non-dream. In this case, and following the hypothesis of curves of time that I just evoked, this last chapter would in fact be the first one, the one that allows the infinite dream to begin.

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Originally published on April 17, 2011

17

COMPUTATIONAL LABYRINTH OR, TOWARDS A BORGESIAN ARCHITECTURE

COMPUTATIONAL LABYRINTH OR, TOWARDS A BORGESIAN ARCHITECTURE ///

(written for *Tarp Magazine*, Brooklyn, 2010)

> Through the years, a man peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, tools, stars, horses, and people. Shortly before its death, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his own face. (Jorge Luis Borges, *Dreamtigers*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.)

For several years now, computation has been a focus in some Western architecture. However, I often regret that computational architecture stands as a self-contained discipline. Increasing the limits of the field of possibilities is definitely a laudable idea; however, this achievement seems relatively meaningless if it is not coupled with serious consideration of the human dimension in architecture. I will elaborate how computation allows one to design what I would call a "Borgesian architecture." Jorge Luis Borges's work involves evocative spatial dimensions and I will try to focus here on what

may be his two most famous short stories: *The Lottery in Babylon* and *The Library of Babel.*

The Lottery in Babylon takes place in a city where human behaviors and functions are systematically subordinated to chance. It is important to understand that the notion of lottery in this short story is not characterized by an arbitrary distribution of more or less valuable prizes, but rather by a random determination of every citizen's acts and fates, whether they are desirable or dreadful. The frenzy/idolatry of this lottery comes from danger and loss of control.

The notion of loss of control is primordial because it associates the creation and origins of architecture with the ability we now have to design with computational methods. Just as Borgesian Babylon ceases to depend on the causal judgment of a transcendental morality, architecture can now tend towards an emancipation from the omnipotence of the architect by partially delegating the power of decision to something else. Both Babylonians and computational architecture still depend on a form of transcendence; however, this power no longer arises from a direct individualized subjectivity but, rather, from an illegible disorder triggered by subjectivity. I would suggest that randomness brings an important dose of irrationality and illegibility, which I am personally interested to study. If hyper-rationalization of architecture tends to make it more controllable by an institutional power, breaking with this process could thus be considered as a form of resistance against such a power. As a homage to Borges, I would propose to call a labyrinth any "out of control" architecture that has at its core a decent amount of resistance to rationality.

The other short story that seems appropriate to evoke in this chapter is *The Library of Babel.* This story is a conscientious description of the library as "a sphere whose exact center is

any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible," that host the totality of books composed with all letter combinations possible. The Library is thus questioning the notion of the infinite and its paradoxical spatial application. I intentionally write "paradoxical" because the infinite seems to me to illustrate a conflict between mathematics and physics. The latter can only suggest the infinite without actually describing it whereas mathematics is a language based on the idea of the infinite. Returning to our field of study, architecture originally belongs to the universe of physics; computation alllows for mathematics, and therefore for the infinite, to become a bigger part of architecture.

The only limit to an architecture generated by mathematics is the finite characteristic of its generator, the computer. However, the idea of relating architecture to one or several equations is to allow it to acquire an infinite dimension. This idea tackles the issue of its physicality and therefore allows architecture to exist through other means than within the finite amount of the physical world's particles.
In the same way Borges succeeded to create an infinite world thanks to words and to the readers' imagination, computation allows the creation of an infinite architecture thanks to its relation to mathematics.

In 1949, Jorge Luis Borges published *Ficcionnes*, a collection of labyrinthine short stories including the two studied here, and thus proved once again that some of the richest architectures were not necessarily designed by traditional means. Sixty years later, computation, another nontraditional means, allows such scenarios to be visualized. It seems appropriate here to evoke very briefly the creation of the hyperlink, which elaborates protocols for the infinite narrative arborescence of another short story from *Ficcionnes*, *The Garden of Forking Paths.*

Computation now allows architecture to reach a new dimension be it poetic, political, mathematical or even metaphysical, and thus seems to justify the use of these new tools. The architect now needs to adopt a perfect balance between, on one hand, the amount of control (s)he gives up in order to improve his/her design, and on the other hand, the amount of control (s)he actually needs to tame the tool so as to not fall into idolatry.

EXCERPTS BY BORGES ///

> However unlikely it might seem, no one had tried out before then a general theory of chance. Babylonians are not very speculative. They revere the judgments of fate, they deliver to them their lives, their hopes, their panic, but it does not occur to them to investigate fate's labyrinthine laws nor the gyratory spheres which reveal it. Nevertheless, the unofficial declaration that I have mentioned inspired many discussions of judicial-mathematical character. From some of them the following conjecture was born: If the lottery is an intensification of chance, a periodical infusion of chaos in the cosmos, would it not be right for chance to intervene in all stages of the drawing and not in one alone? (Jorge Luis Borges. *The Lottery in Babylon,* in *Ficcionnes*, New York: Rayo, 2008.)

> The universe (which other call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air shafts between, surrounded by very low railings. From any of the hexagons one can see, interminably, the upper and lower floors. The distribu-

tion of the galleries is invariable. Twenty shelves, five long shelves per side, cover all the sides except two; their height, which is the distance from floor to ceiling, scarcely exceeds that of a normal book case. One of the free sides leads to a narrow hallway which opens onto another gallery, identical to the first and to all the rest. To the left and right of the hallway there are two very small closets. In the first, one may sleep standing up; in the other, satisfy one's fecal necessities. Also through here passes a spiral stairway, which sinks abysmally and soars upwards to remote distances. (Jorge Luis Borges. *The Library of Babel* in *Ficcionnes*, New York: Rayo, 2008.)

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THE TWO ARCHITECTURES OF THE INFINITE POSSIBLE WORLDS: LEIBNIZ'S PYRAMID AND BORGES' GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 3: DELEUZE]

In his class at the Université de Vincennes in 1983 and 1984, Deleuze approaches cinema by what he calls *la puissance du faux* (power of the false). This notion intermingles the imaginary and reality without confusing them, in order to create the false, and by extension, fiction. The notion of truth is therefore fundamental for his class and in the December 6th 1983 session, he exposes two visions of the world of truths of existence — in opposition to truths of essence — affiliated with each other. The first one comes from Leibniz who imagined an infinite pyramid composed by the infinity of possible worlds, in which each variation of circumstances brings each world to be what it is (see the first excerpt below). In order to end up with a truth of existence, Leibniz has to bring in the notion of morality — and even of theology. For that, he states that at the top of the pyramid stands the world that God has chosen as the unmistakably the best one.

The second vision affiliated with Leibniz's narrative occurs two centuries and half later, in 1941, in the short story "El

Jardin de Senderos que se Bifurcan" ("The Garden of Forking Paths") by Jorge Luis Borges. In this story, Borges introduces a book in which all the possible worlds are contained, simultaneous and equally real (see the second excerpt below).

To these two visions brought up by Deleuze, I would like to add one proposed by Philip K. Dick for the 1977 Metz's Science-Fiction Festival in a lecture entitled *If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others*. In fact, this vision has less to do with an allegorical architecture and more with an allegorical fashion design, since he suggests that each world is a coat owned by God who decides "in the morning" which one to wear. He had illustrated this theory in the past with his novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). Through it, Dick introduced a parallel world — one might say a *uchronia* — that saw the Axis Powers (Germany, Japan and Italy) win the second world war three decades before the novel's plot begins.

The following excerpts are not extracted from Deleuze's class about the *Power of the False* (1983) but from the 1980 class about Leibniz, which proposed a shorter but similar comparison:

SEMINAR ABOUT LEIBNIZ (excerpt) ///
By Gilles Deleuze (found on webdeleuze.com)

I just exposed the first difference between truths of essence and truths of existence. In truths of essence, the analysis is finite, in truths of existence, the analysis is infinite. That is not the only one, for there is a second difference: according to Leibniz, a truth of essence is such that its contradiction is impossible, that is, it is impossible for 2 and 2 not to make 4. Why? For the simple reason that I can prove the identity

of 4 and of 2+2 through a series of finite procedures. Thus 2+2=5 can be proven to be contradictory and impossible. Adam non sinner, Adam who might not have sinned, I therefore seek for the contradictory of sinner. It's possible. The proof is that, following the great criterion of classical logic — and from this perspective Leibniz remains within classical logic — I can think nothing when I say 2+2=5, I cannot think the impossible, no more than I think whatever it might be according to this logic when I say squared circle. But I can very well think of an Adam who might not have sinned. Truths of existence are called contingent truths.

Caesar could have not crossed the Rubicon. Leibniz's answer is admirable: certainly, Adam could have not sinned, Caesar could have not crossed the Rubicon. Only here it is: this was not compossible with the existing world. An Adam non sinner enveloped another world. This world was possible in itself, a world in which the first man might not have sinned is a logically possible world, only it is not compossible with our world. That is, God chose a world such that Adam sinned. Adam non sinner implied another world, this world was possible, but it was not compossible with ours.

Why did God choose this world? Leibniz goes on to explain it. Understand that at this level, the notion of compossibility becomes very strange: what is going to make me say that two things are compossible and that two other things are incompossible? Adam non sinner belongs to another world than ours, but suddenly Caesar might not have crossed the Rubicon either, that would have been another possible world. What is this very unusual relation of compossibility? Understand that perhaps this is the same question as what is infinite analysis, but it does not have the same outline. So we can draw a dream out of it, we can have this dream on several levels. You dream, and there is a kind of wizard who

makes you enter a palace; this palace… it's the dream of Apollodorus told by Leibniz. Apollodorus is going to see a goddess, and this goddess leads him into the palace, and this palace is composed of several palaces. Leibniz loved that, boxes containing boxes. He explained, in a text that we will examine, he explained that in the water, there are many fish and that in the fish, there is water, and in the water of these fish, there are fish of fish. It's infinite analysis. The image of the labyrinth hounds him. He never stops talking about the labyrinth of continuity. This palace is in the form of a pyramid. Then, I look closer and, in the highest section of my pyramid, closest to the point, I see a character who is doing something. Right underneath, I see the same character who is doing something else in another location. Again underneath the same character is there in another situation, as if all sorts of theatrical productions were playing simultaneously, completely different, in each of the palaces, with characters that have common segments. It's a huge book by Leibniz called *Theodicy*, specifically divine justice.

You understand, what he means is that at each level is a possible world. God chose to bring into existence the extreme world closest to the point of the pyramid. How was he guided in making that choice? We shall see, we must not hurry since this will be a tough problem, what the criteria are for God's choice. But once we've said that he chose a particular world, this world implicated Adam the sinner; in another world, obviously all that is simultaneous, these are variants, one can conceive of something else, and each time, it's a world. Each of them is possible. They are incompossible with one another, only one can pass into existence. And all of them attempt with all their strength to pass into existence. The vision that Leibniz proposes of the creation of the world by God becomes very stimulating. There are all these worlds that are in God's understanding, and each of which on its

own presses forward pretending to pass from the possible into the existent. They have a weight of reality, as a function of their essences. As a function of the essences they contain, they tend to pass into existence. And this is not possible for they are not compossible with each other: existence is like a dam. A single combination will pass through. Which one? You already sense Leibniz's splendid response: it will be the best one!

And not the best one by virtue of a moral theory, but by virtue of a theory of games. And it's not by chance that Leibniz is one of the founders of statistics and of the calculus of games. And all that will get more complicated…

ABOUT BORGES (excerpt) ///

By Gilles Deleuze (found on webdeleuze.com)

In *Ficciones*, there is a short story, "The Garden of Forking Paths." As I summarize the story, keep in mind the famous dream of the Theodicy. "The Garden of Forking Paths," what is it? It's the infinite book, the world of compossibilities. The idea of the Chinese philosopher being involved with the labyrinth is an idea of Leibniz's contemporaries, appearing in mid-17th century. There is a famous text by Malebranche that is a discussion with the Chinese philosopher, with some very odd things in it. Leibniz is fascinated by the Orient, and he often cites Confucius. Borges made a kind of copy that conformed to Leibniz's thought with an essential difference: for Leibniz, all the different worlds that might encompass an Adam sinning in a particular way, an Adam sinning in some other way, or an Adam not sinning at all, he excludes all this infinity of worlds from each other, they are incompossible with each other, such that he conserves a very classical principle of disjunction: it's either this world or some other one. Whereas Borges places all these incompossible series

in the same world, allowing a multiplication of effects. Leibniz would never have allowed incompossibles to belong to a single world. Why? I only state our two difficulties: the first is, what is an infinite analysis? And second, what is this relationship of incompossibility? The labyrinth of infinite analysis and the labyrinth of compossibility.

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GEORGE ORWELL: THE POST-IDEOLOGICAL MAN

GEORGE ORWELL: THE POST-IDEOLOGICAL MAN ///
(originally written for *Orwellian*, dpr-barcelona, March 2013)

Too often when we evoke the work of George Orwell, we refer only to his two masterpieces, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which are the least autobiographic of his writings. The result is an over-emphasis on the literal symbols of these two books. People see video-surveillance cameras in the street and they invoke the "Big Brother" as if they miraculously put a spell on them. These cameras, however, are only the spectacular part of a much broader biopolitical system that administers and normalizes behaviors and desires.

Orwell's own life is helpful here to determine potential means of resistance to such processes. Whether his books are inspired by his life, like *Burmese Days* (1934), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939) or frankly autobiographical like in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) or *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), his narratives offer us a testimony of uncompromising courage.

The post-ideology I am evoking in the title has nothing to do with the one our era chose for itself in a delusional or diverting

attempt to declare "the end of history". In that case, post-ideology is an ideology itself. The example that Orwell gives us lies more simply in a systematic suspicion of any form of organization that has instigated a sort of moral tribunal within itself. That is why, for example, he always remained at distance of any form of communist or anarchist party even when he was fighting for the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) during the Spanish Civil War. He enrolled in the militia "because at that time and in that atmosphere it seemed the only conceivable thing to do" (*Homage to Catalonia*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010, 6.).

We are far from the self-proclaimed post-ideology that ambiguously creates a dangerous relativism to avoid the difficult question of ethics. When he left for Spain, Orwell had no doubt that fighting against fascism is the only thing he has to do; for him, that was "common decency" (*Homage to Catalonia*, 50.). The evidence of his fight comes from his systematic refusal to compromise his ethics, to the point that he was not satisfied with writing as a means of resistance. When he decides to experience the life of the poorest in Paris and London, when he examines meticulously the life conditions of Lancashire working class or when he joins a civil war in another country, writing is only a way to report retrospectively. Writing is never a substitute for fighting for him, contrary to what many of us are often telling ourselves. The post-ideological human is the one that does not need ideology to give him/her excuses not to think and fight.

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TOWER OF JOY, ULAN BATOR, APRIL 1992

TOWER OF JOY, ULAN BATOR, APRIL 1992 ///
(originally written for Studio Magazine 1, 2011)

A few months after my friend and mentor Theodore Antonopoulos passed away, his wife suggested that I organize his archives that have grown to consume the entire building of their home in New York. This 'assignment' overwhelmed me, as I was discovering a multitude of previously unknown books and references that seemed to have influenced Theo's work considerably. I decided, then, that I would dedicate all of my efforts to exploring what made his films and novels so powerful.

At the end of my fifth day in the chaos of his archives, I realized that, so far, I had only succeeded in making the hundreds of documents, books and films in the house more disorganized. As I stood dumbfounded by this observation, my eyes encountered a text written on a VHS that was partly submerged in a pile of films covering most of the room's floor. The caption read "Tower Of Joy, Ulan Bator, April 1992". The fact that Theo shot a movie in Mongolia did not come as much of a surprise as I often reflected that he may have visited every country in the world; nevertheless, this title, "Tower of Joy," piqued my interest enough that I stole it away to watch later.

The footage on the VHS was rather confusing and clearly unedited. The first ten minutes consisted of a fixed shot of a gigantic structure under construction in an urban landscape that could only have been Ulan Bator. The structure seemed almost hynoptic; it maintained the standard floor succession, yet the proportions of the building seemed gargantuan considering the rest of the city's buildings likely did not exceed seven or eight stories at the time of the filming. After five minutes of hynopsis, I noticed something even stranger about the edifice. It did not seem to be under construction at all, but rather appeared to be one of those towers that would remain unfinished due to an unnamed and unseen economical crisis or an administrative conflict. A few cranes remained lodged on top of the structure, their movement dictated simply by the strong winds of the Mongolian capital.

The following shot was clearly filmed during the seemingly endless ascent of the tower and was in strong contrast with the first one; Theo was absolutely unable to keep the camera still. As I watched, I could not understand what was pushing him to continue so high when the numerous floors he was by-

passing would have been perfectly capable of conveying the interesting shots in the abandoned structure. The next hour or so consisted exclusively of the repetitive images of these stairs, floor by floor with the city behind, the syncopation of his feet on each step, and Theo's panting that was beginning to occupy most of the soundtrack. Although I was amazed at the existence of such a tower, I was beginning to get bored by the rushes, and soon realized that I was far more accustomed to my mentor's final product than the parts of films that would usually end on the cutting room floor. Just as I was about to move the video forward, I heard a sound that froze my hand just in front of the VCR. Within the film Theo had frozen similarly mid-step, and he turned around and went back a few steps to reach a landing, then turned to enter the core of the building. It did not take much time to discover the origin of the sound as the camera quickly captured a crew of children who were playing in the endless corridor of the tower. Although I could not quite understand how these kids ended up at what was probably the fortieth floor of an abandoned tower, Theo didn't seemed surprised as he stopped filming them to resumie his walk within the corridor, quickly followed by the intrigued children.

Little by little, the rooms beside the corridor went from a state of complete abandonment to a surprising state of organization. Inside of them seemed to live dozens of families that somehow managed to occupy this empty structure, and it suddenly occurred to me that Theo knew exactly what he was doing. Minute by minute, the film was showing more and more squatters of the tower who managed to create domestic spaces by appropriating the other destroyed spaces from this impersonal building.

Theo could not reach the end of the corridor before I heard a strong clamor coming from his left. By that time, it was not Theo who was in Ulan Bator filming this movie anymore, but me, hypnotized as I was by what I was seeing on the screen. The camera penetrated within a room that looked destroyed rather than under construction. On the other side of a pierced brick wall was the origin of this clamor and a continuous sum of voices talking one to another was occupying the space Theo was now entering. An important crowd was gathered around a very large and deep stair shaft that seemed to respond via its echo to the collective conversation. Many people were sitting on the edges of the void, on this floor and

on others as much as the camera was showing. The core of the discussion seemed nowhere and everywhere at the same time and, although I cannot understand a word of Mongolian, it seemed clear that the subject of the discussion was important and serious yet enthusiastic.

Although Theo was still, the camera was slowly unfolding the totality of this space, insisting on the sunlight coming down almost vertically within the void and keeping the conversation of the tower inhabitants as a background sound, almost like an incantation. I was not sure what I witnessed from the other side of the screen about two decades later, but it looked like this Babylonian tower in construction had been occupied by a self-managed micro-society that did not need to get back down to the ground in order to live. This hypothesis was adding to my surprise and my incredulity about the fact that I never heard about such a gigantic building and the fascinating society living in it.

The film suddenly stopped and finished on a long shot of Ulan Bator almost identical to the first one, yet this time without any trace of the tower. Nothing on the screen was really allowing to register these two shots a logical chronology and I was confused by the various hypotheses that could explain the last part of the film. Had the “Tower of Joy” been destroyed between these two shots, was this whole film a pure fictitious construction orchestrated by Theo, was it a temporary hallucination miraculously inscribable on the film material? At the time I am writing this text, I still ignore the answer to these questions.

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ABOUT

THE FUNAMBULIST: a blog written and edited by Léopold Lambert. It finds its name in the consideration for architecture's representative medium, the line, and its philosophical and political power when it materializes and subjectivizes bodies. If the white page represents a given milieu — a desert, for example — and one (an architect, for example) comes to trace a line on it, (s)he will virtually split this same milieu into two distinct impermeable parts through its embodiment, the wall. The Funambulist, also known as a tightrope walker, is the character who, somehow, subverts this power by walking on the line.

CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MEDIA, Parsons The New School for Design: a transdisciplinary media research initiative bridging design and the social sciences, and dedicated to the exploration of the transformative potential of emerging technologies upon the foundational practices of everyday life across a range of settings.

PUNCTUM BOOKS: spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion is an open-access and print-on-demand independent publisher dedicated to radically creative modes of intellectual inquiry and writing across a whimsical para-humanities assemblage. punctum books seeks to curate the open spaces of writing or writing-as-opening, the crucial tiny portals on whose capacious thresholds all writing properly and improperly takes place. Pricking, puncturing, perforating = publishing in the mode of an unconditional hospitality and friendship, making space for what Eve Sedgwick called "queer little gods" – the "ontologically intermediate and teratological figures" of y/our thought.We seek to pierce and disturb the wednesdayish, business-as-usual protocols of both the generic university studium and its individual cells or holding tanks. We also take in strays.

THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS
VOLUME 10: LITERATURE

The idea that architecture can be created through narrative is popular in some academic circles. It seems a fruitful approach to the discipline as it unfolds an important imaginative field. It also envisions a resistance to various forms of architectural teleology, since fiction is usually based on the dysfunction of the environment in which it is set.

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