

21ST CONTEMPORARY ART BIENNIAL SESC_VIDEOBRASIL

READINGS



IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

**21ST
CONTEMPORARY
ART BIENNIAL
SESC_VIDEOBRASIL**

READINGS

**IMAGINED
COMMUNITIES**

**21ST
CONTEMPORARY
ART BIENNIAL
SESC_VIDEOBRASIL**

READINGS

editor
LUISA DUARTE



**IMAGINED
COMMUNITIES**

Working in the field of culture and the arts requires a connection with what's going on in the world. We are part of a wider universe, of realities upon which humans act. Where humans act, culture results. And upon producing culture, we come up against new realities and perspectives that change, in turn, our preconceived social ideas.

DANILO SANTOS DE MIRANDA

director, Sesc São Paulo

ANOTHER EXTERMINATION

JULIANA BRAGA DE MATTOS

visual arts and technologies manager, Sesc São Paulo

Denaturalizing conceptions of the world, critically revising the past, and opening space for necessary counter-hegemonic perspectives, that's the communal territory of the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil Seminars, a project that is precious to Sesc and Associação Cultural Videobrasil, which, together, and through various instruments, have spent decades fostering the reflections of each edition's featured artists and researchers.

Though apparently aware of the standard imposed by the white western patriarchal heteronormative perspective, our society seems to have trouble extricating itself from the tentacles of an authoritarian social dynamic—an undesired but indelible legacy of our historical development. This construction, which unfolded over the centuries, expanding on a global scale through the Imperialist colonial project, engendered a system of genocide and control over bodies that is now producing another extermination: that of imaginations and subjectivities. The relentless persecution of the capacity to imagine worlds beyond the dour bounds of the real resulted in a devastating epistemicide.

It is crucial that we recognize this destructive process, creator of the asymmetries and injustices that abide in societies scarred with the violence of colonization, to say nothing of the economic factors long considered preponderant in the escalated authoritarianisms to which whole populations have found themselves subjected. It is essential that we look at the colonial process for what it is: an influence that has changed the course of so many subjectivities, embezzling the riches of the multiple identities present in all human communities.

How can we address these hijackings and co-optations of conscience if we are still failing to show genuine respect for alterity? How can we shake off this imaginary so entrenched in our behaviors? To what extent can the discourse of art free itself of this colonized logic, even if only to work against it? These are all paths we will certainly take in the reflections and provocations presented herein.

AN EXERCISE IN LISTENING

SOLANGE OLIVEIRA FARKAS

artistic director of the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil

The Seminars that gave rise to this publication were intended as an indissociable part of the general program for the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil. More than comment on or pick up from the exhibited works, the artists and thinkers contributing here all, in their own ways and across a range of fields, performed something akin to that which the works themselves did in the exhibition space. Like the discourses that emerged from the selected artistic output, the ideas and reflexive exercises these texts propose derive from an unequivocal stance taken on the most pressing matters of our time, and draw out paths to move along, and move us along, toward something beyond mere perplexity.

It's hardly surprising that much of the thinking put forward here is born from, or closely bound up with, real experiences of activism, some of them pioneering, others historical, still others tentative, experimental, and in progress, but almost all deriving from the idea of a new communitarian imagination surging now as a way to re-stake the ground gained by gagged minority groups. Some relate directly to the art field, others evoke the philosophical dimension of existence, others come from very concrete facts of real life.

Their discourses are diverse in terms of focus, objectives, and degree of theoretical development. They weave different narratives, but converge in a desire to take the fight to the hegemonic, giving voice to erased perspectives, and lay bare the mechanisms of power and oppression implicit to the ways of life we reproduce.

Omnipresent within the context of Southern poetics, the idea of displacement consolidates in the art on show at the 21st Biennial, as the tool of choice for addressing such contemporary themes as identity, heritage, nationality, and historical reparation. The rich set of reflections and experiences presented at the Seminars—and absorbed by a public staggering in both number and avidity—suggests that stepping out of one's place of privilege is a vital movement if we are to see history from other angles. That's the kind of listening in which the 21st Biennial finds its completion.

INTRODUCTION

The book you are holding in your hands contains fourteen essays especially written for the seminars held as part of the public programs for the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil—*Imagined Communities*.¹ Coming from different fields of knowledge and experience, and addressing a range of questions, the multiple voices gathered here share a common perspective. They all pit themselves against a kamikaze project that is working toward a world without forests, without books, and without imagination. But it's not a question of simply railing against all of that, but of remembering what remains alive and fertile in our present time. Because the same world that seems to be taking broad strides in a counter-revolutionary dynamic² is also now witnessing unprecedented tectonic shifts.³ At the same time as we're living through a period in which "nihilism is lurking, brutalism

LUISA DUARTE

- 1 The 21st Biennial seminars were held at Sesc 24 de Maio, São Paulo, between October 15 and 17, and November 12 and 14, 2019, totaling twelve encounters: "Imagining in Times of Colonized Subjectivities" (Clarissa Diniz and Suely Rolnik); "The Non-Elaboration of the Past and Its Consequences for Present-Day Brazil" (Maria Rita Kehl and Rosana Paulino); "How to Live Together? Updating the Question (Lisette Lagnado and Peter Pál Pelbart); "Toward a New Political Imagination" (Márcio Seligmann-Silva and Vladimir Safatle); "Art and Pedagogy: Counter-Hegemonic Practices in the Present" (Marisa Flório Cesar and Pablo Lafuente); "Time Since the Advent of Virtual Life" (Guilherme Wisnik and Laymert Garcia dos Santos); "The Limits and Promises of Political Art" (Lucy R. Lippard); "Symbolic Production in Social Movements" (Carla Caffé, Carmen Silva Ferreira [Ocupação 9 de Julho], and Mariana Cavalcanti); "The Press, Activism, and Art: LGBTQI+ Production Yesterday and Today" (João Silvério Trevisan, Vitor Grunwald & Paulo Mendel, Elvis Justino [Stronger Family]); "Contemporary Feminisms from a Decolonial Perspective" (Amara Moira and Juliana Borges); "Memory and Politics in Latin American Public Archives" (Nydia Gutierrez and Paulo Herkenhoff); "Resistance and Image in Output from the Indigenous World" (Ampam Karakras and Mario A. Caro). Ana Paula Cohen, Diane Lima, Luisa Duarte, Fernanda D'Agostino, Gabriel Bogossian, Juliana Braga, Marília Loureiro, and Miguel López were the mediators. The encounters in their entirety are available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-zNq5fU2e5SkY7CIBz-GiZw>, in Portuguese.
- 2 See Paul Preciado's preface to Suely Rolnik's *Esferas da insurreição – notas para uma vida não cafetinada* (São Paulo: Editora n-1, 2018).
- 3 See Peter Pál Pelbart's prologue in *Ensaio do assombro* (São Paulo: n-1, 2019).

is the new norm and the desire for an apocalypse is not far,”⁴ a whole decolonial process of historical revision is underway, drawing attention to a new cartography that transforms or at least jeopardizes the traditional visions of race, gender, family, and all the Eurocentric knowledge templates, proposing new epistemologies in their stead.

—

Invited to think of strategies for a new political imagination, in “Decolonial, Disothering: Imagining a Post-National Politics that Installs New Subjectivities,” Márcio Seligmann-Silva draws upon some of the works shown at the 21st Biennial and texts published in the accompanying catalogue in order to sketch a “new ethic of micropolitical relations grounded in the self-image of embrittled bodies open to strategies of *solidarity*.” His approach is not unlike that adopted by Marisa Flório Cesar in “From the Fringes of Worlds,” in which the author registers the presence in the art field of lives that have become undesired or inconvenient to capital, whilst reflecting on one of the most dangerous pitfalls of our time: the kidnapping of our imaginative vitality, our capacity to envision alternative worlds. In “De-Triumph,” Clarissa Diniz offers a powerful, decolonial critique of the legacy of anthropophagy, with special emphasis on different readings of the work of Tarsila do Amaral.

Lucy R. Lippard, in her “What Do We Want to Say? How Do We Want to Say It?,” speaks from the position of theorist and activist. Her impassioned defense of the importance of socially engaged artists dialogues with Mariana Cavalcanti’s essay “Marielle Franco Street.” Taking as her subject a tribute to the assassinated councilwoman, a sign naming a street in her honor, and its subsequent deprecation by right-wing extremists, the anthropologist looks at two Brazils that

live side by side on the same land: one represented by the bisexual, black politician, born and raised in the Maré favela complex, a woman who was the very embodiment of a series of conquests achieved in recent decades in the fields of macro and micro politics, and that represented by the man who, yearning to see that progress peeled back, killed her a second time symbolically by tearing down the plaque that bore her name.

It’s impossible to understand the Brazil in which Franco was murdered by militiamen without also considering the absence of a critical examination of the past, particularly slavery and the military dictatorship. Brushing against the grain of this political amnesia in the essay “Outlaw State,” the psychoanalyst Maria Rita Kehl speaks of her experience as a member of the Truth Commission. Her text shines a light on the countless, perverse effects of our “ample, general, and unlimited” amnesty.

Each in their own way, “LGBT Communitarian Imagination Then and Now: The Case of *Lampião da esquina*,” by João Silvério Trevisan, “The Prettiest Woman in Brazil Is a Man,” by Amara Moira, “Black Feminism: Power Disputes and Radical Transformation,” by Juliana Borges, and “Imagined Communities: Negotiating Native American Art as American Art,” by Mario A. Caro, touch upon the fundamental causes addressed by the curatorial project of the 21st Biennial, namely, those of the LGBTQIA+, feminist, and indigenous movements. Trevisan, a Brazilian pioneer in the campaign for homosexual rights, speaks of the dawn of *Lampião da esquina*, a magazine he helped found in the late 1970s. His text includes an excerpt from an article he wrote for the publication in 1980, in which he advocates for the importance of the micro political sphere; Moira, a transvestite, ex-sex worker, PhD in languages, outlines the changes in the panorama of the trans experience in Brazil from the 1980s to the present day; Borges, a writer, draws out a deep interconnection between black feminism and decolonial processes; while Caro, a curator and researcher, analyzes the limited presence of

4 See the interview with Achille Mbembe, conducted in 2018, available at <https://www.newframe.com/thoughts-on-the-planetary-an-interview-with-achille-mbembe/>, accessed on November 5, 2019.

Amerindian artists at North American institutions.

In “Another Emancipation Is Possible,” Vladimir Safatle dialogues with what he calls identitarian generalizations in order to propose a “decolonial universalism,” completely different from that found on the “masculine, phallogocentric, white, and heteronormative social horizon.” Peter Pál Pelbart, in “How to Live Together in Dark Times?,” looks to actualize, thirteen years on, the question that shaped the curatorial project for the 27th Bienal de São Paulo. The author reminds us that, “on all scales, everywhere, whether in a film by Pedro Costa, a play by the Ueinz Group, a mass street demonstration against a rise in bus fares, an urban occupation resisting the powers-that-be, in all of these examples we see the same horizon of the ‘common,’ inflected to suit each scale and each case, testifying to the various ways we can share time, space, land, gestures, dreams.”

Lastly, it doesn’t strike us as at all possible to understand the present without dwelling at length upon the fact that the wholesale weaving of technology into the fiber of our daily lives is throwing up new ways of seeing, thinking, and experiencing time. The challenges posed by this digital colonization of our lives and the breakneck acceleration it generates are the subject of the essays “Emergence in Emergency,” by Laymert Garcia dos Santos, and “In Search of Stolen Time,” by Guilherme Wisnik.

—

The writings gathered here constitute a response to the urgent demands of our time. In a solidary alliance between thought, art, and micro-political struggles they see an antidote to the “zombie humanity”⁵ we now watch staggering about the great casino-world in which everything is merchandise and our subjectivity is transformed into the raw material

of late capitalism.

If fascism, both micro and macro, is materializing with brutal force right before our eyes as the essays presented here all agree, they also identify ways of resisting it under the asphyxiating present climate. Alert to the impasses of our day, they cling to the hope that together, disagreements aside, we can imagine, invent, and exchange new forms of inhabiting the future.

5 Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019), 26.

20
DECOLONIAL, DISOTHERING: IMAGINING A
POST-NATIONAL POLITICS THAT INSTALLS
NEW SUBJECTIVITIES
Márcio Seligmann-Silva

44
FROM THE FRINGES OF WORLDS
Marisa Flório Cesar

58
DE-TRIUMPH
Clarissa Diniz

72
WHAT DO WE WANT TO SAY?
HOW DO WE WANT TO SAY IT?
Lucy R. Lippard

84
MARIELLE FRANCO STREET
Mariana Cavalcanti

98
OUTLAW STATE
Maria Rita Kehl

114
LGBT COMMUNITARIAN
IMAGINATION THEN AND NOW:
THE CASE OF LAMPIÃO DA ESQUINA
João Silvério Trevisan

126
“THE PRETTIEST WOMAN IN BRAZIL IS A MAN”
Amara Moira

140
BLACK FEMINISM: POWER
DISPUTES AND RADICAL TRANSFORMATION
Juliana Borges

150
IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: NEGOTIATING
NATIVE AMERICAN ART AS AMERICAN ART
Mario A. Caro

162
ANOTHER EMANCIPATION IS POSSIBLE
Vladimir Safatle

176
HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER
IN DARK TIMES?
Peter Pál Pelbart

190
EMERGENCE IN EMERGENCY
Laymert Garcia dos Santos

202
IN SEARCH OF STOLEN TIME
Guilherme Wisnik

—
216
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DECOLONIAL, DISOTHERING: IMAGINING A POST-NATIONAL POLITICS THAT INSTALLS NEW SUBJECTIVITIES

MÁRCIO
SELIGMANN-SILVA

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung proposes that we think of the concept of disothering as a strategy for critiquing and deconstructing the geographies and narratives that determine the central powers in our societies. His text for the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil catalogue carries the title “Disothering as Method” and a subtitle in Ngemba that translates roughly as “You look after yours and I’ll look after mine.” The challenge of the method of disothering is that othering has pretty much always been our way of being in the world. That is, our self-narratives and epistemologies tend to reproduce binaries almost exclusively structured along the lines of the I and the Other. From the psychoanalytical perspective, the I begins to take shape with the differentiation of the other, prescribed by the boundaries of the body, our sense of being unshored, and, finally, through learning how to engage the other in social games.

ANGST AND FEAR AT THE ROOT OF KNOWLEDGE AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE “OTHER”

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer describe the origin of knowledge in our cry of horror in the face of that which we do not know. The knowledge derived from this tragic encounter with the “other” comes steeped in *fear* and *terror*.¹ Precisely because “Enlightenment is mythical

1 Hans Jonas noted that the dream of civilization, i.e., of the taming of nature, was born from a fear of that very nature and the idea that its conquest would be a heroic act. Today, this situation finds itself reversed. It is we who pose a danger to nature. The seas (of water or mud) that destroy us are blowback from wounded Nature. As Hans Jonas writes: “The euphoria of the Faustian dream has worn off and we find ourselves waking in the cold, pale light of fear” (Hans Jonas, *Une éthique pour la nature*, trans. S. Courtine-Denamy [Paris: Flammarion, 2017], 176.) Our response to this fear should not be panic, but the forging of a new ethics that, for the first time, actually includes Nature and does not limit itself to intersubjectivity alone.

fear radicalized,” there hovers, in religiosity and philosophy alike, the intention to *subsume the other in the fullest manner*, as “Nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the ‘outside’ is the real source of fear.”² The Enlightenment project—the expansion of reason to every corner of the Earth—resulted in a domination of the “other” and of nature that reaches its culmination today in ever closer and more tangible images of the end of our world. The reason that rose to prominence as a reaction to fear, and which operated through mythic angst, has become a violent weapon for reducing the other to a mere means toward knowledge or profit, as there is a perverse connection between enlightenment reason and the exploitive, dominating logic of capitalism, especially in its neoliberal guise. Where reason didn’t want to leave anything “outside,” capital strives to turn everything into profitability: individuals are seen as robot-workers devoid of subjectivity and rights, and the land is reduced to a mere commodity. If there is anything that can’t be readily transformed into profit, such as trees and indigenous populations, they should be annihilated without further ado. The other is negated, and this other is everything that stands against the empire of capital. The commodification of the world necessarily implies its own death. Neoliberal geopolitics categorizes the world as per levels of maximum exploitation. In the political field, Nation-States sort themselves into globalized blocs, rolling out the logics of extractivism, manufacture, and conversion into profit. The model is a continuation of the colonial system and reproduces hierarchies derived therefrom, both in terms of relations between national blocs and a new ontologizing racialization.

2 Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford University Press, 2002), 11.

COLONIZATION AND ITS CRIMES: GENOCIDE, ETHNOCIDE, ECOCIDE, AND MEMORICIDE

Achille Mbembe rightly recalls a 19th-century French colonial manual by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, in which colonization is defined as “the expansive force of a people, its reproductive power, its spread and multiplication in space; the act of submitting the world, or a large part of it, to its language, customs, ideas, and laws.” We might remember that, during the 2018 election campaign, a candidate quipped that “*quilombolas* aren’t even good for breeding,” a line that at once animalized Brazilians of African descent and denied them the right to self-reproduction and determination.

In the early 20th century, another Frenchman, Alexandre Méridon, defined colonization as “relating to younger countries in order to avail of the various resources they contain.”³ Colonization implies dividing, conquering, imposing hierarchies. It’s a necropolitics that destroys nature and entire populations, physically and symbolically. *Genocide*, *ethnocide*, and *ecocide* walked hand in hand during the colonial period. But there is a fourth facet to this many-headed beast of the apocalypse that cannot be forgotten: *memoricide*, the planned and systematically repeated expunging of memory. There can be no domination without physical and symbolic violence, and Brazil’s case is paradigmatic: the country with one of the worst social distributions of wealth on the globe, it is also a champion in state and parastate violence; and a wiz at covering up the histories and narratives of that violence. I’ll come back to this point further on.

The cogs of the neocolonial/neoliberal system were amply greased in recent decades; first, with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which allowed the unimpeded expansion of the neoliberal system implanted by Ronald Reagan

3 Achille Mbembe, *Crítica da razão negra*, trans. Marta Lança (Lisbon: Antígona Editores Refractários, 2017), 119.

and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s; and secondly by the September 11 terrorist attacks, which triggered a devastating war against the “other.” Never had the cultural industry’s myth-minting machine been so busy or effective in churning out the supposedly insurmountable differences between the I, defender of Enlightenment, and the barbarian Other. If, on the one hand, from the *Iliad* to Hollywood, the history of such narratives keeps repeating itself, on the other, their genocidal potential has never been greater, thanks to the modern technologies of actual and cyber warfare.

In Brazil, where adherence to this neoliberal playbook is unfolding in a manner as tragic as it is pathetic, it’s no accident that the slogan of security policy is “human rights for right humans.” Insofar as the politicians in power delight in their capacity to distinguish the “good” citizen from the “bad,” instantaneously, as if by some moral facial recognition software, the phrase above would not have looked out of place written large on the gates of Auschwitz or over the door of the Brazilian dictatorship’s Center for the Defense of Internal Order. Achille Mbembe also notes the words of the late 19th-century French colonial theorist, Jules Ferry, who was already touting similar concepts back in his day: “It must be frankly stated that the superior races have more rights than the inferior.... The Declaration of Human Rights was not ‘written by the Blacks of Equatorial Africa.’”⁴

In other words, the search for a politics of disothering, defended by Bonaventure, as by many other artists, curators, anthropologists, agents, and critical thinkers, is a clear response to the fundamentalist swing that occurred with the triumph of neoliberalism, associated with a new onslaught to further the supremacy of what we might call Enlightenment, illuminism, or simply Eurocentrism. As Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote, “the Americans [but not only them, I might add] believe in the reality of ‘race’ as a definite, indubitable feature of the natural world.... [R]ace is the daughter of racism, not

4 Mbembe, *Crítica da razão negra*, 135.

its mother.”⁵ Or, as Achille Mbembe puts it: “The backbone [of] the imperial project is racial difference, which is incorporated into such disciplines as Ethnology, Geography, and Missionology.”⁶ The narratives spun in museums, literatures, the arts, advertising, and international exhibitions constantly reinforce these racial, political, and economic divisions.

A NEW ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE “WHOLE” AS A GAME

The method of disothering is not innocent, and it can’t be ignored that, besides or beyond binaries, our narratives need some minimal ground of identity to bed down in if they are to create their language. It’s a matter of looking at differences as transformations, not solid monads, as per the jaded logic that lies at the base of Enlightenment. Bonaventure’s wily subtitle, “you take care of yours and I’ll take care of mine,” doesn’t seem to envision a new identity struggle in which we simply take the north-south hierarchies that operate politically and economically in the world today and stand them on their head, without tackling the stock metaphysical binarity of it all. Rather, it seems to point toward a *new ethic of responsibility*. In this I/world relationship, othering does not necessarily imply reification, objectification, or domination.

Saussure saw the linguistic system as a game of differences, but he knew that the pieces in the game are moveable. A century before the Swiss linguist, Novalis described the whole in an amusing way that might cast some light on what it means to imagine the open game of differences that sustains language: “The whole rests more or less—like a game in which people sit on each other’s knees in a circular fashion

5 Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Entre o mundo e eu* (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2015), 18–19.

6 Mbembe, *Crítica da razão negra*, 114.

without a chair.”⁷ Here we see the whole resting upon collective play. In the Biennial catalogue, Gladys Tzul Tzul, speaking about her Maia K’iche’ experience in Guatemala and her sociological studies, affirms that “communal work is the lifeblood that gives rise to the concrete wealth of communal life, whilst providing the ethical parameters for an existence not grounded in essential identities.”⁸ Traditional cultures produce the only authentically rich communities and groups, if we think of wealth in terms of well-being, a state that frees us from the above-mentioned “mythic fear” that wells up from our alienated work and reified relationship with others, nature, and our own desires. However, when it is said, as it often is, that the Amerindians are a destitute people in a rich land, it testifies to nothing but the speaker’s poverty of spirit and lack of intelligence. The Amerindians are the only genuinely rich populations on this planet. The shame projected on them should be recognized in our hegemonic culture as deriving from its own genocidal logic.

7 Novalis, *Werke. Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, edited by Hans-Joachim Mähl and Richard Samuel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, vol. II, 1999), 152.

8 Gladys Tzul Tzul, “An Ethical Form of Existence: The Indigenous Communal as a Political Horizon,” in *21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil* (São Paulo: Videobrasil; Edições Sesc, 2019), 58.

THE “SECOND TECHNOLOGY” AND THE NEW PLAYFUL SPACE OF ACTION

Thinking about Novalis’s image of the players all sitting on each other’s knees as a metaphor for the whole, I am reminded that Benjamin also saw the game as an open and nonviolent way of acting within the world. A playful relationship with the world should be considered a *technique of nonviolent interaction*. In his well-known essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin wrote about an emancipated or “second technology.” The “first technology” had the human being at its center and took *human sacrifice* as its paroxysmic attainment. We might say that this technology is the twin of Enlightenment reason and the cause of 20th-century genocides and the devastation of much of the Earth. The “second technology,” on the other hand, frees the human being from work. It is based on mirthful repetition and originates from *play*, which Benjamin saw as our first way of *putting some distance* between ourselves and nature.

We might also recall Freud’s theory of the game peek-a-boo as a way of processing separation/reality.⁹ For Benjamin, too, the game is empowering. For him, the “second technology” does not aim to *master* nature (as the first did), but to *establish interplay* with it. The game brings us closer, but not too close. The “first technology” was more serious; the “second,” blither, with the work of art oscillating somewhere in between. But film and photography, as arts eminently reliant on technology, pertain more closely to the “second technology” and their role is to rehearse for emancipation. Benjamin underscores the relationship between this second technology and revolutions and utopias. Here, he presents the fundamental concept of *Spielraum*, room-for-play. I quote: “Because this technology aims at liberating man from drudgery, the individual suddenly sees his scope for play, his field

9 Sigmund Freud, “Jenseits des Lustprinzips,” in *Studienausgabe*, vol. III (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1989), 213–272, 225–26.

of action, immeasurably expanded.”¹⁰ Benjamin also claims that, faced with this second technology, the “vital questions affecting the individual—questions of love and death that had been buried by the first technology—once again press for solutions.”¹¹ This idea seems to feature as a motto for the works of art produced in our age. Today, a lot of our artworks explore these new fields of play and liberation which technology has opened up for us. They are incursions into a new meaning of life—and of biopolitics—in the age of the technical synthesis of life. They pose questions to us, the denizens of a crisis of borders (geographic, biological, and so many others), of incessant mobility, of anxiety, of the demise of work (the activity that has defined us for centuries).

We might remember that, dealing with technology as a second nature in the closing fragment of *One Way Street*, published in 1928, Benjamin developed this dichotomy between two types of technology, albeit not so explicitly. In the text “On the way to the Planetarium,” Benjamin addressed a theme that was dear to him, namely, our modern abandonment of the perception of the elective affinities or world of similarities that had hitherto united humanity, and the macro to the microcosm. He wrote about the sacrificial and destructive technology that culminated in World War I and about a new technology—contained *in nuce* in the power of the proletariat—that would no longer serve the cause of domination:

Human multitudes, gases, electrical forces were hurled into the open country, high-frequency currents coursed through the landscape, new constellations arose in the sky, aerial space and ocean depths thundered with propellers, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were dug into Mother Earth. This immense wooing of the cosmos was enacted for the first time on a planetary scale, that is, in

10 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Version 2, Note 11, 45.

11 Ibid.

the spirit of technology. But because the lust for profit of the ruling class sought satisfaction through it, technology betrayed humanity and turned the bridal bed into a bloodbath. Mastery over nature, so the imperialists teach, is the goal of all technology. [However,] technology is not the mastery of nature, but of the relation between nature and mankind. Men as a species completed their evolution thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology, a *physis* is being organized through which mankind’s contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and in families.¹²

In other words, through new technologies, derived from this “second technology” and inspired by photography and cinema, another nature is taking shape. Our relationship with this new nature will be playful, dialogic, and entirely beyond the logics of capital, nations, and families. Benjamin was holding out for an incorporation of this technology as art, not as an apparatus of mastery and destruction. His dream was to halt the current catastrophic development going on in the name of so-called progress, but which brought only death, and to nurture a humanity capable of realizing the utopian potentialities of this “second technology”: “Make the monstrous technological apparatus of our times the object of human innervation—that is the historical task in the service of which cinema has its true meaning.”¹³ In cinema and, I might add, in the arts in general, considered as devices for building new subjectivities and recording the history of violence, humanity can also test new modalities of intra-human interaction and contact with nature and, in so doing, playfully rehearse its future.

12 Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street & Other Writings*, “On the Way to the Planetarium,” trans. Jephcott & Shorter (NLB, 1979), 103–4.

13 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 102.

PERVADING HISTORIES: DIALECTICAL IMAGES

Here we return to the task of reconstructing new subjectivities through the integration of recent histories that still hang over us and dominate our mindsets. In the Brazilian case, the history of our violence is paradigmatic in the sense of having been, and still being, systematically erased. Speaking about the imperative of art and writing in her seminal book *Memórias da plantação* [*Plantation Memories*], Grada Kilomba, citing bell hooks, states that: “The idea that one has to write, almost as per some moral obligation, incorporates the belief that history can ‘be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice.’”¹⁴ Only through a creative appropriation of our histories and narratives of violence can we imagine and shape new futures. Just like the heart-shaped Ashanti symbol of the bird Sankofa, whose name in the Twi language of Ghana means “come back and fetch.” This bird, commonly associated with the proverb “There’s nothing wrong with going back to that which we’ve forgotten,” carries a precious egg and is always represented with its head turned backwards, looking to the past for strength, in the histories written in blood that have been repressed and expunged from memory.

The task of the decolonial and artistic reconstruction of history is fundamental, and the curatorial projects and artworks we have seen at the 21st Biennial are absolutely key.¹⁵ Art is revealed here as Benjamin’s second technology (capable of producing another *physis*) and as a fabulous means of generating narratives with the potential to under-

14 Grada Kilomba, *Memórias da plantação: episódios de racismo cotidiano* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2019), 27. Translated into English from the Portuguese edition.

15 Among the African jewelry collection at USP’s Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia, on display at the opening of the 21st Biennial, was a 20th-century ring from the Ashanti of Ghana. The ring represented a double-headed bird, one head looking to the past, and the other, toward the future, in a clear reference to the symbolic image of the Sankofa.

pin transformative actions. First and foremost, this is done through the creation of new subjectivities, no longer drained and artificially filled with Eurocentric stories, and thus incapable of producing *authentic political subjects*. These works and curatorial projects afford a new subjective stance before core, essential issues. Entering the Biennial’s exhibition space and immersing oneself in the (politics of the) immanence of the works, our bodies and our self-image are affected. The narrative that denounces the colonial, phallogocentric, gender-skewed, racist, classist, anti-ecological violence serves as a counterweight to the official discourses that, in their teleological/progress-bent structures, ceaselessly justify the actions of the markets and central powers as if they were expressions of an inexorable second nature. These counter-narratives want to be open and geared towards the empowerment of subjectivities hitherto besieged, censored, and tentatively eliminated. These new postcolonial and post-national subjectivities demand *new responsibilities*.

Thinking along Benjamin’s lines, these responsibilities turn back toward the dead (sacrificed by the history of Enlightenment and the first technology), their histories and dreams, and also toward the living of today and the future. These works of art foster the “now-time” of which Benjamin speaks: the time of Sankofa. They are “dialectical images” which he defines as “the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity.”¹⁶ That is, for Benjamin, the now that grounds the knowledge of history structures the recognition of an image of the past that is, in fact, an “image of memory; to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”¹⁷ There’s no doubt that our present moment is clearly one of danger. Rather than seek the mimetic representation of the past “the way it really was,” as per traditional historicist and positivist—

16 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. V: Das Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 1233.

17 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. I* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), 1243.

in a word, representationist—approaches, Benjamin wants to recover the past historically as “reminiscence.” Historians, and this goes for the artist and anyone else who endeavors to recollect these images with pasts that pervaded us, ought to have presence of spirit (*Geistesgegenwart*) to snatch up these images as they flash before them: only thus can they save them, freeze them, like a *snapshot of time*.¹⁸ This history wrought of involuntary memory disdains and eliminates the “epic moment of the exposure of history,” that is, its representation according to a monologically arranged narration. “Involuntary memory never offers up ... a progression, but an image. (Hence the ‘disorder’ that is the imagetic space of involuntary memory).”¹⁹ This image is therefore read as a hieroglyph—half-word, half-image. In the works curated at the 21st Biennial, this non-epic “disorder” reigns. Each reader becomes a second-order curator. We quote Benjamin:

image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.... The image deals with the now of knowability, that is to say, it carries to the highest degree the mark of the critical, dangerous moment that underlies all reading.²⁰

The danger is also that of being forgotten, of going unread and buried under the traditional, epic, linear narrative that, in Benjamin’s vision, presents only the triumphs of the victors. In the image, as opposed to the narrative, we find a densifica-

18 Ibid., 1244.

19 Ibid., 1243.

20 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. V: Das Passagen-Werk*, 578. Translated into English from the Portuguese edition: Walter Benjamin, *Passagens*, edited by W. Bolle and O. Mattos, translated by C. P. B. Mourão and I. Aron (São Paulo: UFMG; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2006), 505.

tion of the historical that plucks it out of the flux of domination. The artist as materialist, cultural critic seizes hold of the event and plunges it into the moment, like the photograph that captures a here and now and drags it into other *chronotopes*. Its tense constellations explode the false totalities of traditional historical representation by which our lives are organized.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY: EXCHANGE BETWEEN FEAR AND PITY

For Hans Jonas, and this is always worth remembering, our responsibility is also towards Nature as a whole. It’s a perception seconded by the wise words of Davi Kopenawa in his book *A queda do céu* [The sky falling down].²¹ Rather than raise the standard for a promised future paradise, these artistic devices serve, above all, the construction of *testimonial narratives* that shed new light on the past and on our present system of domination. In these narratives, the purpose is not to introduce new heroes, but to dismantle the logic of the historiography of heroes and the hagiography of saints. Now, the point of departure is a new ethic of micropolitical relations grounded in the self-image of embrittled bodies open to strategies of *solidarity*.

This is a central point, as the history of art, like the history of politics, can be redrawn as the history of the construction of social empathy, above all through tragedy as understood and described by Aristotle. If, for the Greek philosopher, the key passions roused by tragedy are *éleos* and *phóbos*, pity and fear, the success of a tragedy depends on our ability to calibrate the characters and situations capable of stirring them. In the succinct but essential definition given in the *Poetics*, we read that pity “is aroused by unmerited misfortune,

21 Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *A queda do céu* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015).

fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves.”²² This “man like ourselves” is key to the argument: the tragic device is, it shows, a means of *constructing and forming the self-same*. At the center of the tragic process lies a mechanism for creating *types* that aggregate the “same” and *exclude the “different.”* This device secretes the “semblable” and the “other.” Therefore, if the concept of “purification” and of “purity” haunts the device like a ghost, it is also because it is the means toward drawing out group identities.

Hardly surprisingly, Aristotle describes the terrible or pitiful circumstances from which the tragic poet can obtain the best tragic effect as those involving conflicts between friends and family. Hence tragedy’s tendency to present plots about certain powerful clans, such as the Labdacidae. This doesn’t only make the events more readily understandable and terrible, but, by inciting pity and fear, strengthens the cult of these mythic families and of a certain founding origin. *The tragic device draws the distinction between those who deserve pity derived from fear and those who produce only fear devoid of pity. A whole politics of friendship and enmity*²³ can be derived from the application of this device, which, we might recall, operates within almost every work of art. So, the challenge of creating artworks designed to break the vicious cycle into which tragedy plunges us requires the reinstallation of borders within the field of art, with all its agents and characters. How can we promote solidarity without reproducing fear and hatred? Inspired by Brecht and Harun Farocki, we might look to a non-tragic empathy, a solidarity that aggregates while maintaining that “otherness effect.”

The precariousness that is the mark of contemporary art—with the use of lesser, occasionally even abject materials, and a temporality geared towards the ephemerality of

22 Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher (Martino Fine Books, 2011), 24.

23 In *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 1927/1932, Carl Schmitt thought of politics as having that friend/enemy pair as its cornerstone. He also theorized on tragedy, as in his book *Hamlet oder Hecuba. Der Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel*, 1956.

performance—is also the defining characteristic of another anthropology upon which this new art of memory and of de-forgetting grounds itself.²⁴ In other words, these emerging artistic devices, which rise up against the idea of the museum as an archive that develops the ontology of the ownmost—or against the idea of the museum as a prison (already criticized by Flusser) or crypt of dead images—which demand dialogue with society; which install new subjectivities and narratives, updating pasts in order to ring in counter-narratives of resistance, these works clamor for deep political change. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that censorship and violence against artists are rebounding with such intensity now.

THE 21ST BIENNIAL SESC_VIDEOBRASIL

As Luiz de Abreu narrates in his Soundcloud²⁵ explanation for his work at the Biennial, he accompanied a process in Brazilian dance that saw blacks finally eke out a space, having long been segregated and denied an opportunity to introduce their narratives to the country’s theaters and concert halls. While, in the first decade of this century, from 2003 on, Abreu saw a turnaround in this state of affairs, with new groups and dancers, himself included, gaining a foothold on the Brazilian art scene, thanks to affirmative policies that promoted the decolonization of the black body, he has also seen this movement regress since 2016, visibly and barbarously. There is a clear endeavor to block or halt this empowerment and reinstate the process of colonization through a systematic black genocide.

24 I’m referring here to my article “Antimonumentos: trabalho de memória e de resistência,” *Psicol. USP* (São Paulo) 27, no. 1 (Jan./Apr. 2016): 49–60.

25 Abreu’s talk-through, like those of all the other artists featured at the 21st Biennial, can be accessed on the event’s website <http://bienalsescvideobrasil.org.br/artistas/>.—Ed.

In Abreu's observations I note how, today, the incumbent establishment is looking to impose anew the old triumphal rhetorics of the discovery, of binary identities, of blazing trails through nature, and the so-called conquests of progress. Our gung ho *bandeirante* arrogance has never been brandished more unapologetically than in recent years. It is also true, of course, that it has found an ally in the white supremacy that has reinstalled itself in the North. There is a concerted neoliberal effort to set the political tone worldwide, and it is predicated upon revisionist denials of colonial violence, of climate catastrophe, of gender violence, and a whole host of other pet erasures. Perversely, they pooh-pooh all the narratives of violence only to authorize and promote the continuity of genocidal practices. This neofascist turnaround is a response to the extraordinary ground gained by the LGBT, feminist, black, indigenous, workers, ecological, homeless, and landless movements. As Robert Antelme wrote in a short but precious article published in 1948, "Pauvre-Pro-létaire-Déporté": "When the poor become the proletariat, the rich become the SS."²⁶ It's a maxim that could be taken as the epigraph (or epitaph) of our time.²⁷

At the 21st Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil two artists work explicitly with this action of erasing/wiping away. In *I Went Away and Forgot You. A While Ago I Remembered. I Remembered I'd Forgotten You. I Was Dreaming* (2017), Dana Awartani acts simultaneously *per via di pore*, delicately constructing an Islamic tile pattern in sand on the floor, and *per via di levare*,

26 Robert Antelme, "Pauvre-prolétaire-déporté," *Lignes* 1, no. 21 (1994): 110, available at <https://www.cairn.info/revue-lignes0-1994-1-page-105.htm?contenu=resume>, in French, accessed on October 27, 2019.

27 Benjamin had already described this dialectic between authentic revolution and its fascist falsification toward the end of his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*: "The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life.... All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. War and war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property system. This is the political formula for the situation. The technological formula may be stated as follows: Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system," Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 20.

literally sweeping it all up. Her broom reveals the "western" flooring underneath, in a design that became a staple of the mansions of the local elite during the 1950s and '60s. The work consists of a reproduction of the sand pattern on the exhibition room floor and a projector screen showing video recordings of the performance at a house in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. The house in question, once a symbol of modernity, is now derelict and abandoned, itself a witness to the destructive power of modernization, implicit to modernism, and its desire to "cleanse" the present of the past by replacing it under streamlined white surfaces. The artist's intention in this work was to hold up an ephemeral mirror of sand and wipe it clean, coaxing us to reflect on our cultural habits.

Marton Robinson's *No le digas a mi mano derecha lo que hace la izquierda* [Don't let my right hand know what my left hand is doing] (2019) is a video performance that involves the artist drawing something on a blackboard only to erase it with a duster. He works with symbols that allude to the construction of the Afro, Diasporic identity in the USA, where he lives, but which hold just as well for the wider American continent. As the curator Gabriel Bogossian writes in the exhibition catalogue: "In Robinson's work, erasure is an act of whitening, as the complex drawing that once adorned that wall ends up as a large white smudge."²⁸ The racist endeavors to erase the symbols of blackness; and by replicating this move, Robinson looks to draw attention to *our culture of erasure*.

Another work that hinges upon erasure as part of the neo-colonial practice of memocide is *Monument to the Property of Peace and Monument to the Property of Evil* (2017), by the ngāti koroki iwi maori sculptor Brett Graham. The artist produces a dual counter-monument or anti-monument with reference to those raised to commemorate the massacre of indigenous populations in a city of Aotearoa (the Maori name for New Zealand). His own words on the work are so powerful they can't be paraphrased:

28 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil, 182.

In my creative process, I am intrigued by the way history is “remembered.” In my last body of work, I have examined how the dominant colonial culture has chosen to memorialize particular historic events through stories, dialogues, and documents of said events, in order to justify their repression of the indigenous culture. The two sculpted columns, which are *Monuments to the Properties of Peace and Evil*, are responses to two obelisks that were erected in a town in Aotearoa, New Zealand, to commemorate what on one side is described as a “battle” and on the other the killing of innocent people. By recreating, in a gallery, the original memorials that have since been destroyed, it gives the audience a chance to revisit this history.

The two wooden columns are made of wooden slats to speak of the fragility of the side of the story which has been lost by history. The dominant discourse is that the people who were killed were actually the aggressors, and occupied a fortified position that needed to be subdued—in actual fact, they were in a domestic, open wooden dwelling that was vulnerable to attack. The wooden slats on the works are arranged in a v and inverted v format, a reference to indigenous iconography which alludes to the two responses humanity is faced with when confronted by difference, to either embrace or repel, hence the “properties of peace or evil.”²⁹

The precariousness and fragility of Graham’s slat-pillars contrast starkly with the concrete obelisks erected in town squares to mark the founding battles of New Zealand. His counter-memory is a self-affirmation that is neither arrogant nor essentialist, as he plays with the obelisk form, associating it with that of the totem and inscribing it with Maori symbols. “Peace” is revealed as the “peace of the victors”

29 Available at <http://bienalsescvideobrasil.org.br/artista/brett-graham>, accessed on October 20, 2019.

and the “evil” is retro projected onto the colonizing culture. The white may refer just as well to the attempted erasure operated by the culture of the monuments and to their opening up to new inscriptions under the present climate of danger of which Benjamin spoke. Brett Graham concludes as follows:

When it comes to offer[ing] a different space to review history, art gives indigenous voices an opportunity to offer “alter-native” perspectives of it, whether by subverting dominant meta-narratives or simply by the act of remembering histories that have been conveniently forgotten. This is because they contradict the dominant culture’s own foundation mythologies and often question the legitimacy of their occupation. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, the dominant culture have forgotten that they too have been perpetrators of violence. Such an amnesia has led to the denial that acts of extreme violence at the hands of the white majority, such as the recent Christchurch Mosque killings, are even possible.

Much contemporary art works with the idea of restoring acts of violence erased or relegated to sensationalist journalism. It’s an attempt to render visible the violence that lies dormant in cold cases, as if banished to an unconscious where they continue to influence our actions like the repressed memories of trauma. Traumatic memories are, themselves, ambiguous mixtures of memory and amnesia.³⁰ One example of this case that deals with “living memories buried in our psyche”³¹ is Clara Ianni’s *Do figurativismo ao abstracionismo* [From figurativism to abstractionism] (2017), in which the artist conducts an archaeology of modernism (much

30 On this relationship between art and trauma treatment, see my article: “Narrar o trauma – A questão dos testemunhos de catástrofes históricas,” *Psicologia clínica* (Rio de Janeiro, Departamento de Psicologia da PUC-Rio) 20, no. 1 (2008): 65–82.

31 Kilomba, *Memórias da plantação*, 33.

like the Minas Gerais-born artist Lais Myrrha has done with aplomb in such works as *O instante interminável* (2015) and *Projeto Gameleira, 1971*). In her work on show at the 21st Biennial, Ianni returns to the scene of the inaugural exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, *Do figurativismo ao abstracionismo*, held in 1949. In producing the work, the artist had to research the archives of the Fundação Biennial de São Paulo, where she found letters sent to Ciccillo Matarazzo by Nelson Rockefeller, who donated some of the works that featured at this seminal exhibition.

Ianni's piece consists of a video projection in which we see, rather haphazardly, images of fragments of the works exhibited back in 1949 alongside lines lifted from this correspondence. However, these lines from Rockefeller the humanist and patron of the arts are pitted against excerpts from another key text of his, the *Rockefeller Americas Report*, in which the magnate speaks of how best to obtain political and economic control over the Americas. Besides the hypocrisy of this patron-of-the-arts-stroke-geopolitical-strategist, Ianni shines a light on the modern art institution's commitment to macropolitics. Hardly surprisingly, modernism and many of its theorists, up until the 1960s at least, showed a marked tendency toward the aesthetic of art for art's sake. There was something at once violent and negationist about the modernist project. The movement that shunted art back towards politics, as occurred, in part, at the beginning of the historical vanguards, such as Dada and the surrealists, came with the neovanguards of the 1960s, and has taken place largely through a clash with a certain conservative modernism. It's a long process, rolled out over the course of half a century, and accelerated now, with the rise of a new era of fascisms and negationisms. Faced with the paroxysm of fascism, artists have plunged headlong into social struggles to the point of blurring the boundaries between art and activism. But it's not a question, in this art, of paternalistically "representing the other," or "lending voice to the other," but rather of injecting perfor-

mance into desire, anarchizing archives, curating the smoldering ruins through a subjective and political turnaround in knowledge and the arts.³²

THE WITNESSES: DECOLONIZATION AND IMAGINATION OF A NEW COMMUNAL LIFE

The work *Jeguatá – caderno de viagem* (2018) [*Jeguatá – A Travel Log*], by Ana Carvalho, Ariel Kuaray Ortega, Fernando Ancil, and Patrícia Para Yxapy, is an offshoot of the Video in the Villages project, which has produced hundreds of films over the last three decades in conjunction with native Brazilian populations. This installation consists of photographs, maps, objects, some commercial packaging with stereotyped Amerindian images on it, and video footage of tribesmen talking about the "recent past" of various Amerindian communities. By "recent past" they mean the particularly catastrophic period since the so-called Discovery, with the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. It may have been five hundred years ago, but that's a blink of an eye in indigenous time, a "yesterday" that continues to plague them in the form of abiding, unrelenting violence. This category of "recent past" as an unpalatable historical moment, varies from group to group, and has indeed built new group identities. Tribes that were enemies before stand united today in the fight against the racist neocolonial violence the government is trying to impose, in flagrant contravention of the Constitution promulgated in 1988. These indigenous groups, also featured in Alberto Guarani's 2018 video

32 Cf. Kilomba, *Memórias da plantação*, 74. On the concept of art as anarchiving, see my essay: "Sobre o *anarquivamento* – um encadeamento a partir de Walter Benjamin," *Revista Poiesis*, year 15, no. 24 (December 2014): 35–58, available at <http://periodicos.uff.br/poiesis/article/download/22910/13487>, accessed on October 20, 2019.

Guardiões da memória [Guardians of memory] and in Andrea Tonacci's *Struggle to Be Heard: Voices of Indigenous Activists*, reveal Brazil's Indians to be true *survivors*.

Superstes, in Latin, refers to the *witness* as someone who returns from death, and so brings a challenging truth. In our case, the words of some of the Amerindians speaking to us from the screen at the 21st Biennial challenge the extermination policies the Brazilian state has been carrying out with greater or lesser intensity since day one. These witnesses, the conveyors of an inconvenient truth, are, to recall the Greek expression used by Foucault, *parresiastas*, that is, people who dare speak the truth despite knowing that doing so may put their lives at risk. At a time marked by ethical deterioration and political vilification, these voices occupy pride of place as an attempt to restore ethics to politics through fair speech and honest listening.³³ The witness allows us to “create new roles outside the colonial order,” producing what Malcolm X called “the decolonization of our minds and imaginations.”³⁴

If we want to think in terms of a new political imagination, we have to bear these witnesses in mind, the truths they deliver, and the pain of their loss. They too had dreams and desires quashed by the violence of the centuries-long reproduction of the colonial machine. Decolonial thinking, Bonaventure's *disothering*, finds in these witnesses and in the work of these artists the memory and de-forgetting that enable us to glimpse new political landscapes, fresh possibilities of communal life, beyond the notion of nation, beyond the binary pairings of inside/outside, autochthonous/foreign,

33 The dignity of the witness and *parresiasta* is also made clear in Tomaz Klotzel's impressive work, tellingly titled: *Ousadia, majestade!* [Boldness, Majesty!] (2018). The work consists of three photos in which we see the scenes of crimes against people associated with land disputes in Pará State. Witness testimony and legal documents piece together a panel of violence in one of the Brazilian states where the most environmentalists are killed. Klotzel eschews cliché and sensationalism by refraining from using graphic images of the violence, but showing “empty” spaces instead, an eloquent response to the challenge inherent to presenting violent death.

34 Kilomba, *Memórias da plantação*, 69.

fringe/center—and, most of all, beyond the biopolitical project of neoliberalism. These new curatorships of memory nourish new subjectivities and enable the construction of freshly minted interpersonal and intergroup links. More than ever, a “second technology,” the agent of testimony, can be called upon to clear new *playful spaces of action*, so that we can seize the apparatuses and revert their entropic/dystopian program. We are a step away from the point of no return when it comes to the destruction of the Earth. The alarm bells are ringing, and the arts have risen to their sound. We cannot fail to heed their warning. Here and now, “too late” means “nevermore.”

FROM THE FRINGES OF WORLDS

MARISA
FLÓRIDO CESAR

Spring 2016, France. During a street protest against labor-law reform, a phrase that appeared daubed on a wall at the Faculty of Nanterre—“Another End of the World is Possible,” an ironic paraphrasing of the altermundialist slogan of the 1990s, “Another World is Possible”—sparked debate on looming economic, political, and social collapse, environmental catastrophe, and the end of civilization. Given the general sense of apocalyptic dread and inexorable wholesale disaster, the words echoed as if all that remained for us to do was drastically downgrade our expectations. From the heart of western revolutions, as the ifs turned to when in a present both absolute and in suspension, the revised slogan plunged us into the angst of our age, clinging to questions and scattered by schisms. How should we grieve our old hopes, or the old repertoires (political, ethical, cognitive, aesthetic) that can no longer cope with the iniquities that assail us at each turn?

What used to lend some sense to the strange familiarity of the world seems to be crumbling. We can’t decipher it. The hackneyed promises of the end of history—a world without evil, lost utopias rising from the depths, paradise regained—have all bottomed out. Channeling its meaning into a teleology, a realizable goal, the construction of a community of men, the old fairytale of equality, was the historical masterplan of modernity. The future and redemptive invocations were replaced by emotion management, control of our fear and resentment. Finding itself aimless, with no end to propel itself toward, is human history now embracing the end of days as death, pure and simple? What can we do to coax some lightning flashes of novelty out of the gloom that engulfs us? Other tomorrows? How do we produce or name an event when we still don’t know what it really entails?

With capitalism as the sole horizon, Fredric Jameson’s prediction echoes loudly: “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.” In the meantime, we might also remember Gramsci’s famous line: “The old world is dying, the new world struggles to be born, and in the interregnum all manner of monsters appear.”

An August afternoon in São Paulo, winter 2019: what should be broad daylight turns to night as the Amazon burns. In prophetic tone, the words of shaman Davi Kopenawa ring out in the sky of the “market people” (as the Yanomami call us), clouded over by the smoke that devours us. The sky is falling, who’s going to prop it up?¹ The conflicting narratives abound, full of denials and finger pointing. Another disaster to add to the already deadly list: the fire that gutted the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, the environmental crimes of Mariana and Brumadinho (MG), the destruction of rights and of the social welfare State, the murder of grassroots leaders, the extermination of inconvenient lives...

PRESENT WITHOUT A FUTURE?

Various cultures have apocalyptic myths. Eschatological narratives that tell of how a world was destroyed, and a new world and collectivity took its place. Some of these Armageddon are singular, while other recreations are cyclical. In Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, the end of the world will come about once, just as Genesis itself was a singular event; time is linear and irreversible, not cyclical. Nor is it a case of cosmic regeneration, with the advent of a brand new humanity, but judgement day and the resurrection of the few. For Christians, *parousia* (from the Greek for “presence”) is the return of Christ at the end of days, when time and world will be folded back into God, revealed as absolute meaning personified. It’s the triumph of Holy History, of which world history is but a tributary. So, if the Son of God does not return, meaning shall not be revealed, and, as the Christian outlook is the western outlook, the world ending with anything less than the Second Coming will signal the demise of meaning in

1 Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *A queda do céu: palavras de um xamã yanomami* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015).

general. So how are we to consider the possibility of meaning moving forward?

On the streets of Rio de Janeiro, more graffiti: “Bible yes, Constitution no. Jesus will return in 2070.” Let the chosen ones prepare.

In recent decades, science has garnered a fuller understanding of the effect of anthropic action upon the planet, accelerated all the more by its dominant techno-economic system. We are living through the Anthropocene, the epoch in which human activity will wreak irreversible damage upon the Earth and its ecosystems. The convergence of individual and collective finitude raises the same problem: a present without a future. The most fantastic thing of all, however, is that the mythical narratives are finding overlap with the scientific discourse; the modern episteme and its scientific knowledge cross-fertilize with cosmological wisdoms in their potentialities and imprecisions. And, seeing as our epistemes and truth regimes are in transformation, the denial of climate change or of historical events (such as the crimes of bygone dictatorships) and the questioning of scientific precepts represent the confused face of the situation.

Anthropocentrism survives but, in the place of Western humanist optimism, we have only man’s eschatological prowess, his power of destruction, above and beyond that of all other species or environmental forces. Is discovering the power to (re)create or imagine possible worlds the challenge that lies ahead?

From the sudden insufficiency of the world, as Déborah Danowsky and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro observe,² comes the preeminent sensation of total incompatibility between ourselves and the world. The authors wonder: doesn’t this disconnect call into question the identity of the “we/us/our-

2 Déborah Danowsky and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Há mundo por vir? – ensaio sobre os medos e os fins* (Florianópolis: Desterro, Cultura e Barbárie/ Instituto Socioambiental, 2015).

selves” for whom the world is world? Of what world precisely do we speak? And who does the speaking when we speak of ourselves?

The best of me is them
(Manoel de Barros)

The western imaginary fed the promise of a total bond, a universal community long lost in the past or awaited in the future. There’s no lack of paradigms for this community (the family, the Athenian polis, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, the communes) or for its bond-makers (from the god Eros to friendship; from love as the unconditional gift of Christian agape to the modern contract of Enlightenment reason). Loss and promise wove the notion of community. Even history was conceived of as a lost community we need to recover and restore. And in the interweaving of losses and promises, the originary community of dreamed-of paradises conflates with the historical community with its postponed communion, its reconciliation at the end of days. And from the detour of a commonality built as work—of which the communist model was the maximum expression—emerges the challenge to invent community. A debate between Jean-Luc Nancy (1983) and other voices³ sought to imagine this community beyond a homogeneous and excluding identification that grounds belonging in sameness and equality; understand it beyond an essence sourced in origins or collectively produced that is installed on a horizon that justifies all works. In a nutshell, to place substantial community under incessant interrogation.

3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986). Nancy’s “inoperative” or “confronted community” was first mentioned in an article published in *Alea* magazine in 1983; along similar lines, we have Maurice Blanchot’s “inconfessable community,” and Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities”; or Giorgio Agamben’s “coming communities”; Roberto Esposito’s “communitas-immunitas”; the “unconditional hospitality” of Jacques Derrida; “community and security” of Zygmunt Bauman; “the distribution of the sensible” of Jacques Rancière, and the “multitude” of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt.

This debate was sparked precisely when globalized neo-liberal capitalism became triumphant. By “globalization” we understand the process of market integration, the world engendered by financial capital, the speed of electronic communications, the transformation of forms of production (post-industrialism, post-Fordism, post-Taylorism), and the dispute for visibility. Globalization echoes the image of a world that always existed in the western imagination, in its will towards universality and totalization. But it’s a world that also always washed back across its own abyss. Its powers operate in networks, subtly and inwardly. They encroach upon forms of life, shaping them, and upon desire and language too, and upon bodies and traditions of knowledge... They also trespass upon “art.” At the same time, blowback and deviations abound, coming from movements connected to gender and sexuality (feminism, LGBTQI, etc.), as well as black and Amerindian populations. We’re also seeing large-scale, widespread demonstrations worldwide, even if they’re constantly appropriated in the worst possible ways.

Possibility and risk. This abyss (crisis of meaning, value, and truth) provokes two possible outcomes: either we tackle it head on and affirm various worlds and humanities, or it will respond to us with figures of resentment, intolerance, and hatred. Unable to stand this ontological wound, identitarianisms and nationalisms, communitarianisms and religious fundamentalisms are springing up all round. While this wound is also the chance for communities to learn, to weave differences into a tapestry, its closure can also signify a fusional identification from which the different is secreted. One possibility opens onto new horizons; the other clams shut with terror and violence.

This scenario heightened after the economic crisis of 2008, when global interdependence was made explicitly clear and the cracks in the world’s veneer began to deepen. What followed was a dichotomy between coexistence and fratricidal war between a sense of planetary oneness and nationalist, identitarian rifts. The promise of a universal community would either be

subsumed under a single market or transferred to ecological causes as collective responsibility and tragedy—what we share is impending planetary catastrophe: the communal body, full of mythical echoes, is the body of Mother Earth.

So, if capitalism is a system of perpetual credit and debt, an unforgivable debt that molds our subjectivities, financial capitalism—which Maurizio Lazzarato⁴ defines as the generalization of credit—unlike industrial capitalism, which produced merchandise, turns out life scenarios and new subjectivities. Goods leave the factories to explore all the fields of life: the working day, previously confined to shifts, has expanded into other moments of the waking day, turning it into a blur; income has replaced profit, and the creditor/debtor relationship is the new capital/labor power-play. Debt has become the backbone of power, especially moral power, because it generates and feeds off bad conscience. The control it exercises over our lives goes beyond labor per se, because our debt already owns our future. Desire is taken hostage by the commercial management of the visible and fusional appeal (in advertising, the seer blends with the seen, believing that it desires what it sees). The capitalist illusion imposes the figures of happiness and unhappiness as futures to be attained or avoided through consumption. But in so doing it kidnaps our genuine ability to imagine other possible worlds. Our imaginative vitality enters into collapse.

With the new media, a war of versions is manipulating and rallying emotion in a synchronized and ubiquitous way: “People are now asking themselves what is real and what is not,” says Paul Virilio. “The screen is a battlefield, a weapon of war that either cuts the supply of information or attempts to corrupt it.... The danger is ‘de-reality,’ a collective madness of sorts. The suicidal now have a weapon of mass persuasion.”⁵

4 Maurizio Lazzarato, *O governo do homem endividado* (São Paulo: n-1 Edições, 2017).

5 Paul Virilio, “War without limit,” interview given to Fernando Eichenberg, *Folha de S.Paulo*, April 4, 2004, available at <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mundo/ft0404200408.htm>, in Portuguese, accessed on October 26, 2019.

The phenomenon of post-truth, or alternative facts, reveals its root in a desperate need to choose and join a world (including digital tribes) through which to share and propagate alternative truths online, in open-and-shut packages of words and images closed to all dialogue.

We’re also seeing a shift in the relationship between visibility and subjectivation. People are vigilant about their online footprint because their preferences, sensibilities, and behaviors can be profiled and this data sold. The invisible eye of control roams far and wide: everyone is watching everyone else, from the political superpower to the mega-corporation to the neighbor next door. Unable to deal with one’s own malaise, we project it onto the other, and attack without mercy. The social media have become a forum for catharsis without reparation; and resentment, a tool through which to manipulate the masses. If catharsis was, in Tragedy, the purging of excess emotions against excess, it was also insatiable and always in need of another scapegoat, another villain worth lynching. In the media, man is presented with his fate at every turn, as the hero and spectator of his own drama. As in Tragedy, he becomes a god, but the gods of the social media tell him not to grow too big for his boots. He may even suspend his soul’s affections (relief at being a mere spectator), but only for a second because, without the distance that operates in fiction, there’s no returning the tragic fate to illusion.

Undesired, inconvenient lives—those that challenge the gods by living outside the lines in bodies or behaviors that do not fit—are reduced to their biological condition, negating their political standing and their very humanity. Thrown into zones of anomy, they can be murdered violently and with impunity. And we find ourselves watching—somewhere between distraught and impassive—the daily killings of the black, the poor, and the LGBT, not to mention the ongoing Amerindian genocide, femicide, and fundamentalisms that demonize any religion that is not their own. For Achille

Mbembe, what we're seeing is a "necropolitics,"⁶ with slavery as the first manifestation of its biopower—"the sovereign right to kill"—that resulted in a triple loss for African man: of his home, his political rights, and dominion over his own body. "A shadow personified," transformed into a tool, the slave was, however, able to break away from the pure world of things of which he was a part, and he did so by extracting music and dance from any old object or movement. The slave found ways to express his "polymorphic capacity" to survive and transform relationships through music and the movements of his body, despite the latter being someone else's property.

Works from the farthest extremes of the world, inviting gestures of change.

THE EXHIBITION OF UNDESIRE LIVES

Since the 1990s, artistic practices that stress the context and sensibility of social relationships, interfering in their dynamic, have been the focus of a debate in which they have drawn both praise and criticism. Whether called collaborative art, activism, art collectives, or communitarian art, these relational and contextual practices have been seen as an "ethical turn in the arts" (Jacques Rancière); "ethnographic art" (Hal Foster); socially "situated" or "engaged" art (Claire Doherty); "relational" art (Nicolas Bourriaud); "pulse reaction" art (Christian Ruby), etc. The shift that has led philosophy to rethink situations and ontologies of the communal has also reconfigured the artistic experience, in both its steps and missteps. What they share is a desire to repair the world's fractures and unstick its grinding cogs. Among these practices, I will discuss what I call the "exhibition of undesired lives."

6 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolítica* (São Paulo: N-1, 2018), 30.

Without political or aesthetic representation, and threatened in their very existence, "peoples," "minorities," and "social causes" occupy exhibition spaces. In some discourses, art invites us to open our eyes and ears to those condemned to aesthetic and political nonexistence, to give them the conditions under which they can appear, and have the other respond to that appearance. Of course, not without ambiguities and conflicts. Becoming "visible" is having a right to an image:⁷ the right to be included in the image of humanity.

Now, inclusion in the image of humanity has always been brutally vetted. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin's famous statement, history is told (and shown) by the victors. How are we to open ourselves up to the imageless and voiceless? How can we do that without trying to tutor them, or condemn them to the pacifying distance afforded by the cabinets of curiosities in which multiculturalisms are confined? We accept difference so long as it's kept apart from us and showcased behind glass panes. After all, how many of these exhibitions were sponsored by banks or mining companies? Do we need art as cultural marketing or as an alibi?

And how do we show that this humanity isn't just an abstract figure of the Same, but has different facets and voices? In a time in which death is celebrated in our nation, the people from the fringes of the world are occupying the spaces of art. And the audience, avid for life and sharing, is turning up to watch. An exercise in memory, hegemonic counter-narratives, in working through trauma, shattering the codes that deny visibility and a voice, in the affirmation of life, of shared knowledge, of listening and learning

7 Georges Didi-Huberman, "Coisa pública, coisa dos povos, coisa plural," in *A república por vir: arte, política e pensamento para o século XXI*, edited by Rodrigo Silva and Leonor Nazaré (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2011), 43. Term derived from Roman law, "law of images," according to Didi-Huberman, ensured a social place and political representation. The *imago romana* was a prerogative inseparable from republican *dignitas*.

from these peoples, for whom the world has been ending for the last five hundred years. If art appeals to a *we*, it exceeds any design, but it is this formless excess on which my appearance rests.

WHO IN THE DEPTHS AND THE HEAVENS WILL HEAR US?

The Aldeia Maracanã Indigenous University, an initiative not recognized or supported by the State, occupies what was once the Museu do Índio, a dilapidated building in front of Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. In 2013, the Rio state government tried to turn it into a car park for the World Cup. The building was saved from demolition by indigenous resistance but it is still constantly threatened with the wrecking ball. Various ethnicities attend debates there, take courses in native languages, and in agriculture, arts and crafts, etc. It's a venue for exchange, discussion, and learning about traditional techniques and cosmovisions, but, above all, it's a place where imagination reveals all its potency—because it's imagination that turns collapse, and the cracks and fissures that issue from it, into the interstitial zone of possibilities. “The imagination accepts the multiple (and even revels in it),” says Georges Didi-Huberman; it does not subsume the world to a formula, but “detect[s] therein new intimate and secret relations, new correspondences and analogies.”⁸ The imagination connects knowledges and emotions, epistemes and sensibilities that seem irreconcilable, temporalities and actions, words and images that defy the whole vile blandness to which they are reduced today. It revives the creatures of the world.

The imagination is thought through relations, the choreography of connections and epiphanies. It returns the image,

8 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science*, trans. Shane Lillis (University of Chicago Press, 2018), 5.

captured by tyrants that confiscate the visible in order to convey a single message, to its native zone of indeterminateness and promise; it rescues the enigmatic density, the complex, open, and infinite meanings of words, freeing them from vain verbosity and literal interpretations (of the Biblical Word and all the certainties of our little empires).

Who knows, perhaps it's time to learn to listen to the wrinkled murmurings of the world's skin, the wordless babble of the water spirits, the instructions of Watu (the Rio Doce), grandfather of the Krenak, the laments of the mountain-sister of the Hopi, the whistling speech of the Gavião Indians. We need to awaken the heart to the Shapely Words of the Tupi-Guarani. Different to worldly words, soul-words stir the beauty and the sacred nature in things, waking up the tone of the heart, attuned to the great cosmic music, like the Greeks and their song of the spheres. It's a universal harmony only very special people can hear. They say Pythagoras was one such man.

My mother could tell when it was going to rain from the way the buzzards flew around the rock that peeks through the canopy of Tijuca Forest. We must relearn to connect the most humdrum events, the most domestic of occurrences, to the momentous, the significant. An “ecology of wisdoms,”⁹ as Boaventura de Souza Santos suggests, faced with the crisis of “Northern epistemologies.” To tackle the “drama of our times,” we need to gather wisdom from the quotidian experience of community, and the wisdoms of the “indigenous tribes, the Afroquilombolas, women, peasants”...

To do that, we'll need to be open to all the myriad forms of time: the sudden occurrence of the impetuous, the messianic moment of Judaic tradition, which slips through the cracks in clock time, the acrobatic leap that captures the opportune moment in the “to come,” as in Greek *kairos*. We must abide in a constant state of birth, in what the Macuxi artist Jaider

9 Boaventura Souza Santos, *Ver horizontes nos varais*, available at <https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Politica/Ver-horizontes-nos-varais/4/45094>, in Portuguese, accessed on October 26, 2019.

Eshell calls ancestral time; we need to understand that the rock Eshu threw today killed a bird yesterday. Eshu, the last Orisha and the first man, messenger between worlds, reinvents memory and subverts time, teaching that everything can be reinaugurated at any time. Eshu, who clears the path and opens the time of occurrences.

To learn from Eshu, Hermes, the angels, the Shamans the wisdom of passage: between beings and elements, speech and whistles, the everyday and the cosmic... “The idea that we humans should leave the earth, go to live in some abstract civilization, is absurd,” says Ailton Krenak. “It suppresses diversity, denies the plurality of forms of life, of existence, of habits.”¹⁰

The community of all beings, beyond western abstractions, of multiple faces and voices, of “people” of flesh and stone, wind and earth.

Who in the depths and in the heavens will hear us? How can we postpone the end of the world? Ailton Krenak answers with the wisdom of the survivors: “when the sky sinks low, reach up and give it a push, and breathe.”

10 Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019), 28-29. Translated for this volume.

DE-TRIUMPH

The triumphalism that identifies both the West and capitalism continues to operate within art, digging its trenches against the negation of the triumph of the major artists and their masterworks. Attending the *Tarsila Popular* exhibition, the critic Tadeu Chiarelli was moved to wonder, upon seeing Amaral's triumphal works, "... produced at the height of her most vigorous period, shown alongside much paler siblings produced decades later,"¹ what the institution was really up to: "What does MASP hope to achieve by placing *Abaporu*, 1928, and *Batizado de Macunaíma*, 1956, both by Tarsila do Amaral, in the same room?"

Considering that "placing two works in the same space ... means presenting them authoritatively as equals, possessed of the same aesthetic vigor, the same historic importance," he accused MASP of irresponsibility towards its public by sullyng the triumphalism of Amaral's canonical historicization, mixing her "wheat with the chaff." Chiarelli defined the curatorial act of playing Amaral off herself as "mean" and "perverse," and he railed against the institution's disservice in teaching a skewed history to a "population in desperate need of artistic education."

While the critic seemed oblivious to the complexity of MASP's gesture, ignoring the political imagination that lends it meanings at once creative and critical, at least the President of Brazil showed more creativity.

—

In 2011, Dilma Rousseff brought the painting *Abaporu*—which belongs to the Museu de Arte Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires—back to Brazil for the occasion of the state visit by Barack Obama, and the painting was right there, on show at the Presidential Palace, when she asked the then US Presi-

CLARISSA DINIZ

¹ Tadeu Chiarelli, "Tarsila populista," *ARTE!Brasileiros*, "Opinião" section, 2019, <https://artebrasileiros.com.br/opinioao/tarsila-populista/>, in Portuguese, accessed on September 9, 2019.

dent to support Brazil's candidacy for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

During the visit, she said,

... we are not motivated by the lesser, bureaucratic interests of occupying representative fora for the sake of it... Brazil is committed to peace, to democracy, to consensus. This commitment is not conditional or self-interested, but an integral part of our values: tolerance, dialogue, flexibility. It is a principle inscribed in our Constitution, our history, in the very nature of the Brazilian people. We are proud to have lived in peace with our ten continental neighbors for over a century now.²

As is clear from the President's speech, the demand for political support was couched in a culturalist approach anchored in *Abaporu* and the interpretation that the "Anthropophagous Movement is our capacity to absorb what is universal in all cultures and metabolize that in the particular."³

In the maiden issue of *Revista de Antropofagia* (1928), Oswald de Andrade published his *Manifesto Antropófago* (*Anthropophagous Manifesto* or *Cannibalistic Manifesto*), the symbolic and political force of which was reaffirmed by the record turnout to the *Tarsila Popular* exhibition at MASP,⁴ and the retrospective *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, held at MoMA in 2018. At MoMA, in a gesture

2 Dilma Rousseff, "Íntegra do discurso de Dilma Rousseff na recepção a Barack Obama," *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 20, 2011, <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,integra-do-discurso-de-dilma-rousseff-na-recepcao-a-barack-obama,694534,0.htm>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

3 Ibid.

4 With *Tarsila Popular* (2019) and its 402,850 visitors, MASP surpassed previous blockbuster exhibitions, such as those of Monet (1997), Picasso (1999), and Salvador Dalí (1998).

not dissimilar to Rousseff's, anthropophagy was presented as an identity practice of affiliation with the foreign, a culturalization that seems to have generalized since Oswald de Andrade's work was revived by some of the Tropicália generation, for whom the political and aesthetic rehabilitation of anthropophagy went some way toward checking the conservatism of the military regime's nationalistic and xenophobic ideas. In 1998, the 24th Bienal de São Paulo legitimized a similar approach, as its curator, Paulo Herkenhoff, signaled when he said, "I wanted [the Bienal] to have a point of departure rooted in Brazilian culture, but fully aware that our culture is affiliated with wider western culture, albeit with its own tensions, differences, and singularities."⁵ And so the interpretation of anthropophagy that Brazilian art produced gradually cemented the "national identity" as its core problematic, something the line from *The Cannibalistic Manifesto* chosen as the 24th Bienal slogan alerts us to—"Only anthropophagy unites us."

This process saw the obliteration of the political and social dimension of the anthropophagous project, the *Manifesto* of which is packed with more legalisms and legal-social vagaries than references to art or any specific cultural identity: "the world's only law," "we had justice as codification of vengeance," "I asked a man what Law was," "somnia law," "the paterfamilias and the creation of the Fable of the Stork," "the matriarchy of Pindorama."⁶ It was less about the search for a cultural identity than an anti-colonial exercise in imagining an anthropophagous epistemology and law—the maxim of which became "possession against ownership"—demonstrating the arbitrary and fictional dimension of the juridical and social episteme of the colonizer and the political,

5 Cf. <http://www.bienal.org.br/exposicoes/24bienal>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

6 Cf. Alexandre André Nodari, *A posse contra a propriedade: pedra de toque do direito antropofágico* (master's dissertation, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, graduate program in literature, 2007, <http://repositorio.ufsc.br/xmlui/handle/123456789/89601>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

social, and epistemic violence of colonization as a ravaging, both territorial (“Brazil is a six-million-square-kilometer land-grab set down in the Tordesillas”⁷) and cultural (“Without us, Europe wouldn’t even have its paltry declaration of human rights”).⁸ These arguments delineate its criticism of colonialism, electing as its main corollary the proposition of another, indigenously based social onto-epistemology: matriarchy versus patriarchy, possession versus ownership, divination versus speculation, among other “precepts.”

Anthropophagy does not intend to be a conceptual device for addressing, peacefully, through the lenses of identity, the violence of colonization—as Dilma Rousseff affirmed—but the opposite: an anticolonial construct whose epistemic rebelliousness underpinned the legitimacy, importance, and need for the constitution of epistemologies that were *different* to, rather than deviated from, the colonial epistemology. Its backbone lay not in “affiliating our culture with western culture,” but in pointing a finger at the “false epistemic problem” deriving from the historical process of colonization, namely: the feeling that we had to build ourselves in relation to the “foreign.”

The anticolonial proposition of anthropophagous whitening was, however, persistently colonial in its dynamics of appropriation and extractivism in relation to the indigenous peoples, perpetrating acts of epistemic violence against those who were being called to fight against colonial hegemony and its trademark epistemicide.

—

Ninety years on, it is the problematization of epistemic violence produced by art that comes banging on our white-washed door: “Suddenly, the anthropophagy of art is here. With real cannibals. We’re those real cannibals, and we’ve

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

come to devour and regurgitate this art,” warns the artist Denilson Baniwa during an encounter at which indigenous leader Ailton Krenak spoke of the gravity, complexity, and urgency of this revision:

Mário de Andrade put a successful express kidnapping over on Makunaima. And, to this day, everything that’s said comes straight from there. He seems to have pulled off something quite unbeatable, which is why it’s interesting to want to go back, start a street fight with Mário de Andrade... The appropriation of an egg from someone else’s nest is a monumental battle that deserves to be fought. It’s vital to accuse modern art.⁹

A reader of Theodor Köch-Grunberg, a German ethnographer who traveled in Brazil, and whose *From Roraima to the Orinoco* (1916) contains accounts of an indigenous entity that inhabited Mount Roraima, Mário de Andrade took Makunaima and turned it into *Macunaíma, a Hero without Character*, one of the most important allegories ever produced about Brazil. This “successful express kidnapping” still echoes today, as we can see from Chiarelli’s criticism, when, in referring to the painting *Batizado de Macunaíma*, he says that Amaral “seems to have wanted to elevate Mário de Andrade’s character to the level of a symbol,” swapping the indigenous entity Makunaima for the modernist character Macunaíma, despite the fact that his baptism did not take place in the wilds, but in a hostel.

Snatching Makunaima and reinterpreting him as he saw fit, Andrade and the incalculable legacy built upon his work ended up *replacing* that which they supposedly *represented*, an act of epistemic violence insofar as their radically free-and-easy attitude and consequent ethnic, ontological, and cosmological fictionalization of Makunaima annulled not

9 Ailton Krenak speaking at the *Encontro Arte Indígena. Discussão sobre criação, produção e disseminação cultural indígena* (São Paulo, Instituto Goethe, December 2, 2017). Author’s records.

only “[the] systems of symbolization, subjectivation, and representation that the other has of itself, but also the concrete forms of representation, registration, and memory of its experience.”¹⁰

—

However, Makunaima held out, and, through the artist Jaider Esbell,¹¹ his grandson, he warns us that, knowing “the importance of the cultural icons that arrived”¹² along with the invaders, and in order to save his own, he opted for “maximum exposure.” “He let himself be taken.”¹³ “I stuck to the cover of that book” by Mário de Andrade: “They say I was kidnapped, that I was double-crossed, hornswoggled, deceived, betrayed, hard done by. They say I was a dupe. No! I wanted to be swept up in that book. I wanted to tag along with those men. It was me who wanted to go off and tell our story. I saw in that fellow a shot at our eternity.”¹⁴

Whatever Makunaima’s plan, it seems to have worked. If through similarity, the icon replaces what it represents, in the violence of the icon-making appropriation, there is perhaps some switch between captivity and liberty: “I saw you all in the future. I saw it, and I plunged into it.... I was sent there to lead you all here.”¹⁵

10 Marisa Belausteguigoitia, “Descarados y deslenguadas: el cuerpo y la lengua india en los umbrales de la nación,” *Debate Feminista*, year 12, vol. 24 (October 2001), http://www.debatefeminista.cieg.unam.mx/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/articulos/024_14.pdf, in Spanish, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

11 Cf. Jaider Esbell, “Makunaima, o meu avô em mim!,” *Illuminuras* (Porto Alegre) 19, no. 46 (Jan./Jul. 2018): 11–39.

12 *Ibid.*, 17.

13 *Ibid.*, 18.

14 *Ibid.*, 16.

15 *Ibid.*

As Esbell says, “there’s more to it than that,”¹⁶ because “you can’t discuss decolonization” without “first opening the doors onto the native cosmovisions.”¹⁷ And, as you can’t go through those doors without first, in some sense, reenacting the invasion, it is this unassailable and radical difference that sustains the political position of the future that Makunaima has prepared for his descendants: having let himself be twisted into an icon by white modernity, now he reveals that the Brazilian art erected upon the violation of Amerindian cosmopolitics can only shore up its expropriating canons and myths if, perversely, and on many levels, it remains in collusion with, and continuously updates, the old colonial practices.

At the start of the century, Makunaima’s grandchildren came from all sides not only to correct the misreadings of the invaders so long tasked with his capture—“it would be a risk were we to demand comprehension”¹⁸—but also to affirm the inexhaustibility of Makunaima’s transformations and the impossibility of reducing them to colonial whitewashing. Art institutions and initiatives have been ambushed by the *pa-jé-onça* [jaguar-shaman], an entity created by the artist Denilson Baniwa, which stormed the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, where, in front of a gigantic photograph of Selk’nam Indians, he tore the pages out of a copy of the book *Breve história da arte* [*A Brief History of Art*] while chanting: “Indians don’t belong to the past. They can’t allow themselves to be trapped in the images the whites make for them/ We are free, free, free / Despite the plunder, the violence, and the history of art / Enough of the white man taking Indian art and transforming it into simulacra!”

16 Jaider Esbell, “Jaider Esbell expõe ‘TransMakunaima’ na Casa das Artes, em Manaus,” <http://amazoniareal.com.br/jaider-esbell-expoe-trans-makunaima-na-casa-das-artes-em-manaus/>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

17 Esbell, “Makunaima,” 13.

18 *Ibid.*, 35.

Indigenous occupation of the hegemonic field of art won't happen under a white flag, and that's why it intimidates this privileged preserve of the whites—contemporary art—with an anti-colonial movement that reacts against the violence with which the indigenous cultures have been and continue to be targeted. That intimidation is more than just a resistance strategy against processes of appropriation, expropriation, extractivism, exoticization, erasure, fetishization, capital gains, etc., which have hitherto set the tone of all art's usually primitivist approximations to indigenous ontologies. Instead, the intention is to genuinely threaten us, as Denilson Baniwa makes clear in a textual calling card:

Who am I?
 I am the white man's biggest fear
 I am the one who sits at the table with the PhDs
 Who wrongfoots and embarrasses one and all
 Who laughs at the white folks' flowery words and their Curriculum Lattes
 I'm the new Cabano
 I'm the resistance through anthropophagy
 I'm the one who beheads Tarsila do Amaral
 I'm the one who impales Mário de Andrade
 I'm the one who eats Oswald de Andrade's heart
 I am Indigenous art
 I am the contemporary Indian
 Nice to meet you¹⁹

The cosmopolitical inclination to avenge the violence wrought by modern art lies at the very heart of the painting *ReAntropofagia* (2019), an allegory Denilson Baniwa created about the process now in course. In this work, we see Mário de Andrade's blackened, severed head on a platter, alongside some cassava, corn, coffee, pepper, the first edition of

19 Denilson Baniwa, *Aparição do pajé-onça no pavilhão da Bienal de São Paulo*, action conducted at the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, November 17, 2018.

Macunaíma, and a note that reads, "Here lies the simulacrum Macunaíma. With him lie the idea of the Brazilian people and anthropophagy seasoned with Bordeaux and Pax Mongolica. Let us see reborn from this long digestion Makunaimi and the originary anthropophagy that belongs to all of us Indians." For Denilson, *ReAntropofagia* "reemerges" as a "Manifesto, an urgent cry from Indigenous art, breaking the centuries-long silencing and exoticization of those who have always been here."²⁰

That the rupture should be a violent one is inevitable, as Frantz Fanon reminds us when he says that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" insofar as "changing the world order" requires "total disorder, [not] the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman's agreement."²¹ In this sense, the indigenous artists who are decapitating Mário de Andrade and recannibalizing Oswald de Andrade or Tarsila do Amaral are doing it as an act of vengeance that doesn't just annihilate us but blames us. In the words of the artist Jota Mombaça, it projects upon our "unblemished and so privileged positions the responsibility for confronting the violence that gives form to our ontological comfort."²²

—

The antidemocratic onslaught accelerating worldwide makes it increasingly hard to believe that we are, as Dilma Rousseff put it during her inaugural presidential address to Congress, "a vibrant, modern democracy, with full social

20 Excerpt from the curatorial text to *Reantropofagia* (Centro de Artes da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 4/24/2019 to 5/26/2019), signed by Denilson Baniwa and Pedro Gradella.

21 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, reprint edition (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 2.

22 <http://www.buala.org/pt/corpo/notas-estrategicas-quanto-aos-usos-politicos-do-conceito-de-lugar-de-fala>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 25, 2019.

commitment, political freedom, and institutional creativity.”²³ If, for Rousseff back in 2011, Brazil was affirming its “passage toward another bank of history,”²⁴ we now see that crossing revealed in all its instabilities and fictions. The image of *Abaporu* flanked by Dilma Rousseff and Barack Obama begs new readings. The impossibility of locating it within a triumphant narrative of either Brazil or the USA also extends to art. Impelled to reimagine that scene, we find ourselves obliged to rain on its triumphalism, profaning what is canonical in it in terms of art and politics.

In 2013, the image of “the first woman president and first black president of the two largest democracies in the Americas”²⁵ mediated by *Abaporu*—the spectral presence of Amerindian cultures—seemed to have been consecrated as an allegory for the victory of representative democracy. Today, in the face of the present unfolding catastrophe, the gravity of the absence of the indigenous peoples replaced in that picture by *Abaporu* weighs more heavily than ever, showing that the crisis of representation in democracy is not distinct from the violence and failure of the traditions of art. If only a few years were enough for Trump, Temer, and Bolsonaro to shatter the apparent solidity of that vision we had, *Abaporu* was already the plug hole draining off all the dirty bathwater that produced the squeaky cleanness of that and so many other scenes. We, therefore, need to desacralize them.

To profane these images is, as Agamben teaches us, “to return [them] to common use,”²⁶ challenging the rites and institutions that, in order to sacralize them, kept them separate from the profane sphere. As he demonstrates,

23 Dilma Rousseff, Inaugural speech at the National Congress, 2011, <https://veja.abril.com.br/politica/leia-a-integra-do-discurso-de-dilma-no-congresso/>, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on September 9, 2019.

24 Ibid.

25 Cf. Dilma Rousseff’s address at the reception for Barack Obama, 2013.

26 Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 82.

thus one of the simplest forms of profanation occurs through contact ... during the same sacrifice that effects and regulates the passage of the victim from the human to the divine sphere.... The participants in the rite need only touch these organs [the parts reserved for the gods] for them to become profane and edible. There is a profane contagion, a touch that disenchant and returns to use what the sacred had separated and petrified.²⁷

Hardly surprisingly, at the Amaral retrospective, a rite that was to serve to maintain *Abaporu*’s canonical status, contact with its non-sacralized dimension shocked the initiated, fearful for the rite’s efficacy vis-a-vis that “population in desperate need of artistic education.” Their perplexity before this “contamination between works” (an aspect recurrent in a certain critical-curatorial tradition here in Brazil), presented as a concern for the intelligibility, veracity, or responsibility of exhibitions that operate through such contagion, was also a conservative reaction to the transformations of the rites of sacralization worked by these profanations, seeing as, if these rites become innocuous, it will mean the erasure of the dividing line of initiation and so the toppling of the initiated from their pedestals.

—

It is symptomatic that the debate between the sacred and the profane in Tarsila do Amaral has been filtered through the contagion between the representation of an initiation ritual—not a simple baptism, but the consecration of a divinity, Makunaima—and the image of absolute profanation, a man who devours everything, *Abaporu*—an icon of Oswald de Andrade’s “philosophy of devouring,”²⁸ which, ever eager to

27 Ibid., 74.

28 Oswald de Andrade, quoted in the interview “Perdeu o apetite o terrível antropófago,” *Revista Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), April 17, 1954.

transform totems and taboos, he described as a “work of anti-catechesis.”²⁹

How-and-ever, despite advocating for devouring and being against “all catecheses,”³⁰ right off the bat, those pale-skinned anthropophagites were quick to clarify that “in no way, shape, or form [were they willing] to abdicate their acquired rights.” As Oswald would rail, “The generation of Brazilian intellectuals leading this movement of renewal ... will have to steer the nation’s fate. It will know how to manage government and the press, set the social course, and those of aesthetics and pedagogy. It’s inevitable.”³¹ If the anthropophagous project imagined a nation rooted in an episteme whose only law was to devour, it did so in the interests of preserving its privileges and with a view to a position of hegemony, even if these—the privileges they called rights—were anchored in slavery, racism, and other brands of violence that sustained the São Paulo elites and their kindling desire for a “Caraíba revolution.”³²

—

From this complex, ambivalent, and perverse historical process, as Jota Mombaça so aptly puts it, it happens that this inheritance is, in itself, a debt.³³ And even if it’s a debt that is historically, ontologically, and epistemologically unpayable, we have no choice but to do the math: cast out the nines. After all, there’s more to the proof of nines than just happiness. To balance the books in pounds of flesh gouged from colonialism and the regimes of epistemic violence that continue to operate in art, one must first deal with the embarrassment of

29 Oswald de Andrade, quoted in the interview “De antropofagia,” *O Jornal* (Rio de Janeiro), September 1, 1929.

30 Cf. *Manifesto Antropófago*, 1928.

31 Oswald de Andrade quoted in “Contra os ‘Emboabas,’” *Estado de Minas* (Belo Horizonte), May 13, 1982.

32 Cf. *Manifesto Antropófago*, 1928.

33 Cf. Jota Mombaça, “O mundo é meu trauma” (2017), in *Não vão nos matar agora* (Lisbon: Galerias Municipais / EGEEAC, 2019).

the fact that, along with the profanation of our canons, there can be no triumph for whatever owes a debt to the colonialist whiteness that produced the “silences that rendered unpronounceable the needs and aspirations of peoples or social groups whose forms of knowledge were the object of [our] destruction.”³⁴

Confronted with our triumphalist imaginaries turned inside out, we reckon head on with historical moments so shameful we would rather consign them, strategically, to the shadows, abdicating the perverse position of winners we long occupied only because we continue to produce the subjugation that sustains the infrastructure of our triumphs and privileges.

And that’s why, even if we conservatively and irresponsibly shirk the task of confronting ourselves with a view to reimagining our forms of existing and sharing this world, thankfully there will always be someone willing to do it for us, with all the profanation and counter-violence we deserve.

34 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Para um novo senso comum: a ciência, o direito e a política na transição paradigmática*, vol. 1, *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência* (São Paulo: Cortez, 2007).

WHAT DO WE WANT TO SAY? HOW DO WE WANT TO SAY IT?

LUCY R. LIPPARD

This essay, like the lecture it is based upon, reflects my frustration and outrage, and, yes, fear, from the viewpoint of a cultural worker in the era of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro and their dubious paths to power. Culture is always low on the list of U.S. politics, but until the election of November 2016, I thought my generation of leftists and activist artists had had some successes among our failures during the culture wars of the 1980s. Seeing so many of them collapse under the current attack on civil liberties, the environment, children, immigrants, people of color, and anyone who disagrees with the president has been a bewildering eye-opener. Now all I have to offer is questions: “What Do We Want to Say? How Do We Want to Say It?” These queries are addressed as much to myself as to other concerned artworkers around the globe.

Socially and politically engaged artists, like everyone else, have to choose among the tsunamis of issues we should be weighing in on, fighting for with compelling visual ideas. But sometimes it feels that we are spread so thin, we’ll blow away. I live in the arid high desert of New Mexico, in the southwestern United States, so my list is headed by Climate change, Water, Indigenous Rights, Immigration, and saving public lands from the extraction industries. New Mexico is a border state, and the situation of youthful undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America living under DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) is especially heartbreaking; their lives are in limbo because they have the courage to risk their futures by speaking out against cruel and unfair asylum policies. On this continent and around the world, climate refugees are already moving north. One subtle artwork on this issue was Doris Salcedo’s *Palimpsesto* at Madrid’s Museo Reina Sofía, in which drops of water on stone formed the names of those who lost their lives trying to reach Europe. In northern Italy, American artist Marguerite Kahrl is a cofounder of Con MOI, working with a refugee community, and of the group Permaculture for Refugees. Artists everywhere are beginning to step up to the plate on issues surrounding immigration and climate change.

For decades, socially engaged artists have talked about reaching broader audiences—something that the Tunisian/French public artist JR has actually achieved, as have the Belgian muralist ROA and their rural American counterpart – Jetsonorama, a.k.a. Chip Thomas, an African-American physician who’s worked on the Navajo Nation for twenty-five years and anonymously wheat pastes rural walls on the reservation. (One image is a little girl’s face with a huge lump of coal poised over her head like the sword of Damocles.) As Navajo musician and Post Commodity Collective cofounder Raven Chacon says of his own work in museums and concert halls, on the streets and the Navajo Nation, “It’s not for everybody, but it is for anybody.” That’s probably as good as it gets. Put it out there and see if it works. If it doesn’t, try something different.

Conventional wisdom has it that “art speaks for itself,” so even the goal of saying something beyond the artwork can be contentious. James Baldwin said that “The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers.” That is an amazing gift...and responsibility. The world is in turmoil. What is the role of socially engaged artists?

I’ve long advocated for art that escapes the mainstream art world and elopes with life—“social energies not yet recognized as art.” I’ve written wishfully about “escape attempts”—artworkers trying to break out of the art world. (They’re usually drawn back in...as I have been over and over again.) Many years ago, I found my community among would-be escape artists, those who have led the way out of the art world toward life.

When the British collective Forensic Architecture was nominated for the Turner Prize last year, they were surprised because they don’t consider themselves to be artists. Their mission is to produce visual evidence for international prosecutors, human rights organizations, and political and environmental justice groups around the world, and they were wary of becoming part of the “art-financial complex.” Yet they can be seen as part of the activist branch of public practice—that is, art that is issue-oriented and grassroots-based, artists who work out in the world or in communities *with* (not just *for*) the

people who live there. Such work is based on subversion, on one hand, and empowerment, on the other. The controlling factors are the collaborators and/or audiences focused on the contexts in which the projects take place, and how well, how sensitively, and how effectively the artists make these connections. Social sustainability, like environmental sustainability, is all about context. And decontextualization can be counterproductive.

Talking to artist friends, I find that one of the issues that most interests them is how far beyond the art world artists can work and still be satisfied that they’re making art, and—not at all incidentally—still be recognized as artists, not called sociologists or “merely” activists. And can they still make a living outside of that aesthetic playground my generation was nurtured in? It is not easy to disavow recognition by the market and the institutions, and if you’ve managed to do it, we probably don’t know what you’re doing. Does it matter? Is it still Art? Who cares? As in gender issues, the boundaries are buckling and blurring.

The artist’s dilemma—this choice between remaining independent and relatively powerless or being co-opted by the powerful mainstream art world—is decades long. Perhaps the toughest question we have to ask ourselves is what do we value most – individual success or a collective social victory? Over the years, a lot of smart things have been said about the possibilities for artists who take on social issues to be included in museums, though it may take decades for them to be accepted. Ask Hans Haacke, who has always named names, a basic taboo within the mainstream. He has managed to remain in the (more often European) art context by very thoroughly studying his targets from outside—corporations, politics, cities, nations, history. And of course, you can also be making abstract art that opens up perceptions of the world and still take responsibility for your place in it, like Harmony Hammond’s veiled but powerful reflections on queering abstraction that have made her a hero in American LGBTQI+ communities.

Suzanne Lacy, my longtime social practice mentor, is a genius at esthetically contextualizing nonart contexts, at choreographing collective expression, bringing unheard voices to the foreground, if not exactly to the center. She has said that if she hadn't been interested in addressing the art world, she would have gone into politics, crediting Alan Kaprow with showing her the advantages of putting life into the gallery and putting the gallery into life. She doesn't start with a clear idea but awaits what is generated by those at the table. "The art world is where I get to talk," she says. "The community is where I get to listen." Her current show at San Francisco MoMA offers viewers a chance to vicariously participate.¹

Activists addressing intersectionality emphasize a radical inclusiveness. Lessons learned about entering communities that are not our own include: Take part but don't take the lead. Curiosity is good but not voyeurism. Honesty is good. Condescension isn't. You can't fake empathy. Have we educated ourselves about unfamiliar cultures? Listen to them. Who are they and who are we? Do they even want our help? This slogan from South Africa in a poster by Ricardo Morales hangs over my desk: "Nothing about us without us is for us." An immensely important caveat.

It's hardly news that artists working *in* communities have to work *with* communities, and sometimes social success means aesthetic sacrifice. One example of this I saw first-hand back in the 1970s when Charles Simonds worked with Mobilization for Youth on New York's Lower East Side to design a park in a vacant lot based on his imaginary landscapes inhabited by invisible Little People. The art idea was a strikingly incongruous barren hill, a southwestern landscape collaged onto a northeastern barrio. Then the community voted to add a Puerto Rican mural and a kids' slide, diminishing the intended

¹ *Suzanne Lacy: We Are Here* was co-organized by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), and shown in both museums from April 20 to Aug. 4, 2019.—Ed.

illusion of distance and scale. Despite the sacrifice of aesthetics, it was a social success. Both artist and community were happy.

Author Arundhati Roy has said that there's no such thing as voiceless people, there are only "the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard." In the last few years, groups formerly perceived as "voiceless" have stood up and finally been heard: In North America, indigenous people at Standing Rock, in Idle No More and Red Nation have raised consciousness not only about pipelines, clean water, and treaty rights, but suddenly the American art world knows something about Indians. Lakota artist Cannupa Hanska Luger, raised at Standing Rock, made mirror shields with which to confront the security forces, inspired by Ukrainian women and children who held up mirrors to show riot police how they looked to their own people. I trust that Brazilian artists are taking up the causes of the Yanomami and other indigenous groups threatened by Bolsonaro's proud anti-environmentalism, his disastrous deforestation of the Amazon. In the U.S., students from the Florida high school where seventeen people were killed by a mass shooter last year are calling out long-standing political failures on gun control and the obsolete Second amendment to the Constitution. Children around the world are striking for climate justice. Let's hope that these voices don't fade back into oblivion, into inaudibility.

Sustainability has become a catchword, a truism, the fate of so many good ideas planted in the wrong soils. I prefer the term environmental justice or climate justice, which must include social justice. What do we want to sustain? Certainly not the status quo. How about the entire planet and everything on it? How do we do that through art? It seems that the world is just beginning to understand that social sustainability is inextricably linked to ecological sustainability, which is a basic necessity for survival, and for public practice art.

Sustainability is dependent on empathy and downsizing—both of which are hard to achieve in a capitalist society based entirely on unsustainable growth, nonstop for-profit expansion, and to hell with the consequences. Growth of

everything, from McMansions to nuclear arsenals to strip mines to corporate conglomerates to ever larger and more expensive installations and artworks. E.F. Schumacher's influential 1973 book *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if people mattered*² occupies a small but beautiful place in our pantheon. In this century, small is no longer just beautiful, it's crucial. It's not just a matter of tiny and portable houses, urban infill, thrift shops, resource conservation, environmental protection, recycling, and reproductive rights, it's a psychological impetus that's needed everywhere. So Downsize or Die. Halt or at least *slow* growth until some sort of sustainability for both people *and* the planet is reached.

Part of downsizing for socially engaged and ecological artists is conceiving of one's art within the context of unsustainable resources—like the rainforest, water, and fossil fuels—and of independence from big money. It involves building toward the future instead of planning for posterity, spending time and energy in our own communities. So many of us are still searching for our “Postcapitalist Self”—an alternative to the rugged individualism of Manifest Destiny that allows working people a decent living and human rights—which are, alas, rapidly being downsized. I have great faith in small-scale projects and their potential to spread into larger spheres. The challenge is to make the work interesting enough to draw viewers in and profound enough to keep us there, to make us think.

The strongest public practice, like activism, starts from a specific location, from consciously lived experience. Then it has to move on out from there in a kind of ripple effect. If you don't know your neighborhood, you're likely to either idealize or disparage its inhabitants, fail to recognize threats, and choose the wrong solutions as the basis of your art. So where do you live? What is your center? How far out do the ripples go? Are you following them into unfamiliar territory? Or are

2 E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if people mattered* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).

you remaining at the center and holding the reins? Who are you working with? Other artists? Community members with whom you may have little in common until you forge alliances over issues that affect everyone?

For some of us, the best way to deal with the onslaught of urgent issues is trying to strengthen our local community. For those who come from generations of global deracination, it's hard to work with rooted communities when one can identify no homeplace of one's own. I insisted in a 1997 book called *The Lure of the Local*,³ that wherever we find ourselves, for even short periods, we have to take responsibility for that place as long as we're there. I talk about senses of place—*plural*. Listening to the stories of longtime occupants of the places where we live or work is one way of knowing where we've landed, for however long or short a time, and how to address the forces that threaten it.

Twenty-six years ago, after decades of organizing, wheat pasting, protesting, and urging artists into the streets of New York, I moved to a tiny semi-rural village. Since then, much of my activism consists of County community planning, water and cultural resource protection, fighting drought, development, and especially fossil fuel extraction, in a state highly dependent on its economic benefits. Three of my last four books are on local history and archaeology. I've found that a concentration on place (which isn't the same thing as land, site, or landscape) can bring everything into focus, including politics. This may not resonate with urban progressives. However, climate chaos is far more terrifying than even the current political threats to democracy itself.

Gentrification is as common in rural as in urban areas, and its impact can be even more culturally devastating. On some levels, it's a lot more challenging to work in a small community. There is a Spanish *dicho*: *Pueblo Chico, infierno grande*. Artworkers settling in little villages or barrios, no matter how

3 Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997).

well-intentioned, inadvertently change a community. The issues that affect the once-rural Hispano farming village where I live, population 260, are certainly as global as they are local, but it's the local that's visible and it's the local that we have a chance to affect. New Mexico, one of the poorest states in the union, where the diminishing number of elders speak Spanish as their first language, sometimes seems like another planet. One old Hispano gentleman in my village told me kindly that when I get old and sick, I'd probably want to go back to my own country. And he's right; I immigrated from a foreign country—New York's Lower Manhattan.

This era—called since 2000 the Anthropocene—is also dubbed the *misanthropocene*, or the *eremozoic*—an era of loneliness and isolation, as species go extinct, and desertion (or desertification), as the oceans rise and the groundwaters sink. The sense of urgency is so overwhelming it can stop us in our tracks and make us hide our heads in the sand. Sea level around Manhattan is projected to rise six feet within the century. Huge cities can't build a wall the way the wealthy do to protect their seaside summer homes. (And we know from Cold-War Germany, Israel/Palestine, and US/Mexico that walls are never the answer.) In New Mexico, the momentous challenge is *lack of water*, a vast drought, with the overexploitation of the Colorado and Rio Grande rivers.

As things race out of control and we do nothing, as we destroy our environment, run out of water, witness species extinction and climate change, etc., we should know that similar catastrophes have happened to the planet many times over the eons. The blip in time that is humanity will not be missed. It's coming down to a race between humans and climate change to see who can get rid of us first. Be-leaguered creatures are losing their habitat, their migration routes, their lives. We share DNA with every form of life on the planet. How can artists help change the way humans relate to nature, to all of its life, and to each other? It's not too late for humanity to consider the legal rights of nature herself. Indigenous people are demanding rights for nature

(and for themselves) from India to Ecuador to New Zealand, where a 400,000-acre national park taken from the indigenous Maoris has been designated as a person, not property. Land belongs to itself. Nature (which of course includes us) should not be a commodity we can sell off to the highest bidder. It's a community we belong to and harm at our own risk. *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* has advanced their Doomsday Clock to two minutes to midnight, citing increasing concerns over nuclear weapons and climate change. That is the closest it has come to terminal disaster since 1953, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union exploded thermonuclear weapons, and it was reported before the release of Trump's Nuclear Posture Review, which significantly increases the dangers. Everything is coming down the pike far faster than we imagined it could. I used to worry about my grandsons and future generations down the line. Now I worry as much about my son, who's in his mid-fifties.

At the risk of sounding retrograde, I want to consider the necessity to think about history, not just the past but the layers of history and the *continuous present*, as Gertrude Stein put it. We tend to take our national and personal histories for granted, but it is all too often misrepresented. The lies that haunt us and hold us hostage must be examined and exposed. George Orwell said in his dystopian book 1984, "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." Some Native tribes face the past as a way to move into the future, considered by some in our amnesiac society as a move "backwards." History is surfacing more often these days, as we try to imagine our futures, figure out where we went wrong, and look back from Trump's United States and Bolsonaro's Brazil at lessons from Hitler's Germany, Franco's Spain, or Pinochet's Chile.

One way for artists to read our national relationships to history is to scrutinize the way we monumentalize the past. Some advocate destruction of offensive historical monuments to evildoers, slavery, or unjust wars, while others recommend their removal to museums as educational artifacts

to illuminate an unlamented past. But the most cogent idea, now spreading internationally, is to use each one of these public abominations as a teaching moment. Keep the monument in situ and then ask artists, historians, lawyers, and community activists to work on a public reply. This solution was exemplified in the small Italian town of Bolzano, where artists Arnold Holzknecht and Michele Bernardi addressed a relief celebrating Mussolini, whose slogan was “Believe, Obey, Combat.” They superimposed, in neon, a quote from Hannah Arendt: “Nobody has the right to obey,” correcting fascist grandiloquence with intellectual minimalism.

An increasing number of artists are now creating public works that invite us to reflect on our histories rather than censoring memories. Fred Wilson’s *E Pluribus Unum* proposed to revise the image of the only African American in the Soldiers and Sailor Monument in Indianapolis by giving the figure a prouder stance, standing, brandishing a patchwork banner of all the flags of African countries. The project was canceled. Olu Oguibe’s *Monument for Strangers and Refugees* in Kassel, Germany, an obelisk bearing the biblical quote: “I was a stranger and you took me in” was taken down, although later restored to nearby site.

We artworkers have always had to be satisfied with small victories, with raising consciousness rather than changing policies. We can fool ourselves about how successful our projects are. Writer Arlene Goldbard says she wishes she had a penny for every time she’s heard an artist claim to be changing the world. Yet I suspect that most of those participating in the 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil have some faith in art’s capacity to inspire and/or jolt or at least *pinprick* people out of their self-imposed or received stupors. It can add visual layers to the global debates. I always say that artworkers can’t change the world, alone, but with the right allies, little miracles can happen. Hard work and organizing can encourage clear-eyed analyses of what works and what doesn’t. We need to discuss art’s failures as often as we tout the successes. These times call for some

tough love and honesty with ourselves and our colleagues because being effective seems more crucial today than any time I can remember, and I’ve been working on these issues for some sixty years.

So, once again: What Do We Want to Say? How Do We Want to Say It? And Where Do We Go From Here? Obviously I do not have the answers. But the work that socially engaged artists are doing today is even more important than it was yesterday. There is a fine line between skepticism and cynicism. Some say that “Pessimism is a waste of time,” while others dismiss optimists as Utopian or politically reactionary. It’s true that we need to be grounded in reality, however unpleasant. But we also need something to hope for, to long for, to reach for. I constantly cite Antonio Gramsci: “Pessimism of the Intellect Optimism of the Will.” I don’t think it’s ever been better said.

MARIELLE FRANCO STREET

MARIANA CAVALCANTI

September 30, 2018, last Sunday before the first round of the general elections that would culminate with Jair Bolsonaro elected president of Brazil. The campaign of the hitherto unremarkable PSC candidate Wilson Witzel for state governor of Rio de Janeiro showed signs of sudden and unexpected growth in voting intentions, according to polls released that weekend. Daniel Silveira, PSL candidate for federal deputy at the time, published on his Facebook page a video of a campaign rally held in the upstate city of Petrópolis, where he appears alongside Witzel and the then candidate for state deputy, Rodrigo Amorim, also a PSL member, who had run for deputy mayor on the ticket headed by Flavio Bolsonaro in the 2016 municipal elections.

According to a UOL news report, which had access to the full twenty-two-minute footage, now taken down,¹ the candidates spoke enthusiastically to a small crowd, dotted with the green-and-yellow jerseys of the Brazilian national soccer team, which since the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff had become a symbol in right-wing demonstrations. “If I make it to Alerj (the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro), I’m going to decapitate those bums of PCdoB, PT, and PSOL. If Daniel gets to Brasília, he’ll drive out those bums, and we’ll take over this city hall and paint Petrópolis green and yellow,” said Amorim. In a shorter video published in the same story and still available online, Witzel speaks for almost two minutes, during which one sees fragments of a broken street sign with the name of Marielle Franco—a black, bisexual, favela-born PSOL councilwoman who was assassinated on March 14, 2018, in an attack that also claimed the life of her driver, Anderson Gomes.

The broken sign simulated the official street signs of Rio de Janeiro; the caption in the space reserved to identify the person honored with the street name read, “Councilwoman.

¹ See <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticias/2018/10/08/witzel-participou-de-ato-em-que-placa-destruida-de-marielle-foi-exibida.htm>, in Portuguese, accessed on September 19, 2019.

Defender of Human and Minority Rights, cowardly assassinated on March 14, 2018.” The ZIP code included was of the street where Franco was killed, 29220-080. Images of the street sign had made the rounds on social media a few months earlier when, in one of the many protests following Franco’s death, it was placed over one of the official signs of Praça Marechal Floriano square in Cinelândia, downtown Rio de Janeiro, a historical venue of political demonstrations.

The significance of setting up the sign at the demonstration was obvious: to honor Franco, to acknowledge and make visible the public work and collective dimension of her life and struggle, to celebrate the trajectory of the daughter of the Maré favela elected with more than 46,000 votes, from all over the city, and killed in the Estácio neighborhood. That inscription in the urban space would denounce the existence of stories other than the victorious version of national heroes—white men, in the overwhelming majority. On that Sunday before the elections, and on the following days, however, the meanings of the sign became the object of a symbolic and ideological dispute that encapsulates and clarifies the so-called political polarization and ideological splits of (and in) contemporary Brazil.

In his Petrópolis speech, Amorim additionally vociferated: “I have news for you. Those bums, they went to Cinelândia, and, behind everyone’s back, took down one of the street signs of Marechal Floriano square in Rio de Janeiro and replaced it with a sign written Marielle Franco Street. Daniel and I went there this week and broke up the sign. Jair Bolsonaro suffered an attack against democracy, and those scoundrels shut up. That’s why we’re going to drive those bums out. It’s over for PSOL, for PCdoB, this whole shit is over. Now it’s fucking Bolsonaro!” he bellows. The crowd responds by cheering, whistling, and tooting plastic horns, likely remnants of some Soccer World Cup that have also become part of the symbolic arsenal of the right in street demonstrations since 2013.

The symbolic meaning of the rally was not fully felt until the following day when Amorim publishes on his Facebook

page an image that would go viral on social media. In the photograph, he and Silveira are smiling victoriously, displaying pieces of the broken sign as if they were a trophy. The caption states, “Fulfilling our civic duty, we removed the degradation and restored the street sign in honor of the great marshal.... Beware, left-wing loonies: as far as we’re concerned, your days are numbered.”

At the height of the online controversy, Flavio Bolsonaro, who was running for Senator for Rio de Janeiro at the time, also exploits the case politically on the eve of the election: “Actually, all they did was restore order. There was a sign of Marechal Floriano [square]. PSOL thinks it’s above the law and can change street names by force. All they did was remove the sign that was there illegally.”²

On October 7, Flavio Bolsonaro, Daniel Silveira, and Rodrigo Amorim were elected, the latter receiving the most votes for state deputy in Rio. Witzel advanced to the second round in first place, with an astonishing 3,154,771 votes (41.28 percent of valid votes). On October 28, he would defeat former mayor Eduardo Paes (DEM).

In the twenty-one-day interval between the two rounds of the election, the sign bearing Franco’s name became one of the most significant symbols of Brazil’s current political polarization. The destroyed sign triggered a campaign for the distribution of copies of the sign with Franco’s name. A crowdfunding campaign was launched to raise R\$2,000 to print one hundred new street signs in honor of the murdered councilwoman. The goal was reached in twenty minutes with donations from over fifteen hundred people. The distribution was scheduled for October 14 at Cinelândia itself. The signs ran out in minutes. Monica Benicio, Franco’s widow, replaced one over the official Marechal Floriano sign at the corner of the City Council building.

2 See <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticias/2018/10/04/placa-de-marielle-foi-quebrada-para-restaurar-a-ordem-diz-flavio-bolsonaro.htm>, in Portuguese, accessed on September 19, 2019.

With the election over, the dispute over the significations and meanings attributed to the sign proceeded from social media and the streets to government offices. Once sworn in, Rodrigo Amorim framed a fragment of the broken sign and hung it up in his office at Alerj. Renata Souza, Monica Francisco, and Dani Monteiro, three black PSOL deputies linked to Franco, also elected on October 7, placed signs with the name of the murdered councilwoman on their office doors. In Brasília, there are copies of the sign on the office doors of deputies Marcelo Freixo, Talíria Petrone, and David Miranda, all PSOL members.

CULTURE WAR, WAR METAPHOR, AND PRIVATE WAR

This essay is an ethnographic attempt to interpret the “culture war” surrounding the street sign bearing Marielle Franco’s name, within the context of the underlying issues and conflicts evidenced by the councilwoman’s political assassination. The term “culture war” is borrowed from US political science. Initially coined and used in the 1990s to explain processes such as the public controversy sparked by two art exhibitions,³ it spread way beyond the politics of museums and contents to embrace morality and the sense of national history. The controversies generated “overt” disagreements in the public space, according to Daryle Williams,⁴ modernizing political and moral disputes that were much deeper and older than the exhibitions. Since then, the expression “culture wars” has

3 The first exhibition was the retrospective *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* (1989), canceled by Washington’s Corcoran Gallery under pressure from conservative senators. The second was an exhibition about the B-29 Enola Gay bomber and its role in launching the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, held at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in 1995, with state funding.

4 Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

been applied to arguments over national narratives that go beyond specific fields of activity and galvanize public opinion in sharp divides over the nation’s official history and past.

The first movements of the performance of this culture war take place in the first hours following the assassination of Marielle Franco. It is worth recalling that at the time of her death, she was far less known than other left-wing figures, such as her political mentor Marcelo Freixo, with whom she had sat on the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on militias and coordinated the Human Rights Commission of Alerj. Thus, the public meanings of her death started developing with the spread of the news of her execution.

Several false stories about Franco’s private life were already being published in social media in the early hours of March 15, 2018. The main one, later confirmed as originally spread by the *Ceticismo Político* [Political skepticism] website, linked to MBL, connected Franco to the criminal organization Comando Vermelho and Marcinho VP, one of the most famous drug dealers in Rio from the 1990s until his death in 2003. The fake news had more than four hundred thousand shares. It was accompanied by the image of a woman sitting on a young man’s lap (neither Franco nor Marcinho VP). The picture triggered several other posts, including by the DEM deputy Alberto Fraga on Twitter, particularly illustrative of the tone of the defamatory campaign against Franco: “Meet the new left-wing myth, Marielle Franco. Pregnant at the age of sixteen, former wife of Marcinho VP, marijuana user, defender of the rival organization, and elected by Comando Vermelho, she recently dismissed six employees, but who killed her was the Military Police.”

More serious was the comment by Judge Marília Castro Neves, of the Rio de Janeiro Court of Justice, in response to a post by the lawyer Paulo Nader describing the councilwoman as a “defender of human rights”: “The point is that this Marielle person was not merely a ‘defender’; she was actively involved with criminals! She was elected by Comando Vermelho and failed to honor ‘commitments’ to her supporters,” she wrote. The magistrate implied that Franco had

been killed over unpaid debts: “Anything other than that is left-wing whining trying to add value to a corpse as common as any other,” she concluded.

Indeed, what was observed in the early days after the murder was an effort to dump Franco’s body into the “mass grave”—a symbolic and often literal place where the bodies (and investigations) of the majority of homicide cases that occur daily in the state of Rio de Janeiro end up. However, it is in the very acceptance of the existence of this mass grave that the culture war revolving around the signs expresses the incommensurability of two opposing projects for Brazil.

On one side of the front line are those who use actual war language, speaking of “decapitating” opponents and “eliminating” people, parties, and ideas; who reject the very notion of human rights in the name of an imagined nation with unmistakable traces of a fascist project, where there is no place for a street honoring a black, favela-born, bisexual councilwoman who defends the rights of all and minorities.

That was the side that won the 2018 elections. The electoral outcome was the triumph of that which the sociologist Marcia Leite called “war metaphor” to describe the rationale used to justify the daily police violence and “life under siege” to which are subjected vast portions of the Rio population that live in favelas, outskirts, and deprived areas in general. In a now-classic article originally published in 2000,⁵ Leite draws attention to the way in which the daily evocation and repetition of the idea of a city at war with drug trafficking gradually built up over the 1990s a consensus on the acceptability, in the name of the greater good—public security—of the systematic violation of the rights of certain human beings subjected to violent police raids and militarized repression in their homes.

In the name of protecting “law-abiding citizens,” war artifacts are built, such as the *caveirão*, an armored tank-like

5 Márcia Pereira Leite, “Da metáfora da guerra à mobilização pela paz: temas e imagens do Reage Rio.” *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem* 4, no. 1 (1997): 121–146.

vehicle used in police operations in Rio’s favelas since the 2000s. Police raids are scheduled for peak school commuting hours. Headlines such as “Shooting at Salgueiro Causes Panic in Tijuca” and “Crossfire at Rocinha Scares College Students” become par for the course. Intolerable police fatality rates are accepted: in 2017, 1,127 people were killed by the police; in 2018, 1,534, the highest figure since initial record-keeping in 1995. Even worse: approximately 98 percent of cases are filed at the request of the actual Prosecution Service, according to the recent survey *Quando a polícia mata* [When the police kill], which followed up on the investigations of those deaths.⁶

All of this also leads to rationalizations of this state of affairs, such as the maxim “A good criminal is a dead criminal.” Originally used in 1986 as a slogan for the election campaign of the former military police officer Sivuca, a self-declared member of a vigilante group, its constant citation since then has made it into a popular saying, repeated from the beaches of Leblon to the sidewalks of suburban districts, from the streets of Jacarezinho to the barbecue areas of the gated communities of Barra da Tijuca. Even more astonishing is its fatalistic version (influenced by the prevailing morality of common sense), which is heard even from defenders of human rights in favelas: “He died, but then he was a criminal.”

However, the normality of the execution of alleged drug dealers is only part of the effects of the war metaphor. It also contributed to the rise of militias in Rio de Janeiro by justifying them. What we call “militia” today is the result of the organization of various activities of paramilitary groups comprising active and former security officers who are tasked with maintaining order in neighborhoods, favelas, and housing projects. Initially introduced as an alternative to drug trafficking (and their progress involved expelling the drug dealers from the areas where they were installed), they were praised by the for-

6 Michel Misse et al., *Quando a polícia mata: homicídios por “autos de resistência” no Rio de Janeiro (2001–2011)* (Rio de Janeiro: Booklink, 2013).

mer mayors Eduardo Paes and Cesar Maia for their capacity to maintain order and keep drug traffickers at bay. Their methods and agents also show historical links with the vigilante groups of the Baixada Fluminense area and inland regions. Besides exploiting illegal security markets, they profit from the control of various urban services in certain neighborhoods (gas, cable TV, internet, alternative transport), not to mention carving up land or building entire streets, particularly in the west end of the city.

Since 2000, when the power of these groups was first reported, their growth and insertion in political institutions have also been observed. There are now politicians linked to militias at the three levels of government—municipal, state, and federal—and the three powers, executive, legislative, and judiciary. The sociologist José Cláudio Alves explains didactically: “They are composed of actual State agents. There are militia members who are killer, deputies, councilmen. A militia member is an environment secretary. Without this direct connection with the State structure, the militia would not have the power they have today.”⁷

Even before being elected councilor, Franco embodied the enemy of that State, either in the police version—denouncing human rights violations as coordinator of the Alerj’s Human Rights Commission—or in the militia version, as a member of the Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry on militias, whose final report in 2008 called for the prosecution of 266 people, including seven politicians. In the following year, 246 militia-men were arrested in the state. Such visibility has forced the militias to operate more discreetly, without however retreating or slowing their advance over new areas, as shown in research coordinated by Ignacio Cano and Thais Duarte.⁸

7 See <https://apublica.org/2019/01/no-rio-de-janeiro-a-milicia-nao-e-um-poder-paralelo-e-o-estado/>, in Portuguese, accessed on September 19, 2019.

8 Ignacio Cano and Thais Duarte. *No sapatinho: a evolução das milícias no Rio de Janeiro (2008–2011)* (Rio de Janeiro: LAV, Laboratório de Análise da Violência, 2012).

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the arrests for Franco’s death have linked the crime to militia activity. What really surprises are the investigations leading to the inner circle of the Bolsonaro family. In this case, the street sign drama takes on the contours of a private war, to paraphrase the title of João Moreira Salles’s documentary about the conflicts between drug trafficking and police in Rio de Janeiro.⁹ Not that there is any hard evidence of the involvement of the Bolsonaros in Franco’s death, but the investigations have brought to light the family’s relations with the militias. On March 12, 2019, two days before the first anniversary of Franco’s death, the civil police arrested the former military police officers Ronnie Lessa and Elcio Vieira de Queiroz, both accused of links with a militia called Escritório do Crime [Crime office], which operates in the regions of Rio das Pedras and Gardênia Azul, in Rio’s west zone. The former lived in the same gated community and street as Jair and Carlos Bolsonaro. His daughter supposedly dated one of the president’s sons. Adriano da Nóbrega, whose wife and son used to work in Flavio Bolsonaro’s office at Alerj, is thought to be the head of Escritório do Crime.

Victorious at the elections, the supporters of the war metaphor seem to have eliminated the metaphor, leaving us only with the wars—the actual and the cultural. According to the Institute for Public Security (ISP), since January 1, 2019, the civil and military police have been responsible for the deaths of 1,075 people, up 20 percent compared to the previous year, when Rio was under federal intervention and setting records for police lethality. Even before taking office, Witzel announced that he would hire snipers to “aim at the little head” of alleged traffickers, executing them at a distance with no investigation or judgment. The governor has been photographed in operations and raids of different police bodies and filmed following a police operation in a helicopter firing at supposed criminals in a favela in Angra dos Reis.

9 *Notícias de uma guerra particular* [News from a Private War], 1999, written and directed by João Moreira Salles and Katia Lund.

If the “other” side has consolidated the daily war, the culture war is still being waged. “This” side of the front line has a project for Brazil to acknowledge the historical and constitutive violence of its State and society, besides the weight of patriarchy and, above all, of slavery in the visible inequalities, especially in urban everyday life. For this project, Marielle Franco Street is an indispensable symbol.

The initial act of putting up a street sign with Franco’s name in Cinelândia outside the City Council is fraught with meaning. The square was built during the Pereira Passos Renovation (1902–1906), which displaced thousands of downtown tenement dwellers, contributing to the construction of shacks on the surrounding hillsides and the creation of the slums that became known in the 1920s as favelas. That in itself would suffice to symbolically justify exchanging the street sign.

However, I would like to suggest that the symbolic potential of the sign goes beyond that, linking it, on the one hand, to a more distant past and, on the other, to a future. One of the less publicized consequences of the Passos Renovation at the time—also absent in most studies devoted to the period—was the leveling of the former Rio de Janeiro port. During excavations in the area for the Porto Maravilha project in 2011, two archaeological layers of Rio de Janeiro’s history were discovered under the renovation work: closer to the surface, the granite floor of Cais da Imperatriz [Empress Wharf], built in 1843 to receive the then future wife of Dom Pedro II, the Neapolitan princess Teresa Cristina. This structure, in turn, had buried (and erased the memory of) Cais do Valongo [Valongo Wharf], where more than seven hundred thousand slaves landed between the last decades of the 18th century and 1830.¹⁰ Many perished on arrival and were buried in shallow mass graves in the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos [New Blacks Cemetery], which took up a vast area around the port.

10 See <https://apublica.org/2016/07/o-porto-maravilha-e-negro/>, in Portuguese, accessed on September 19, 2019.

The finding is a reminder that everyday life in Rio de Janeiro carries on over thousands of skeletons of enslaved slaves, buried and invisible for hundreds of years. It is impossible not to see the continuity of the deaths and their public erasure in contemporary security policies.

The memorialization of Marielle Franco on a street sign in Cinelândia brings all these buried memories to the surface, enabling a far-reaching movement of symbolic reinterpretation of the city’s history, of the meanings of the nation’s past, and of the construction and appropriation of its symbols in the present. In this sense, it is impossible to forget the victory of the Mangueira samba school in the 2019 carnival parade with the theme *História de ninar para gente grande* [Bedtime stories for grown-ups], which is part of the same struggle of the Marielle Franco street sign. One must not underestimate the impact of the apothecic image at the end of the parade: a Brazilian flag in which green and yellow have been replaced by the organization’s traditional pink and green shades and the motto *Order and Progress* gives way to the words “Indians, Blacks, and Paupers,” alongside images of black figures that have marked the country’s history and culture. It is the construction of a new national pantheon.

The dispute does not end with the sign or the parade. Franco is present throughout the entire city. The stencil and graffiti artwork stamping her face and name on walls evokes and updates a dispute over public memory that is not exhausted by the figure of the murdered councilwoman. Unlike the language of extermination that marks the “other” side of the front line, “this” side draws on the metaphor of fertility. While the MBL was busy spreading fake news, Franco’s closest friends published a text on March 18, 2018, entitled “Enterraram uma semente” [A seed has been sown,” anticipating the potential for Franco’s ideas and values to multiply after her death.

That is what happened with her term of office. They killed Franco, and three state deputies directly linked to her and her struggles were elected. That is what happened with the

street sign in her honor. Its destruction caused potentially infinite dematerialization and replication: Marielle Franco Street ceased to be a physical location to become a state of mind and city project, but also a stance in the dispute for the meanings of Brazil's historical past—and, therefore, of its future. Life goes on.

OUTLAW STATE

MARIA RITA
KEHL

THE DICTATORSHIP THAT NEVER ENDED

The National Truth Commission was signed into law by the Brazilian Congress in 2012 under law 12.528/2011. It was an initiative which then President Dilma Rousseff worked hard to see come to fruition.

When the Commission was formed, thirty-three years had passed since 1979, when an agreement between the last dictatorial government and representatives of Brazilian society passed the Amnesty Law, which saw fit to extend the same protections from prosecution to the torturers/murderers of anti-regime militants as it did to those very militants. With the Amnesty law, the crimes committed by agents of the State against defenseless prisoners in their custody were left unpunished.

And then, finally, along came a president who had fought against the dictatorship and herself endured the horrors of torture at its hands, and she succeeded in installing the Truth Commission: a vital stage of Transition Justice which our neighboring nations which had also suffered dictatorial rule had set up immediately after re-democratization.

Brazil was the only Latin American country among those that had suffered dictatorships to award amnesty to military agents known to have committed grievous human rights violations against political prisoners. The circumstances under which our unjust bilateral amnesty was established were understandable enough: the families of the last political prisoners, anxious to have them released, accepted the amnesty as a condition imposed by João Baptista Figueiredo, the last military president. Torturers and murderers, violators of human rights, were granted the same clean slate as guerrilla fighters who had never killed anyone, kids who had robbed banks to finance the struggle, and young “conspirers” against illegitimate military authorities.

Among the dire consequences of the way our amnesty law gave the same treatment to ordinary crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by agents of the State was the propagation, among sectors of civil society that had not engaged in the fight against the dictatorship, and among people from all social classes, the misconception that it had, indeed, “taken two to tango.” To this day, many Brazilians believe, some in good faith, that the State’s repression against its political opponents was a proportional reaction to the use of violence on the part of leftist militants. “It was a war,” some of the least informed will say. “It’s only natural that there were victims on both sides,” as if there were any parity between the crimes committed by defenders of human rights and the horrors visited upon them by human rights violators. No, the lives of the three victims of left-wing militants—one guard killed during a bank heist, a lieutenant shot dead during Lamarca’s escape, and a poor militant executed by his comrades as punishment for an alleged “betrayal”—are worth no less (and no more) than those of the militants murdered at the hands of State agents. The decision to kill them was no less criminal or unjust than the orders that led to the execution of so many young opponents of the regime.

The *two sides of a coin* theory, however, does not stand up under scrutiny. It’s not a question of numeric disproportion: every murder is a crime. The heinousness doesn’t lie in the numbers. What separates one from the other is that the crimes committed by common citizens are considered common crimes, punishable under Penal Law as a judge decides. Crimes committed by agents of the State against citizens in the custody of the State are of an altogether other order: torture, the murder of defenseless detainees, and the concealment of corpses are considered crimes against humanity and therefore cannot be amnestied.

But as Brazilian society lumped torturer and tortured together under the same Amnesty, a large swath of the population who had not been involved in opposing the dictatorship began to believe that, yes, the military regime that lasted from

1964 to 1985 had been a “necessary evil” to free the country from the threat of a Stalinist dictatorship. And that the killings committed by agents of the State were, therefore, on a level with any other victims of war.

Another serious consequence was that our police remained militarized after the dictatorship—the only such case in Latin America. Worse: they continue to execute innocent citizens and suspects already in their custody. A study by the North American researchers Kathryn Siskin and Carrie Booth Walling¹ reveals that the Brazilian military police post-dictatorship have killed more citizens under their custody than during the entire dictatorship period. When it comes to human rights violations, an aberration of that magnitude only happens here.

The third of these consequences, every bit as atrocious as the first two, was that, during the Truth Commission investigations, none of the agents of the State we interrogated gave up the whereabouts of even a single individual among the disappeared. The only agent who broke the omertà—revealing the circumstances behind the disappearance of the corpse of the congressman Rubens Paiva in 1968—was murdered in his home a few days later. The groundskeeper who tended to the homestead of colonel Paulo Malhões was arrested for the crime, accused of murder during the commission of a felony as if the whole thing was just a burglary gone wrong. The innocent continue to pay for the crimes of the State.

The re-democratization of Brazil is yet to be fully completed.

1 Kathryn Siskink and Carrie Booth Walling, “The Impact of Human Rights Trials in Latin America,” *Journal of Peace Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications) 44, no. 4 (2007): 427–45, quoted in Edson Telles and Vladimir Sáfale, *O que resta da ditadura?* (São Paulo: Boitempo, 2010).

INDIANS AND PEASANTS: INVISIBLE VICTIMS OF THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP

My militancy, since 2006, with the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) led me to choose the theme of human rights violations against rural populations. I was surprised to discover that the workgroup that was to conduct the investigations into abuses against rural peasants would also be in charge of violations against indigenous populations. It was a subject I knew absolutely nothing about. The experience of hearing elderly tribespeople from various ethnicities recounting the abuses they suffered at the hands of the State during the dictatorship period left a lasting mark on me. The hardest part was drawing a cut-off point for that particular chapter, as the Brazilian State continues to violate their rights relentlessly to this very day.

As soon as my investigations began, I discovered that the dictatorship's two first victims were peasant leaders of the Sapé League, in Paraíba State: João Alfredo Dias, a.k.a. "Nego Fuba," and Pedro Inácio Araújo, or "Pedro Fazendeiro," both murdered on April 1, 1964. It would take an article apart just to explain the nature of the Peasant Leagues set up during the Jânio Quadros government in 1960, and extinguished during the very first hour of the military regime, in 1964. Suffice it to reproduce some information published by a North American journalist, Tad Szulc, who came to Brazil in 1960 to write a report for *The New York Times* on the rural conflicts and the creation of the Peasant Leagues:

In some regions of the arid Northeast, the average annual income is fifty dollars. Roughly 75 percent of Northeasterners are illiterate. Average calorie consumption per day is 1,644, and life expectancy is 28 for men and 32 for women...²

2 *The New York Times*, October 31, 1960.

Given the widespread misery endured by these peasants, land disputes in Brazil, which had been severe since the 1960s, lay at the core of the conflicts that finally triggered the civilian/military coup d'état on March 31, 1964. The agrarian reform project begun by João Goulart and aborted by the coup was an attempt to redress the historical inequalities and injustices in Brazil's land distribution, traditionally arranged on the basis of "might is right." Land grabbers took over vast swaths of territory worked by smallholders and got away with it through bonds of friendship, family, or *compadrio* with the local politicians and regional authorities. The promiscuity between landowners, politicians, and agents of repression meant land disputes were always settled down the barrel of a gun.

Large ranchers pushed their perimeters to swallow up neighboring smallholdings and indigenous homelands, emboldened by the assurance of protection from the local authorities and political *compadrios* at the state assemblies and National Congress.

Our chapter on serious human rights violations in rural lands came to include not only those perpetrated by the police or army—torture and murder against rural workers movements and settlers fighting for land rights—but also some cases in which the peasant struggle was repressed by local agents, even outside the timespan covered by the National Truth Commission (1946 to 1985). Our chapter was therefore divided into nine cases of grievous human rights violations carried out by agents of the Brazilian State:

1 — Cases of murder during land disputes: repression and violence against organized groups fighting for agrarian reform and just rural labor relations. Examples: Peasant Leagues, Trombas and Formoso (Goiás), the Porecatu Guerrilla (Paraná).

2 — List of those killed and disappeared in each of these conflicts, with descriptions of the circumstances surrounding these deaths.

3 — Localized disputes between settlers and land-grabbers,

with agents of the State defending or assisting the latter.

4 — Abuses and violations against rural workers authorized to work plots on large rural properties.

5 — Cases of violence against rural workers in reprisal for Labor Court claims.

6 — Expulsion of settlers to clear land for major public construction projects, without compensation. Torture and murder of peasants who resisted expulsion.

7 — Repression, invasion, and closure of rural workers unions, with local union leaders murdered.

8 — Landless rural workers forced into slave labor, with the connivance of local authorities.

9 — Creation, already during re-democratization (1980), of the Rural Democratic Union, formed by armed landowners—some of them holders of political mandates at state or federal level. Impunity of crimes committed by members of the RDU under the pretext of “protection of property.”

2.1

INDIANS, THE DICTATORSHIP'S BIGGEST VICTIM

I had a hard time convincing my NTC colleagues of the importance of including a chapter on human rights violations against indigenous groups. Though there were provisions for this under the law that installed the Commission, the initial reaction from my colleagues was usually: “But the Indians didn’t fight against the dictatorship!”

That’s true, to a point. When I chose to handle the chapter on peasant victims, I had no idea the remit covered Brazil’s Indians, too, but some time later I heard an excellent answer to that question as to the pertinence of investigating violations against the country’s natives. It was given to me by Davi Kopenawa, the great Yanomami leader who has garnered respect Brazil-wide and abroad for the steadfast defense of his ethnicity’s homelands in Roraima.

I didn’t know there was a government. They came to us from afar: a thinking that’s very different from ours. A thinking that wants to dig merchandise out of the earth: gold, diamonds, cassiterite, wood, precious stones. They kill trees, destroy mother earth, as the indigenous people call her. She takes care of us. She was born, the great nature, for us to use. I didn’t know the government was going to build roads here. The authorities gave no warning before destroying our environment, killing our people. Not only the Yanomami but the Brazilian people in general. Roads bring invaders, land grabbers, ranchers, fishermen. They do “biopiracy” without telling us. The roads the government built started over in Belém, then Amapá, Manaus, Boa Vista. They killed our relatives, the Waimiri Atroari. All illegal work. That’s the word the white man uses: illegal.

FUNAI (National Indian Foundation), which was supposed to protect us, didn’t help us or warn us of the dangers. Today we are complaining. Only now, in 2013, that you’ve come up here to hear our story. Let me say: I don’t want to die again. The local and national governments, members of Congress, senators, they’ve got to start thinking about how to protect us, and they have to stop destroying the forest and rivers and making the Yanomami and our cousins suffer, along with the forest. The environment suffers too, along with the Indian.

I have included the passage in full in virtue of the Yanomami leader’s tremendous clarity on the Brazilian State’s responsibility for the violations suffered by indigenous populations before, during, and since the dictatorship. At this juncture of re-democratization, the very government of the President who managed to have the Truth Commission installed has been accused of complicity in violations committed by landowners against the rights of indigenous populations.

Our research, which received precious help from the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), Centro de Trabalho Indígena

(CTI), and *Vídeo nas Aldeias*, identified the murders of approximately eight thousand individuals from various ethnicities as a result of land invasions since the second Getúlio Vargas administration. The violence worsened during the tenure of presidents Médici and Geisel, due to the “Occupy the Amazon” projects (as if the Indians hadn’t occupied it since forever) and road-laying work that decimated entire Indian villages.

In the first years of the military dictatorship (1964–85), the organ entrusted with defending the rights of indigenous populations was subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture, despite the glaring conflict of interests between large land-owners and the indigenous ethnicities. Funai (National Indian Foundation), created in 1967, was then packed into the Inland Ministry, responsible for road-building in the nation’s hinterland and the government’s developmentalist policy in general. The conflict of interests couldn’t be more explicit nor could the weak position the Indians were put in, faced with the overwhelming economic power of their antagonists.

In the NTC chapter on serious human rights violations against native peoples, we accuse the Brazilian State of deliberate omission in the decimation of a considerable portion of the indigenous population. The chapter opens thus:³

Brazil’s indigenous populations suffered grievous human rights violations during the period 1946 to 1988.... These violations were neither sporadic nor accidental, but systematic, insofar as they resulted directly from the structural policies of the State, and are therefore its responsibility, whether through action or omission.

During the period under investigation by the Truth Commission, four Parliamentary Investigation Committees were convened to look into accusations of violations committed

3 National Truth Commission Report, Volume II (Thematic Texts), 204–262. On page 204.

against indigenous peoples: the CPIs of 1955, 1963, 1968, and 1977. The accusations were sent to the Second Russell Tribunal (International War Crimes Tribunal probing repression in Brazil, Chile, and Latin America), which ran from 1974 to 1976, and again in 1980. Brazil was convicted in the cases concerning the Waimiri Atroari, Yanomami, Nambikwara, and Kaingang.

The Brazilian State was accused of genocide against indigenous populations in cases of contact made without due precautions to avoid infecting the natives with diseases against which they had no immunity. Since the Villas Boas brothers’ first contact with isolated Indians in the 1940s, it has been well known that white man’s diseases, such as the flu or measles, cause devastating epidemics among indigenous populations. In 1972, the contact specialist Antônio Cotrim resigned as Director of Funai and gave a lengthy interview to *Veja* magazine, explaining his decision: “I’m tired of burying Indians... I’m not going to contribute toward the enrichment of certain power groups at the cost of the extinction of primitive cultures.”

During the military regime, the indigenous issue was considered a matter of “national security,” as if these autochthonous populations were enemies of the Brazilian State. In 1969, the Superintendency for Amazonian Development, a.k.a. Sudam, agreed to grant a concession of Amazonian territory to some large businesspeople (the regime’s most significant support base) on condition that they could obtain a legal declaration corroborating that the area was free of any “indigenous presence.” The Congressional Investigation of 1977 found that countless such declarations were fraudulently issued to clear indigenous homelands for exploration...

Some initiatives toward approximation with and inclusion of indigenous populations as Brazilians with the same civil rights as any other were ham-handed, to say the least. In 1969, the government created the Rural Indigenous Guard, which recruited Indians from the regions of Araguaia, Tocantins, and Minas Gerais to serve as an indigenous police force.

A denunciation brought before the Russell Tribunal in 1974 stated:

Concerning the Indians, the atmosphere is one of terror. Overstepping its remit and contravening human rights, Funai created a prison specifically for Indians ... in Minas Gerais. During the Bandeira de Melo administration, this prison was put to heavy use. In the words of the contact specialist Antônio Cotrim Soares, and never contested by Funai, Kernak is a “concentration camp” for Indians rebelling against the exploitive and oppressive Funai system.

In addition to the Waimiri Atroari, Yanomami, and Krenak, the NTC report highlights the case of the Guarani Mbya, from the west of Paraná, decimated to make way for the construction of the Itaipu Binational Hydroelectric Plant, which flooded their homelands without any evacuation and relocation framework in place.

In the region of Araguaia, the Suruí were innocent victims in the army’s persecution of anti-regime guerrillas. Like the peasants, the Indians were tortured to obtain information they never possessed about the whereabouts of guerrilla fighters. They were then enslaved and used as trackers through the local forests. Though this “collaboration” with the army was forced, the Suruí were considered “traitors” by those who survived the army’s extermination drive under Major Curió.

In virtue of the cases mentioned above, the National Truth Commission’s report accused the Brazilian State of ethnocide against indigenous populations.

3

THE ONGOING MOURNING OF THE FAMILIES OF THE DISAPPEARED

Death happens to the body: it’s an inexorable event in all realities. But it also happens to the “soul”—or whatever it is that

breathes life into the body and lends it cultural value. Death is so hard to absorb that we’ve created funeral rites at which relatives and friends can stand vigil by the departing body.

It’s a farewell, yes. But a farewell for someone who is no longer “there.” So we contemplate that body for a long time until the fact that it is dead really sinks in and death can reduce the body to the real; to that which resists symbolization. There’s something in death that our language just can’t say.

We then bury that body (with or without prayer). We decide how the funeral will be, what final tributes to make, what last wishes to honor—a request left to those who go on living as a symbolic inheritance, just like the name engraved on the headstone.

In *The Family Complexes*,⁴ Lacan cites Hegel, who, speaking in reference to those unknown figures—almost all of us, in fact—whose passage upon this earth is attested to for posterity by just a score of letters engraved on a tombstone, says the following: “As regards personal dignity, the family can only promote the individual to that of a name-bearing entity, and it can only do this at the hour of his burial.”

4

DISAPPEARANCE AS AN EXPRESSION OF TOTALITARIAN POWER

And so I would like to invite you all to think about a situation that is even more sinister than the reality of death itself. I’m talking about the disappearance of bodies, and all the consequences it has on the families of the disappeared. Not all disappearances are political. In some cases, bodies disappear in natural catastrophes. People can also disappear in the desert, or forest, or even in the city and never be found again. We’ve all been moved at some time or other by the missing-persons posters at highway toll booths and other

4 Jacques Lacan, Chapter 1, “The Complex of Weaning,” in *The Family Complexes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc, 1989).

public places showing the faces of lost children; or by appeals to passersby, to anyone who may have seen a missing child wandering alone somewhere in the street. How many of these people are ever found? How many of them are still alive?

How can you call off the search, accept the tragic evidence of death, when there may still be even the slightest chance of finding someone alive? The doubt never goes away, not completely, and the anguish never leaves those who have faced the moment of deciding it's time to stop searching. Some never do, and never stop hoping against hope.

Disappearing with bodies is one of the cruelest crimes totalitarian regimes can commit, and it's done to repress opponents and take revenge on those who survive. Disappearance was an act of vindictive violence against militants murdered in the secret-police holding cells of Latin America: after torturing detainees to death, the agents of the State extended their cruelty to the deceased's next of kin by denying them access to the corpse.

Added to these crimes against humanity were the cases of "false suicide," where the bodies were returned to their families in sealed caskets. Imagine the suffering and pain of death redoubled by being deprived of the chance to see your loved one one last time. And then there's the doubt, and it lasts *forever*: is he (she) really in there? If they won't let us see the body, what sort of condition is it in?

In her book *Poder y desaparición*,⁵ about the disappeared during the Argentinean dictatorship, Pilar Calveiro draws out the difference between people disappearing in the ordinary course of life (as happens every day in major cities) and the *disappearance of corpses as a form of political repression*. On the disappearances in Argentina, starting with the coup of 1966—during Peronism—and with higher intensity afterwards, with the military coup of 1976, she writes:

5 Pilar Calveiro, *Poder y desaparición* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1998).

Disappearance is not a euphemism, but a literal statement: a person actually disappears after a certain point, vanishes into thin air, leaving no trace of either life or death. There's no body, and so no crime. There may be witnesses to a kidnapping and speculations about posterior murder, but no corpse, no material evidence of what might have happened.⁶

As Calveiro understands it, disappearance is a particularly cruel form of political repression. It affects the prisoner—a supposed enemy of the State—and everyone around him—family, friends, comrades.

Here in Brazil, the disappearance of militants intensified after the promulgation of AI-5, in December 1968. It was an act that seared the figure of the political disappeared into the national psyche. And it raised a question: why would the dictatorship do this to the bodies of people its agents had already eliminated? The only answer I can imagine is: "because they could."

Just think of the subjective consequences this has on mothers, fathers, spouses, siblings, unable to give their loved one a fitting burial and to grieve appropriately. How do you end a search like that? How do you shoulder the responsibility of giving up and declaring a brother dead, if his killers won't claim responsibility for it?

Which brings us, by extension, to another awful cruelty perpetrated by dictatorial regimes: condemning the families to an endless, fruitless search. When I went to Araguaia for the National Truth Commission, I was impressed and moved by the tireless pursuit of the families for the sixty-eight guerrilla fighters murdered by the regime and whose bodies were never found. The massacre, coordinated by the notorious Major Curió, in 1973/74, yields the largest single contingent

6 Pilar Calveiro, *Poder e desaparecimento* (São Paulo: Boitempo, 2013), 38. Translated into English from the Brazilian edition.

of militants disappeared during the 1964–85 dictatorship.⁷ The guerrilla fighters were executed without trial, and their families were condemned to endless grief. There's no closure for the families of the disappeared—whether of Paiva or Amarildo.⁸

In his book *K*, the journalist Bernardo Kucinski creates a fictional narrative about an elderly father's search for his disappeared daughter.⁹ With this, he was able to lay to rest, symbolically, not so much his search—ended two decades earlier—but the emotional commitment to the *lingering hope* of someday finding the bodies of his sister, Ana Rosa, and brother-in-law, Wilson Silva. The composer José Miguel Wisnik approached the National Truth Commission soon after it was installed in a bid to step up the effort to find the final resting place of his uncle, Elson Costa. As his attempts came to nothing, he publicly ended his search with an extraordinary piece published in *O Globo* newspaper in which a fictionalized Elson Costa gives a first-person account of the supposed circumstances of his imprisonment, torture, and disappearance.

This is the cruelty of agents of the State who remain committed to illegal repression even in democratic times and after the work of the Truth Commission.

The disappeared are not buried somewhere far away, in some backwater graveyard. They are cadavers excluded from the practice that differentiates man from the animals: funeral rites. They become *dejecta/remains/things*. That's why disappearance is considered a *continuous offense*, given its uninterrupted cruelty in making the loved ones of the disappeared wake up each day with their grief renewed. Elzita Santa Cruz, mother of Fernando Santo Cruz (disappeared

7 For more, see the book of journalism by Leonêncio Nossa, *Mata! O major Curió e as guerrilhas no Araguaia* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012).

8 Amarildo Dias de Souza was an assistant mason who disappeared in Rio de Janeiro on July 14, 2013, after being taken away from his home in the Rocinha favela by Military Police.—Trans.

9 Bernardo Kucinski, *K* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2011).

in Recife), lived to the age of one hundred, still waiting for news of her son.

The power that colluded in disappearances during the military dictatorship continues to collude during times of democracy. Writing in the *Folha de S.Paulo* newspaper in 2014, the journalist Luiz Fernando Vianna said: “If we hadn't had Ruben Paiva (disappeared in 1968), we would not have had the Amarildos of the democratic period.” Those disappeared post-dictatorship are, as I see it, the perverse side effects of our “ample, general, and unrestricted” amnesty that placed the crimes of those fighting against tyranny on a level with the atrocities of the agents of tyrannical power.

LGBT COMMUNITARIAN IMAGINATION THEN AND NOW: THE CASE OF LAMPIÃO DA ESQUINA

JOÃO SILVÉRIO
TREVISAN

Exile is an experience the LGBT community feels in its skin. I'm speaking of an experience of cultural, emotional, sexual non-belonging that is, given its absurd breadth, an existential exile of sorts. From the very moment they discover they are different, that is, that they diverge from the established norm, the sense of exile is inevitable for LGBTs. Not that it's exclusive to this group. Other socially marginalized segments know precisely what it feels like: blacks, the disabled, Amerindians, and a host of others who, for multiple reasons, feel like they're in dissonance with a supposedly healthy majority.

Recognizing from early childhood that they are on the outside looking in, these children develop a potentially disastrous understanding of a reality in which bullying is often the most immediate, though not, by any means, the only symptom of being a stranger in the nest. Adolescence across the board comes with a natural sense of not belonging, as it's a phase during which the world always looks too foreign to call one's own. But teenage LGBTs carry extra weight: being off-kilter in terms of sexuality and/or gender. As such, a certain redoubled understanding is required here. For these kids, it's a matter of inventing another society to which they can belong—supposing any such can exist. During a period of life in which we draw the first broad strokes of the adult personality, rethinking the culture that has set the norms and the margins of belonging is a Herculean task. Understanding oneself as a misfit means having to craft a new possible world, even if only in the imagination. In the midst of all this confusion, guilt, and suffering, coming out of the wardrobe of heteronormativity implies having to rethink one's culture, one's society, one's time. That's an insane task to expect of a teenager. One could say that, for the excluded, that's where the crucial labor of building or imagining new communities in which to live—to survive—really begins.

So, just imagine what these experiences of exile were like for young LGBTs back in the 1960s-'70s, when we felt invisible, guilty, offended, and rejected. All that lay within our grasp was the worst possible self-image, the label of degenerate,

sicko, sinner, threat. We suffered all sorts of slander and attack in the media, in biased news stories under aggressive titles. Take the following front-page headlines from *Notícias Populares*, in São Paulo: “Lesbian murdered Dulcinea because she rejected her love,” “Homosexuals burgle boutiques,” or “I escaped Homosexual Hell.” On TV, we were comedy fodder, the butt of gay-baiting and stereotyping, especially through the figure of the effeminate gay man.

In this thornbush of solitude, where many hid in wardrobes and caves, our desire kept us alive and full of lust. The first step was to find our kind. With our biological families averse to our sexuality, we felt obliged to seek out friendships based on affinities of desire. Like so many homosexual men of my generation, my search drove me underground, where unpredictability reigned. We took to whatever nooks and crannies of society our desires could wriggle into. Besides private parties at friends’ houses, we met in public toilets, parks, movie theaters, and the few semi-tolerated bars and clubs, or even the odd hetero sauna where furtive trysts were possible but often dangerous. Living clandestinely was part of the *guei*,¹ lesbian, and transsexual experience of our adolescence. Of course, we had our own between-the-lines repertoire. In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *Little Prince*, I found echoes of my own feelings in the relationship between a boy and an older man. I went to the movies to drool over James Dean and Marlon Brando, among other idols. I scoured songs by The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Maria Bethânia, Caetano Veloso, and Ney Matogrosso for traces of homoeroticism. These were just some of the ways I found to breach the boundaries in search of the lost self-image.

It was this drive that led me to gather together the first LGBT rights group. When I came back to Brazil after three years of political self-exile in California and Mexico, the dictatorship we were living under had exacerbated my sense of loneliness. So I got some people together and formed

1 A phonetic Portuguese spelling of the word “gay” used at the time.—Ed.

Somos – Grupo de Afirmação Homossexual [We Are—Homosexual Affirmation Group]. It was 1978. That same year we founded the rag *Lampião da Esquina*, once again aiming to create a solidary community for LGBTs and tee-up a fight for gay rights. As a monthly publication available through newsstands nationwide, *Lampião* had a broad geographic reach and commensurate cultural scope. It all started with Winston Leyland, editor of the monthly *Gay Sunshine* in San Francisco, California. Early in 1978, Leyland came down to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, looking for material by LGBT authors for an anthology—*Now the Volcano: An Anthology of Latin American Gay Literature*. When Darcy Penteadó threw a party for Leyland at his apartment in São Paulo, I met many of *Lampião*’s future editors. I’d been knocked out by the articles in *Gay Sunshine* since my time in Berkeley/San Francisco, in the early 1970s. My friends and I used to celebrate the arrival of each new issue, and we’d discuss the contents fervently. The interviews with illustrious homosexuals were particularly fascinating—people like Jean Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Gore Vidal. At this get-together at Penteadó’s, we asked ourselves why there was nothing like it for the LGBT community in Brazil. So we set about filling the void, and our maiden issue came out in April 1978.

When Aguinaldo Silva, who became editor-in-chief, suggested *Lampião* as the title, I was one of the least enthusiastic. I can’t recall what countersuggestion I made, but I was outvoted anyway. Silva was going for an ironic take on *Lampião*, the northeastern Brazilian outlaw-cum-folk hero, a genuine macho backlander, hence the tabloid’s logo, which featured the typical *cangaceiro* hat with two eyelike balls underneath, one white, the other black (*Lampião* was apparently cross-eyed) and a straight line for a nose. Of course, this eye-and-nose combo was visually ambiguous, as it could just as well have been testicles and a penis. But history is full of surprises, and it turns out someone already held a patent for the title *Lampião*, so we had to modify it a bit. As the publisher that was going to handle the paper was called *Esquina* [Cor-

ner], we opted for *Lampião da Esquina* (roughly: Corner-boy Lampião). In the general dither caused by the dictatorship back then, this unusual name took on a special meaning. Besides seeking to represent the LGBT community, the main aim was to fight against invisibility and offer a beacon for all those languishing in the exile that came with being LGBT in Brazil. Hence the second sense of the word *lâmpião*, lamp, light post. We wanted to send up a flare for our peers. Before long, the media was touting the paper as “the mouthpiece of Brazil’s homosexuals.”

We decided that *Lampião* should be headquartered in Rio de Janeiro, more specifically in Lapa, one of the cheapest neighborhoods in the downtown area. There was a reason for that: chronic financial difficulties. Aguinaldo Silva, who was living in Santa Teresa at the time, provided much of the structure, even putting his friend and private secretary at our disposal. For obvious reasons, Silva took the post of editor-in-chief. As the founding editors were split between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, we decided there should be a team in each city, with the meetings alternating between the two. It didn’t take us long to realize the impracticality of that idea. As we had to pay our fare out of our own pockets, shuttling between the two cities was just too expensive. So the agenda meetings ended up being fixed in Rio de Janeiro, and Penteadó and I attended whenever we could.

Initially, the team of editors consisted of eleven men, among journalists, authors, artists, and intellectuals—though one member pulled out right at the start. But where were the women? We weren’t excluding them; we just couldn’t find them. We’d done some headhunting among our lesbian friends, and a few names popped up, but they all declined. I remember two, in São Paulo: a journalist and a visual artist. They refused on the grounds that it would have meant putting their faces out there as gay. There was an extra weight to being a homosexual woman back then. Though we had some feminist publications, being openly lesbian was almost unthinkable—even if many closet lesbians were active on the feminist scene. A more di-

rect lesbian presence at *Lampião* only came about in May 1979, when Feminist Lesbians, a subgroup of *Somos-SP*, produced a four-page spread for the magazine, enumerating the difficulties of being lesbian in Brazil.

The blowback from the dictatorship came right from issue number zero, which ran a long piece I wrote in defense of the journalist Celso Curi, who was being charged with moral turpitude under the recently installed Press Law. The press had adopted self-censorship, and Curi had tried to get around that in his LGBT-gearred column “Coluna do Meio,” which he’d been writing in the *Última Hora* newspaper in São Paulo since 1976. The column’s mocking tone was set right from the title—*Coluna do Meio* [Middle column]—and it featured news, jokes, and even a rather elegant personal ads service. Despite being a major sales draw for the paper, Curi was fired, so I defended him in my piece, and the Justice Ministry accused us of moral turpitude too. We were hounded by the courts and the cops, eager to shut us down. The whole editing team was photographed, branded ‘persons of interest,’ and interrogated by the police. At one of my interrogations, it became crystal clear that these people didn’t have a clue what real homosexuals were like. I turned up in a suit and a tie, accompanied by a lawyer from the Union of Journalists, and the authorities were a bit spun because I didn’t fit any of their hackneyed stereotypes. My homosexuality was cloaked because they just couldn’t recognize it. Perplexed by my respectability, the inspector on duty asked me how he ought to refer to me. I said straight out, “call me a fag.” That was nothing new for us; that was how *Lampião* and *Somos* worked: it was all about drawing attention to our existence.

In our writing, it was a priority for us to revel in the ample, thriving lingo of LGBT subculture. The first step was to own the terms society used to offend us and repress us, draining them of their pejorative charge and laying bare their linguistic meanings and social representativeness. This “owning” extended to camping it up, which was something that didn’t go down well in certain gay circles. “Poofery” filled the paper’s

pages unapologetically just to show that it in no way detracted from our analyses or diminished our opinions. Inevitably, we were considered a danger to society, like the bearers of an infectious disease. The nature of the investigation we were subjected to clearly showed just how badly we stuck in the official craw. At this time of legal/criminal persecution, we were informed by some gays in the know that the official at the Justice Ministry tasked with our investigation had himself been accused of being queer in the past. He was probably terrified that our “fag rag” would blow the lid on that juicy bit of gossip in our social column.

Another characteristic of *Lampião* was its combativeness, and not only with those on the right of the political spectrum. The left, of which we considered ourselves a part, didn’t take us seriously either. Social movements not directly associated with the revolution—the “greater struggle”—were of secondary importance, if that. Like feminism, the black movement, environmentalism, LGBT rights ranked among the “lesser concerns.” Though it went against our grain, it was a problem we had to tackle. One cover issue of *Lampião* addressed the political persecution of homosexuals in Cuba—a subject the left kept under wraps, as, for them, the Cuban revolution was sacrosanct.

We really were daring, totally unafraid to drag up forgotten themes or take on the prevailing intellectual beliefs of the day. But we had some allies too. When Fernando Gabeira came back from exile and caused a hullabaloo in Rio with his crocheted thong, *Lampião* interviewed him. It yielded one of the most compelling reflections on sexuality I can recall coming from the left. A quote from Gabeira emblazoned the front page of issue #18, in November 1979: “You can’t wait for seventy years (of revolution) to finally have an orgasm.”

Lampião strove to galvanize a community imagined by and for LGBTs. Excluded from power, we had to rely on solidarity. When Fernando Chinaglia’s distributor of newspapers and magazines, the biggest back in the day, summarily canceled our nationwide distribution, alleging “pornographic” content, we had to cobble together regional distribution

deals. To do that, we needed local LGBT groups to convince the newsstands to carry the paper. Someone had to do the leg work. On one of these rounds in São Paulo, helping out with the distribution, someone filched our meager monthly funds from my bag. Later, I had to go back and gather up the unsold stock. The box-room down the back of my apartment was always blocked up with stacks of old issues.

But if *Lampião* envisaged the creation of a community we could call our own, it also fought for the formation of others. We made alliances with other segments with their own struggles and supported their innovative politics as nascent social movements. We ceded column inches to feminists, the black movement, indigenous and environmental activists, inviting their representatives to write for us. We gave feminist women’s congresses in Rio and São Paulo ample coverage and railed against Brazilian racism. We interviewed various black movement leaders, including Abdias Nascimento and Lecy Brandão. We plunged head-on into the campaign against Amazonian deforestation, proposed as an economic solution by the dictatorial regime under General Figueiredo. These political actions stemmed from our dissatisfaction with those who passed themselves off as the prophets of a more egalitarian society while proposing a social transformation that excluded segments of society disdained in their revolutionary manuals.

Many of the ideas and practices *Lampião da Esquina* did a lot to foster remain surprisingly current.² Just the other day, a young university lecturer wrote to me enthusing about an article I’d published in *Lampião* in June 1980, in which I’d proposed a bold sociopolitical project influenced by the anarcho-individualist thought of the German philosopher Max Stirner. Rereading the piece, I saw that the article really of-

2 All thirty-seven issues (plus three special issues) of *Lampião da Esquina*, which circulated from April 1978 to June 1981, can be consulted on the website of the Dignidade group, in Curitiba: <http://www.grupodignidade.org.br/projetos/lampiao-da-esquina/>, in Portuguese.

ferred quite a rousing summary of that which was driving me politically back then. I guess it also expressed a certain political disquiet that was circulating within the paper itself, and, by way of illustration, below are some excerpts that show how *Lampião da Esquina* sought to create new communities within Brazilian democracy, then as now.

TOWARD A POLITICS OF THE MINOR: FAGS AND LESBIANS INAUGURATE UTOPIA³

to those who dare, dared, and shall dare
(copyright: Angela Ro Ro)

When I think in terms of the possible, we, from the so-called minority movements, not only have the power to transform society but to do so through alternative, transgressive political forms of our own making. I believe this will only be possible by agency of a profound critique of the political parties as they exist today in our bourgeoisie democracies, and whose models are basically copied by the socialist groups now vying for power.

There are some fundamental differences between us and the political parties. The parties are organized with one thing in mind, winning power, and to do that they'll patter on in the name of other classes, like ventriloquists. We, on the other hand, in a homosexual political praxis (part of a politics of maligned groups), will speak for ourselves and of our daily existence, taking a stance against power....

For me, alternative politics involves forms of praxis that stand outside party politics and beyond mere power-play. In other words, ours is a truly autonomous homosexual movement that strives to oppose the antiquated style of party politics that is presented to us as the only possible form of left-wing political participation. This has led us to rediscuss

³ Excerpt from an article published in *Lampião da Esquina* (Rio de Janeiro), year 3, no. 25 (June 1980): 9–10.

the present concept of democracy, criticizing its mechanisms of persuasion, which take certain attitudes and turn them into majority standards. In other words, we're out to show that what lies behind the "democratic apparatus" is a far-from-democratic manipulation, insofar as the powers-that-be are the masters of that apparatus....

What does it mean to stand against power? I think it means being more concerned with how politics should be done than with the rigid goals outlined in the revolutionary manuals. By that I mean: the new forms of praxis and questioning will begin with a discussion of the old political forms still present in our heads; forms that are as old as those of our fathers and forefathers.... Our politics is patriarchal, structured around the figure of the Hero, the Leader, the Saint, the icons of Normality.... In our praxis, the patriarchy needs to be more frequently identified as a primary component of both our cultures and our "socialist militancy".... Yes, indeed: we live like soldiers fighting for the Holy Cause and its Truth.

Now, if we see ourselves as the heretics against the sacrosanct order, it follows that all we can achieve is to transform our heresies into new dogmas, a new orthodoxy.... We can only avoid reproducing the tactics of the repressor if our praxis sheds the activism that, being mechanical and compulsive, ends up being conformist. I mean, our praxis must cease to sublimate our drives and allow homosexual desire to flourish in all its subversive potential....

... So how do we relativize power? By asserting our "abnormality," ambiguity, and creativity; by breaking with the decision-making CENTERS where power pools. Our meaning lies on the fringe. That's why nothing is macro or priority for us. We prefer the micro, the individual, the infinitely specific: you can only reach the whole through its parts, from the atomic up, where the species reflects itself, taking roots (...). This is what I call the POLITICS OF THE MINOR....

... To attack the power that created this ORDER, we must disconcert it by opposing this manipulating politics based on hegemonies, of which the proletariat is one. A message: the

working class is indeed one of the agents of social change because it drives economic transformation. But as we do not accept the presupposition that economic transformation is the only transformation, we reject the hegemony of a supposed revolutionary class. Mainly because it's a vague concept which intellectuals, technocrats, and political scientists—the self-styled representatives of the sacralized working class—created to legitimize their power....

Demystifying the transformative hegemony of the proletariat means breaking the bounds and giving the mad, the elderly, the young, the ecologists, the Indians, the blacks, the homosexuals, women, hookers—in short, all of those minority blocks that row against the tide—their voice as agents of transformation. And that will undoubtedly pose a problem for the hegemonic forms and their monopoly over power....

Creating subversive forms of politics means subverting subversion itself...; we've had enough of modernizing the discourse of patriarchal leftists who want to herd the homosexuals back into the party fold. We must critique the parties as manipulators and doctrinaires, peddlers of false democratic promises.... There is no salvation in the hero/patron saint, be he Lenin, Trotsky, Bakunin, the Pope, or Lula. So long as we follow heroes, we'll have dogma; and dogmas need militancy, crusades, power wars.

Against this, perhaps the means towards UTOPIA lie within ourselves: hence the need to develop each and every one of us, with our deepest-rooted specificities as unique beings. Transformation lies in individualities because we are the true owners of ourselves. So, being an individual is up-front subversion: our infinite variety drives an ongoing invention that demands the new. We need to breathe imagination, mystery, and ambiguity into politics, considered today a field of science. And we want to bring along our bodies, our brains, our concepts, our daily lives, the madness of each individual in his or her storm of becoming....

... The only way we can ensure our subversiveness and not be herded back into the fold is for each of us to be as fag and

lezzie as we can be, as disgusting and so unpalatable to the power-peddlers as we can make ourselves.... The more deeply we explore what makes us different to the instituted normalcy (compulsory heterosexual society), the more indigestible we become, and so the greater our power to turn the tables.

“The struggle against power is a struggle of memory against amnesia.” If the 1980s taught us to remember, let us not fail to keep aflame our disenchantment with our idols. Let's not try to recreate heroes, copy models, or beatify saints of our own. We don't need Tranny Martyrs, Patron Saints of Queerdom, or a Lesbian High Priestess. Let's avoid the error of heaping new promises upon the old; let's unlearn the playbooks that divide the world into heroes and villains. If class society fills us with contradictions, it's not in its name that we will second the promise of paradise. Paradise does not exist because all is resolved in Paradise. What makes the real world so delicious is its inexhaustible wellspring of challenges, which topples all theories and forces our minds to invent. ... [T]o the best of our abilities, utopia.

“THE PRETTIEST WOMAN IN BRAZIL IS A MAN”

AMARA MOIRA

Anyone who lived through the 1980s and '90s will relate the title of this essay to a specific person, considered by the article dedicated to her in *Playboy* magazine in May 1984, alongside a controversial photographic essay, as “a mistake of nature like many others, except this time the mistake deceives anyone.” Roberta Close. The first trans woman to pose nude for *Playboy*, with the two-hundred-thousand-copy print run selling out in three days, a record that led to a new photo essay of hers in the July issue of the same year, this time accompanied by an article by the psychoanalyst Eduardo Mascarenhas titled “Roberta Close Is Also Democracy.”

However, despite being responsible for the high sales of those issues, in both cases she featured on the magazine's cover in a secondary role, even though the number of pages reserved for her was equal to or even larger than those of the main attraction (ten against ten in May, and eleven against eight in July). The motivation for doing so is obvious: the main model serves as an alibi for whoever buys the magazine, allowing readers to indulge their desires without having their sexual orientation questioned.

Such caution was justified, given the severe criticism directed at the publication (see, for example, the article by the journalist Eli Halfoun: “Women Have Lost Ground: Playboy's Attraction this Month is a Man”¹). Erasmo Carlos felt it personally when he decided to jump on the bandwagon and invite her to star in his music video *Dá um close nela* [loosely translated as “Close in on her”], which led to rumors of his having an affair with the model. According to Carlos, the song about a cameraman enraptured by a beautiful woman only to discover she is a transvestite had already been written before they met, receiving only minor adjustments to seem inspired by her. That is not consistent with Close's account in her biography² that the singer came up with the idea for the song after witnessing all frenzy she was causing.

¹ *Jornal dos Sports*, May 19, 1984.

² Lucia Rito, *Muito prazer, Roberta Close* (Rio de Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos, 1998).

Be that as it may, some of the most striking lines from the lyrics (“she almost deceives my zoom,” “but for the Adam’s apple and feet / she would captivate my lens,” and “look carefully / appearances are deceiving / what seems to be is not”) clearly reveal the mixture of fascination and fear involving Close. The same can be said of the many comments about her in the media: “Biggest sexual riddle of late” and “She hardly seems not to be what she seems to be but is not”;³ “The transvestite that deceives even specialists”;⁴ “Despite not being a real woman, she has become the most desired female figure in the country,”⁵ etc.

In news stories published in *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper from Rio de Janeiro, which in that year alone cited Close about one hundred times, we find, for example, the journalist Suzana Rodrigues arguing that Close was actually a “woman” but pretended to be a transvestite for marketing reasons;⁶ Marília Pera calling her “an excellent male actor”;⁷ Raul Seixas considering her a “disease”;⁸ Paulo Maluf confused about her (“They say a lot about her, but nobody has ever proved anything”⁹); Ney Matogrosso stressing that she has “unmasked the Brazilian macho” because “everyone knows she’s a man and likes it,”¹⁰ but also demanding she be “brave enough to pose completely naked”;¹¹ Zé do Caixão blaming feminism (“Women have become so unromantic and unfeminine that men ended up inventing a man way more feminine than them”¹²); and, in an adaptation of *The Metamorphosis*, the columnist Carlos Eduardo Novaes imagining a dream/nightmare in which women have all become transvestites.¹³

3 *Ele & Ela*, November 1984.

4 *Manchete* (Rio de Janeiro), January 14, 1984.

5 *Veja* (São Paulo), June 13, 1984.

6 *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), June 4, 1984.

7 *Ibid.*, July 29, 1984.

8 *Ibid.*, July 24, 1984.

9 *Ibid.*, August 24, 1984.

10 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1984.

11 *Ibid.*, August 5, 1984.

12 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1984.

13 *Ibid.*, July 5, 1984

But even before featuring in *Playboy*, Roberta Close was already jumbling notions of gender, whether by gaining a “moral victory,” with 10 percent of readers’ votes, in the contests for both the most beautiful woman and most handsome man in Brazil in *Manchete* magazine of April 9, 1983, or by starring in one of the most commented TV commercials later that year, advertising Gelli built-in cabinets and stating: “Beware of imitations: things are not always are what you think they are.”

The commercial, created by the advertising agency Art-plan, involved an unusual feature: as Close was still little known to the public, a new campaign was required to make people realize that the person recommending caution was, as viewed at the time, herself an imitation. The “Take Note” section of *Jornal do Brasil*,¹⁴ for example, after stating that “the *girl* in the commercial ... is actually a *boy*” and that she had already been “elected one of the most beautiful women in Brazil,” says that Close “has now debuted as pitchwoman on TV, selling furniture and warning against imitations that are not what they seem to be. Like her. Or rather, him.”

To earn her place in the sun, Close exploited the constant delegitimation targeted at her, but also took advantage of her visibility to raise awareness of new gender debates. That is when the term “transsexual,” coined by American psychiatry in the 1950s, starts becoming familiar in Brazil. Drawing on a genital-based criterion, it ends up splitting the category of transgender people in two: on one side, “transsexuals,” i.e., people with a supposed aversion to the genitals they were born with and who hope to overcome it with gender reassignment surgery; and, on the other, “transvestites,”¹⁵ people who either cope well with their genitals of birth or have no aversion to them.

14 *Ibid.*, October 30, 1983.

15 The German term *Transvestit* was coined by Magnus Hirschfeld, spawning the English word *transvestite*. The word adopted in Brazil was *travesti*, a Gallicism that relates to the world of theater and masquerades. That was the original meaning of the word in Portuguese, but in the mid-20th century it eventually became the name adopted by part of the Brazilian trans community to describe themselves, replacing the original sense. The psychiatric concept of transvestite, however, cannot fully account for the Brazilian *travesti*.

According to Harry Benjamin in *The Transsexual Phenomenon*,¹⁶ one of the first to conceptualize the term, “true transsexuals feel they *belong* to the other sex, they want to *be* and *function* as members of the opposite sex, not only appear as such.” In this sense, “dressing in clothes of the opposite sex ... can appease their unhappiness,” but “all their faith and future are in the hands of the doctor, particularly the surgeon,” responsible for making “their bodies at least resemble those of the sex to which they feel they belong and to which they ardently want to belong.”

Transvestites, in turn, according to the author, are satisfied with the experience of cross-dressing, many of them doing so only in private. And even if they “go out ‘dressed’ in public in order to be accepted as women by strangers” or even “live completely as women, their true status sometimes discovered only after death,” “they ‘feel’ as men and know they are men.” Living as a woman, seeking to be recognized as such, is not enough in Benjamin’s opinion; it is necessary to feel like a woman and, at the same time, desire to possess the genitals of legitimate women: the key to understanding the phenomenon, therefore, relates not to how people actually live or are recognized by their community, but to what they have to say about themselves and which genitals they desire to have, all with proper medical endorsement.

Nevertheless, if, on the one hand, the narrative constructed by such psychiatry provided transsexuals with some legibility, on the other, it demanded from them the strict reproduction of a reasonably conservative model of femininity. The gain in legibility for the transsexual category, however, aggravated the stigma surrounding the notion of transvestite, closely linked at the time to depravity, prostitution, and social exclusion.

Transvestites and transsexual women shared the fact of being assigned male at birth and eventually claiming a female identity, but after that, the supposed difference be-

16 Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (Nova York: The Julian Press, 1966).

tween those two groups would be progressively exploited, setting them apart. This is important in understanding why Roberta increasingly emphasized her identification not with “cross-dressing transvestites, who shave their beard, put on a wig, wear makeup, ‘assembling a woman,’”¹⁷ but rather with:

transsexuals ... who become fully feminized. Mainly because I have never resorted to cosmetic surgery but to hormones. And the hormones would have killed any remnants of maleness in me anyhow. During sex I behave as a woman, I feel like a woman and my partner as a man. It is an entirely heterosexual relationship.

What defines gender? The genitals one is born with, those one desires to have, the hormones in one’s body, what one does in bed? New hypotheses emerge, and individuals who discovered early on that self-perception did not suffice to legitimize their gender will cling to them in an attempt to be recognized as such. However, what underpins self-perception is not the hypothesis, but the narrative that aims to validate it: in a society that still asks homosexual couples who plays the role of woman or man in bed, how surprising is it to see trans people using such formulations to affirm their gender?

Despite asserting her condition of transsexual, Close nevertheless knew that it was impossible to visually differentiate one category from the other. She also knew that only transvestites existed in the conventional view. So much so that months earlier, in an interview with Isa Camará,¹⁸ we are told that “Roberta does not consider herself a transvestite, although she uses the word ... to make the situation very clear to people,” stressing, however, that according to the model, “transvestite is someone who dress-

17 *Playboy*, May 1984.

18 *Folha de S.Paulo*, November 4, 1983.

es like a woman; transsexual is someone who really feels like a woman, despite being born with a man's body.”

However, regardless of how Close viewed herself or how she felt, and of whatever word she used to identify herself, the journalist's next comment is revealing of how the model was perceived: “And Roberta Close is a woman: hardly anyone who sees her up close—even knowing her real sex—feels they are before a man.”

That is the point. For the first time, Brazilian society was faced with a figure who, unanimously interpreted as a woman (and one of the most beautiful to boot), had been born with a penis. That is why every reference to her name came with a warning, that is the reason behind such insistence in addressing her as male: without prior notice, eyes and ears were no longer capable of labeling her as a transvestite, much less a man. What was a man from now on? What was a woman?

Three moments can be identified in the history of transgenderism as we conceive it today. Close is a hallmark of the second moment, when the advance of synthetic hormones and surgical interventions made them accessible to the population. Before that, there were already individuals that today we can claim to be trans; however, their body and behavior were under stricter scrutiny, and the body seemed an insurmountable obstacle to claiming to be or even being recognized as someone of the opposite gender to that assigned at birth.

Addressing the US context, the historian Susan Stryker suggests a relationship between the growth of cities (due to the anonymity and privacy afforded by urban life, but also its ethnic and cultural diversity and the early advances of feminism) and the emergence of breaches for individuals to re-imagine their relationship to sex and gender.¹⁹ That hypothesis would help explain, for example, the passing of so many local laws at the time prohibiting the practice of cross-dress-

19 Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Studies, 2008).

ing. The author also stressed that one of the most recurring assaults on feminism in the 19th century was to equate dress reform, a major feminist claim, with cross-dressing.

A similar situation was found in Brazil, with the exception that legislation prohibiting cross-dressing dated back to the *Ordenações filipinas*, a 17th-century legal code in force in Brazil, lasting up to the early 20th century: “We contend that no man dress in or wear female garments, and no woman in male garments, nor wear masks, except for parties or games.”²⁰ Punishment ranged from public flogging to banishment to Africa. The 1890 Criminal Code altered the penalty only, providing in Article 379 imprisonment of fifteen to sixty days for those who “disguise gender by taking garments improper to their own and wearing them publicly for deception.”

Police commissioner Guido Fonseca recalls These laws shortly after presenting a series of news reports from *Correio Paulistano* newspaper at the turn of the 20th century about arrests due to such prohibitions. In the chapter “Sexualidade criminosa” [Criminal sexuality],²¹ following an introduction in which the author takes the opportunity to argue that a significant part of the “licentiousness” prevailing in Brazil results from the “behavior of a few blacks,” the “mass arrival of immigrants,” and “women ... defying customs and authorities,” the text presents cases of “sodomy,” “seduction,” “defloration,” “rape,” and “sexual assault followed by murder.”

The fact that mere experimentation with clothing is included under the same topic addressing murder and rape reveals to what extent it was considered taboo. In turn, the frequent relationship between cross-dressing and sodomy, with the hefty penalties provided for this practice, helps explain how long-standing prejudices against

20 *Ordenações filipinas*, book V (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999). Translated for this volume.

21 Guido Fonseca, *Crimes, criminosos e criminalidade em São Paulo: 1870–1950* (São Paulo: Resenha Tributária, 1988), 215–233.

individuals we now call LGBTQI+ were created in Brazil, including within their families.²²

Police matter, but not only, since modern psychiatry has also shown great interest in those individuals. Not by chance, one of the first studies featuring both reflections on transgenderism (in a markedly pathologizing strand) and reports of analyzed patients is the classic *Psycopathia Sexualis* by Richard von Krafft-Ebing.²³ The most relevant work from that first moment, however, is *Die Transvestiten* by the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld,²⁴ who not only produced a rich compilation of autobiographical accounts, but also invented emblematic ways of understanding those subjects that still hold today (for example, by determining that they had multiple sexual orientations, including asexual individuals, and therefore transvestite was not a subcategory of homosexuality).

In Brazil, we have already referred to Guido Fonseca's research on cases of arrest for cross-dressing, but the author has another critical work on the imprisonment of such individuals: the chapter "Prostituição masculina" [Male prostitution] in his book *História da prostituição em São Paulo* [History of prostitution in São Paulo].²⁵ Fonseca states therein that in the first half of the 20th century the "old Praça da República square was already frequented by transvestites" but "male prostitution at that time was still ashamed of itself, so to say," unlike current practice:

22 In the *Ordenações filipinas*, sodomy was punished by burning the accused alive, confiscating their property (the accusers received half of it) and branding their descendants as "infamous" and "incapable," as with the relatives of those who committed the crime of lese-majesty (Book V, Chapter XIII).

23 Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psycopathia Sexualis* (Stuttgart: Verlag Von Ferdinand Enke, 1886).

24 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten* (Leipzig: Verlag Wahrheit Ferdinand Spohr, 1910).

25 Guido Fonseca, *História da prostituição em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Resenha Universitária, 1982), 217–237.

Today, they do not seem to be ashamed of their abnormality. Purposefully dressed as women, they walk the city's streets, avenues, and squares vying for the best spots with female prostitutes and always prevailing.²⁶

The commissioner further states that resorting to "hormones" and "minor surgery (introduction of silicone)," a small number of transvestites, belonging to what he defined as *average-* and *high-level* prostitution, "has been able to achieve one of their most desired goals, to wit an almost-perfect resemblance to women." He then adds that they "deceive most men" and "mislead even the most discerning observer." First published in 1977, the study reveals that years before the emergence of Roberta Close, individuals such as these already haunted large cities.

From this same period is the lawsuit that resulted in the conviction, reversed on appeal, of the plastic surgeon Roberto Farina, whose pioneering operations on transsexuals since the early 1970s were considered grievous bodily harm. The tone of the accusation is evident already in the request to open an investigation, on November 19, 1975, in which the prosecutor Luiz de Mello Kujawski states that "the ablation, as it appears, of the sexual organs, with the subsequent opening in the perineum of a fissure in imitation of a false vulva" does not result in "sex change," but in "stylized eunuchs, to better enjoy their pitiful sexual perversions and also those of the profligates who indulge in them."

All of this helps us understand why the law treats the prostitution of cisgender and transvestite women differently. According to Fonseca, while the former was considered by most scholars to be "a necessary evil," serving "an important social function, namely, to preserve the morality of households, the purity of customs in the bosom of the family," and therefore did not fit the description of the crime of vagrancy, the same did not apply to the latter. In arguing this point, the

26 *Ibid.*, 224. Translated for this volume.

commissioner presents recent pleadings, such as the appeal by the prosecutor José Fernando de Mafra Carbonieri, dated April 7, 1974, which states:

Homosexuals who admittedly live on male prostitution, walking the streets like women, are committing the offense of vagrancy. Unlike them, prostitutes do not parasitically exploit a personal abnormality but a social one.

For decades, such a stance justified the arrest of transvestites. In an interview with James N. Green,²⁷ the commissioner admits the irony of not being able to use the vagrancy law to arrest those who, having a formal employment relationship, nevertheless prostituted themselves (income outside prostitution was usually insufficient for subsistence) but being able to do so with those who did not have a formal job. Detention for vagrancy could be as long as three months, but even if transvestites were only imprisoned for a few days, that could be enough to prevent them from earning a living, which, according to Fonseca, would drive them out of his jurisdiction or make them detransition to look for another type of job.

The marginalization and violence to which transvestites were subjected did not prevent them from pursuing their right to exist. With very few exceptions, however, such an existence was only possible through segregation, in ghettos. In recent years, however, we are witnessing a profound change in this situation, with transgender individuals increasingly present in society and beginning that which I call the third moment of trans history. Its main point is to problematize all discourses that insist on viewing gender as a mere unfolding of the genitals one is born with.

One of the privileged forms of this problematization is to question the cisgender body model underlying the ideas of man and woman. Prominent in doing so are figures like the

27 James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 253.

singer Linn da Quebrada, who in the song *Mulher* [Woman] inverts the traditional expression “woman with a cock” in portraying a transvestite (“She has the face of a woman / she has the body of a woman / she has the boobs / the ass / the manner / and the cock of a woman”). Or Tito Carvalhal, who in his poem “And now... what makes you a man?” provokes by saying: “My masculinity / Deviated / Is forged in kindness / I trans-see / A male pussy / Destroying normality.”²⁸

Viewed now as criminals, now as perverts and, in both cases, from a distinctly cisgender perspective foreign to us, what is certain is that, at some point, we trans people started taking a stand in this debate, claiming a leading role in defining who we are and who we are not. Interestingly, if for those who lived through the 1980s and '90s the sentence I took as a title (the headline of *Notícias Populares* newspaper for May 31, 1984) relates to a specific person, that is not the case for whoever was born in the last twenty years: audiences who grew up among the recent boom of trans visibility will doubt whether the terms *man* and *woman* in the headline refer to the subject before or after transition, and may even relate to either the drag queen singer Pablio Vittar or the trans male actor Thammy Miranda (a sex symbol also before transition), since, for example, both respectively competed for the “sexiest man and woman of the year” awards of *IstoÉ* magazine in 2018.

What are people more? What are they first and foremost? What, after all? There was a time when our bodies were the problem, an insurmountable obstacle; then came the discovery that it was possible to transform them, which stirred up the fears and longings of an entire society; we now see that maybe we can simply condemn the normative models that have upheld notions of gender, without necessarily having to undergo surgical and drug-related modifications to feel good about the bodies we have or to have our gender recognized. Women with cocks and men with pussies, or peo-

28 Linn da Quebrada in *Nós trans: escrituras de resistência* (LiteraTrans, 2017), 42 (e-book). Translated for this volume.

ple who refuse to fit into the man/woman binomial, seeking new terminologies for themselves. Only one thing is certain: in this process of questioning gender determinations, we are not the only ones to break free.

BLACK FEMINISM: POWER DISPUTES AND RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

JULIANA BORGES

In this text, I aim to discuss and present the main potencies and epistemological instruments of black feminism within the decolonial process. In fact, for me, separating black feminism from decolonial feminism seems rather odd; I understand them as converging upon the same core, strategy, and goals.

Before getting round to decolonial, it is important to address what differentiates decolonial from postcolonial. Postcolonial studies gained momentum in the 1970s and were based on discerning the relationship between the colonized and colonizer, striving to understand the relationships of domination and power. These studies struck up important dialogues with the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, among others, looking to comprehend the narrative the colonizer spins about the colonized and how these discourses are built within given bodies and subjects. However, in the 1990s, new lines of questioning emerged about the predominance of European epistemologies and references in postcolonial studies, and regarding this I'm reminded of the words of Audre Lorde: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." While this does not mean dismissing European output altogether, it does stress the need to look more keenly at who is producing and disseminating these epistemologies and, more importantly, what references and objectives underly them.

A group of Latin Americans proposed breaking once and for all from the European epistemological tradition, and present what they called a "decolonial critique." In other words, the idea that we need to decolonize postcolonial studies as well. For the decolonial thinkers, the discussion of the "coloniality of power," presented by Anibal Quijano, is key to understanding the complex web of domination structures; in the relationship between world and fringe powers, the focus of reflection must be on the inequality deriving from ethnic, racial, gender, and class hierarchies.

With the terms explained, I return to my goal of presenting the strategic role black feminism plays in the decolonial movement. To do this, I will briefly outline the tools used to

identify a genocidal project and the way in which certain images of control are central to the continued marginalization of the work of black women, which, as I see it, is a tremendous missed opportunity. Contrary to what is so often said—and through an intricately racist discourse—black feminism is not strategic only for black women. It’s an output by black women, but not exclusively for black women, that can serve as a powerful tool in radicalizing the transformations we so direly need. Black women lie at the base of the inequality pyramid; when they rise up, the whole structure finds itself at risk of toppling over.

Based on the work of some important black intellectuals, I have endeavored to piece together the most important points of what we mean by black feminism. According to the sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, to understand black feminism we must start with the premise that it is not merely an add-on to broader, universal feminism. Black feminism is formulated as per the needs, knowledge, and political activities of black women. In her *Enegrecer o feminismo: a situação da mulher negra na América Latina a partir de uma perspectiva de gênero* [Blackening feminism: the situation of black women in Latin America seen from a gender perspective],¹ a classic of Brazilian feminism, the philosopher Sueli Carneiro speaks of the need to blacken feminism, starting at street-level and moving into the universities, where they can dispute and produce knowledge. The process of formulating and exchanging understandings therefore starts with an active militancy and expands into the debate on existing academic narratives and the construction of new epistemologies. This is the crux of black feminist production. Carneiro’s text is of the utmost importance in understanding the decolonial aspect of black feminism, questioning the notion of a universal category of womanhood and debunking the myth of feminine fragility.

¹ Available at <https://www.geledes.org.br/enegrecer-o-feminismo-situacao-da-mulher-negra-na-america-latina-partir-de-uma-perspectiva-de-genero/>, in Portuguese, accessed on November 5, 2019.

Carneiro couldn’t be clearer when she asks: “What women are we talking about?” and it reminds us of the historical re-tort by Sojourner Truth, in 1851: “Ain’t I a Woman?”

Beyond the plurality of existences, another hallmark of black feminism, from even before it existed as a concept, is “intersectionality.” Since the 1970s, Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz Nascimento, Luiza Bairros, Angela Davis, and Audre Lorde, among others, have been writing on the impossibility of discussing domination structures and systems of inequality without considering ethnic, racial, gender, and class issues all together, as indissociable parts of a whole. If we think about colonization, these were the bases for the legitimization of domination through discourse and the economy. There is no ground for capitalism without these aspects being in evidence, as its pillars. As Kimberlé Crenshaw recalls, it is impossible to think theoretically, much less construct intersectional political action, without the dispute for power lying at the core of the process.

Black feminism also constitutes a defense of the self in connection with a defense of the other. A sense of humanity is part of the black feminist struggle, a fact that becomes clear if we bear in mind: 1) the process of dehumanization to which black bodies were subjected during the Diasporas and in Africa; 2) intersectionality, which evokes heterogeneity; 3) the dispute for power, not for identities, as the kernel of that thinking (grounded in the anti-capitalist fight, as capitalism is a system indissociable from inequalities and domination); and 4) the decolonization of politics, intellectual production, and the economy, as well as of black bodies, minds, and spirits, whether literally or symbolically.

Here I insist on the idea of alterity—the understanding that the constitution of the self requires the existence of the other—as the central element behind a radical reorganization of citizenship and of rights created under multicultural premises. This precept of black feminism figures as anti-capitalist and radically democratic right from the start: it rejects all relationships of domination, without erasing the autonomy

and existence of the individual, and his or her liberties. And it does this while aiming for equality, cohabitation, and coexistence in opposition to capitalist individualism.

The construction of new individual and collective existences does not dilute the historical context of the working-class struggle as an agent of transformation. On the contrary, perceiving and encouraging new existences that question capitalist, sexist, and racist hegemonies is precisely to understand the changes in the model and capitalist relations of production.

Faced with the complexity capitalism acquired by allying itself so inextricably with racial and class oppression, intersectional black feminist thought allows us to discuss these diverse existences and, therefore, ensure the multiplicity of constructions within the structures of society and systemic conflict. Hence the affirmation that, when black women rise, the whole structure of society moves along with them. Black women are the foundation of the socio-racial pyramid and are, in number, the most vulnerable contingent of the population.

That's no accident. As Silvio Almeida points out,² it's impossible to discuss capitalism without analyzing the phenomenon of colonialism and, consequently, racism. That means that, more than simply looking at racism as something that occurs in our institutions and social interactions, we need to examine it as a structuring, constitutive element of those institutions and all interactions that establish inequalities through socio-racial hierarchies. If, as we have said, black women form the base of the pyramid of inequalities, and if we are truly committed to transforming our society, it is absolutely urgent that we discuss their plight—in fact, fight by their side—and ensure that their voices and thinking echo throughout the political arena.

The colonial process and power relations are all about questioning identities. In this hierarchy-building, power structure-erecting process, colonialism has racialized ex-

2 Silvio Almeida, *Racismo estrutural* (São Paulo: Pólen Livros, 2019).

ploited groups on the grounds of physical traits and cultural characteristics. In other words, discourses and stereotypes based on bodies and cultures were crucial to the success and acceptance of the colonial process. The anthropologist Avtar Brah argues that the racialization of power operates *in* and *through* bodies, that is, this discourse and representation are indissociable from the political and economic power they engender; without racialization it would be far more difficult to apprehend and impose the colonial process and hierarchization of politics. And that still holds for the smooth running of the neoliberal mechanism.

Imperiling black lives entails more than just keeping us in the role of body-thing. It also means implementing a plan of constant political demotivation, dis-aggregation, insecurity, and vulnerability. A particularly bruising example is the Criminal Justice System, which is intrinsically racist. Its processes are built around structures of oppression, and the whole system is designed to maintain racism and so the inequalities based on racial hierarchies. Feminisms need to look more vigorously at this key institution in terms of the role it plays in the norms and exercises of control and extermination. This necropolitical tool has clearly focused on imprisoning women, transsexuals, and transvestites. Just to give some measure of this focus—and these are official stats—the number of women jailed in Brazil increased over 500 percent³ between 2006 and 2016, and over 60 percent of those women were black.

So how can we not consider the constant dialogue between black feminist output and decolonial output? It's hardly surprising that the leading exponents of this drive in Latin America are Afro-Latin or Amerfrican women (the latter, a term coined by Lélia Gonzalez).

Black female criminality sees the black woman tarred as criminal and white women as victims. The criminalization of

3 All data used in this essay is taken from official reports published by the Departamento Penitenciário Nacional do Ministério da Justiça (Depen), through InfoPen (Penitentiary System Data Report, 2016).

black (and indigenous) women has always been there, submitted to more severe punitive practices and deprivations of freedom. As Ana Luiza Pinheiro Flauzina points out, control over the black woman's body has traditionally been a public affair (unlike control over non-black women, which unfolded behind closed doors), and it was exacerbated by their being pegged with a certain lasciviousness that made it near-impossible for them to be viewed as victims of sexual violence:

Seen from this perspective, we can infer that, as occurs with men to a far lesser degree, abuses by the penal system when it comes to the criminalization of women have always been especially geared towards controlling black women. Circulating in the public space before, and with greater intensity than, their white counterparts, black women had to be controlled at close quarters when out-and-about, as their presence in public was, paradoxically, something that should have been precluded by the fact that they were women in the first place. In other words, the dehumanization process black women were subjected to by racism denied them the chance to be recognized in society as women, thus heaping public discrimination upon the private. In this sense, levels of female criminality, which are increasing at a troubling rate, are affecting black women in particular because they are the preferred targets of a system conditioned by patriarchy and racism.⁴

Black women, considered property in the past, were subjected to punishments meted out by slaveowners that often spilled over into the sexual sphere. As Sueli Carneiro notes:

4 Ana Luiza Pinheiro Flauzina, "Corpo negro caído no chão: sistema penal e o projeto genocida do Estado brasileiro" (master's diss., Brasília, UnB, 2006), 132, http://www.cddh.org.br/assets/docs/2006_AnaLuizaPinheiroFlauzina.pdf, in Portuguese, translated for this volume, accessed on November 5, 2019.

Colonial sexual violence is also the "cement" that holds together the hierarchies of gender and race that run through our society, configuring what Angela Gilliam calls the "grand theory of sperm in our national formation," through which, the author argues: "the role of the black woman was elided from the national culture; inequality between men and women was eroticized; and sexual violence against black women, romanticized."⁵

Today, these romanticized rapes have been turned into a factor for the criminalization of black women.

Criminality as a constitutive factor in the representation of the black population derives from this process and found "scientific" justification in eugenic theories heavily underwritten by religious readings. As the descendants of Ham, blacks were considered inferior and animal-like, and so their salvation could lay only in supplication, work, and exploitation. I stress here the modal "could"; the crime of the negro was taken as the mark of inherent degeneracy. As Carla Akotirene writing about the etymology of the word "penitentiary" reminds us: it's the place of "penitence," of suffering. And the black body continues to feature in the cultural mindset as worthy only of repression and exploitation, because it is a penal enemy that needs to be controlled. In other words, the belief in black inferiority lingers, as does the conviction that nothing positive can be expected from a degenerate being.

In the 19th century, one of the aspects that associated the black women of Bahia with criminality was the work they did. These so-called "peddler slaves," who sold goods in the streets, were allowed to retain a percentage of their sales, so they could save up and buy their manumission. It turns out that these women were successful in sales, even controlling the trade of certain products. This was a problem for the enslavers, who did their best to maintain some degree of control over them, especially through a series of obstructive tax-

5 Carneiro, *Enegrecer o feminismo*.

es and laws. Of course, the women ended up breaking many of these rules, earning themselves a reputation for peccancy in the process. Many records from the time categorize black women as criminals, lawbreakers, and delinquents.

But why discuss this criminalization in speaking about black feminism and decoloniality? Because the renewed mechanisms for control over black bodies and for keeping them in precarious standing, the politics of extermination and of inequalities based on racial hierarchies are most strongly expressed when we look at the criminal justice system. The penal State is, today, the clearest expression of this structure, somewhat changed, but fully operable in the ongoing colonization of subjects, especially in Latin America.

Hence decolonizing the postcolonial is, for me, a constant exercise in the construction of black feminism. Black women have built, and continue to build, various bases of knowledge, many of which may clash, but which will undoubtedly yield sharable experiences, above all within the context of the African diaspora.

It is important to underscore that, for black women, empowerment necessarily demands a struggle and collective conquests. In other words, it's a concept that dialogues directly with the idea of vying for decolonial power. As Joice Berth put it, empowerment was never limited to an individual change or hike in personal self-esteem; it is a struggle to guarantee the full rights of citizenship for social groups.

That's why I see black feminism as a tool for political formulation and action with radical strategic goals. Historically, black women have reflected and produced knowledge with their communities as the strongholds from which to defend their perspectives, put up resistance, carry forth their political struggles, and formulate their transformative solutions. In this sense, we can only dismantle privileges and modify power if the center of reference of our political actions lies precisely in the voices that, today, the powers-that-be seek to silence anyway they can. As bell hooks and other black feminists have said, the ongoing effort at erasure—and the

anger seen, felt, and experienced—happens because there is something absolutely subversive about black people recovering and owning their blackness. When blacks recognize each other's blackness, there is an uncontrollable radicalness in it that decolonizes these bodies in that very instant.

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: NEGOTIATING NATIVE AMERICAN ART AS AMERICAN ART

Contemporary Indigenous artists negotiate multiple, and often conflicting, institutional spaces. Their work defies easy categorization, particularly when institutions espouse facile nationalist narratives meant to conserve colonial relations. Recent efforts to decolonize museums have provided opportunities for Indigenous artists to effectively counter established dynamics of power. However, interventions within these spaces have also resulted in unexpected affirmations of identities already compromised by a history of occupation and assimilation.

In this essay, I will briefly look at a few recent instances in which museums have attempted to engage Indigenous cultural production with varied results. I'll particularly focus on situations in the United States in which the term "America" has been employed, often in a gesture of inclusiveness, but has resulted, instead, in efforts that appear more like co-optation, or even assimilation. The term is not only used by institutions seeking to incorporate Native American culture within the narrative of the United States, it is also used by Native artists, scholars, and curators themselves. A few examples will help illustrate the complicated nature of this negotiation. I'll look at the unusually high number of Indigenous artists—nine in total—included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial. I'll also look at interventions by Indigenous artists within the Metropolitan Museum's installation of the Diker Collection, a collection promised as a gift, which will substantially increase the museum's holdings of Native American art. I'll also consider the National Museum of the American Indian rehanging of their permanent exhibition, titled *Americans*.

MARIO A. CARO

THE IMAGE AND THE PRODUCTION OF THE NATION-STATE

Images have been powerful tools of the state—ranging from illustrations of a national patrimony, to their increasing employment in practices of surveillance, to the ubiquitous propaganda images rampant on social media today. They play a key role in imagining the ideal citizen; often depicting a romanticized membership; the visual has been an effective realm for the production of the nation as an imagined community. At the same time, imagery is also useful in depicting the undesirable subject, the nation's other, also key in defining who belongs and does not belong.

In his revised edition of *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson added a chapter dedicated to the analysis of “the census, the map, and the museum” as institutions that “profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion—the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry.”¹ In regions such as the Americas, where a history of colonization marks the rise of the nation-state, visualizing census data, mapping the physical contours of the state, or displaying its visual culture within the museum have all been part of the imagery deployed by the colonizer to cohere the nation, determining its national visual imaginary.

Of Anderson's nationalist institutions, I will focus on the museum as a space where visibility is activated in ways that provide some agency to artists, as individuals and as representatives of their communities. While the visual narratives displayed there often convey the nationalist interests of those promoting the museum, there are at times possibilities for negotiating the visual dialectics that transpire between artists, the institution, and the viewer. Much slippage in signification is possible in the semiotic transactions between the point of

1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), 168.

production (artist), the space of dissemination (the museum), and the ultimate location of consumption (the viewer).

The radical difference of how these semidynamics are negotiated is best seen when visiting tribal museums where representation—both at the individual and national levels—is most closely aligned with the workings of self-representation. There are currently 573 federally recognized Native nations within the United States.² While only a small number of these have their own museums, they have made a substantial contribution to establishing a means of cultural self-representation. Although these are often described as “tribal” museums, they are, for all intents and purposes, national museums in that they represent Native nations.

NATIVE AMERICAN ART AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

The Metropolitan Museum has recently announced that they will be making a concerted effort to feature Native American art as part of the history of “American Art.” (In the United States, this latter category is meant to explicitly encompass art from the United States.) In a blog entry dated February 21, 2017, and titled “Redefining American Art: Native American Art in the American Wing,” Sylvia Yount, Lawrence A. Fleischman Curator in Charge of The American Wing proclaimed that

Featuring Native American art in The American Wing for the very first time in The Met's history reveals our current commitment to expanding the definition and scope of American art at the Museum...³

2 There are many more recognized by states, and still more beyond that not recognized by either federal or state governments.

3 <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2017/native-american-art-the-american-wing>, accessed on September 20, 2019.

Yount's announcement described in detail the installation of what at the time were only a few items loaned by Charles and Valerie Diker from their substantial collection of Native American art. (Much of the rest of the collection was on view at the same time but in another section of the museum dedicated to temporary exhibitions.)⁴

The museum's new approach to broaden the category of "American Art" in order to be more inclusive of Native American art was primarily prompted by the imminent major donation of the Diker collection, "considered to be the most significant holdings of historical Native American art in private hands," which would eventually be featured in a permanent exhibition, titled *Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection*. That exhibition is now permanently installed in the American Wing.

It is important to note that this process of incorporating Native Art as American art was not done with some buy-in. The institution sought consultation from various prominent Native artists and scholars, one of whom is Ned Blackhawk, a Western Shoshone scholar who is professor of history and American studies at Yale University. He was a consultant on the installation as well as one of the main authors of the exhibition catalogue. He stated his perspective as follows:

I would like to think that the Diker Collection is the beginning of a major, if not radical reorientation of not just The Met, but other American museums' commitments to seeing past a limiting vision of what it means to call something American art.⁵

4 The exhibition was titled *Native American Masterpieces from the Charles and Valerie Diker Collection*.

5 Chadd Scott, "Native American Art Receiving Broad Reassessment In Museums Across U.S." *Forbes*, November 21, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chaddscott/2018/11/21/native-american-art-receiving-broad-reassessment-in-museums-across-u-s/>, accessed on October 18, 2019.

In addition to its inclusion in the American Wing, the installation of the collection also provided an opportunity for Native artists and scholars to include their voices in framing and reacting to some of the work that already formed the American Wing.⁶ And these reactions varied. For example, Alan Michelson, a Mohawk artist whose practice is research-based, analyzed *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, the iconic image of George Washington leading his troops across the frozen Delaware River. Michelson notes that the man at the stern of Washington's boat is Native—a member of the Delaware tribe. He explains that Native troops fought on both sides of the war, and that the Delaware had entered into a treaty—the first by the newly formed United States with a Native nation. However, not long after the US would betray that treaty, what Michelson wryly observes would have been a "double crossing of the Delaware."⁷

These interventions into the history of colonial dynamics between Native Americans and Americans were further played out in a program of performances, which included Jackson Polys (Tlingit) participating in a walkthrough of the exhibition, with Valerie Diker in attendance. Polys spoke about a significant Tlingit treasure included in the exhibition—a dagger from the early 18th century—which he discussed as part of his cultural and familial lineage. His claim was not only about the object itself but also about the art historical discourse that frames it. While Diker expressed impatience at the lack of focus on appreciating the aesthetics of the work, Polys was obstinate about his emphasis on Tlingit ownership—of both the object and its discursive framing.

6 There was also an exhibition titled *Artistic Encounters with Indigenous America*, which consisted of objects representing Indigenous subjects produced by Non-Natives. The selection from the Met's holdings was made by Wendy Red Star, an artist who is Apsáalooke/Crow. She also provided text for the labels.

7 <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/the-american-wing/native-perspectives>, accessed on October 18, 2019.

The lack of a coherent approach by Native Americans to the inclusion of their cultural material into a space explicitly coded as American is understandable, particularly if the space is the Metropolitan Museum, a prime example of the encyclopedic, nationalist museum project.

NATIVE AMERICAN ART AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN INDIAN

A more surprising venue for the insistence of the inclusion of Native American Art as American Art is the National Museum of the American Indian. While it is a state-run entity that sits diagonally across the National Mall from the Capitol, it was created as a means of presenting Native art from a Native perspective, a venue primarily designed for Native American self-representation.

Since its opening in 2004, the museum has endeavored to provide opportunities for Native artists and curator to tell their own stories, attempting to eschew the colonial legacy of Western museums. However, the space has dealt with compromise since its beginnings. From the outset, there were critiques that the museum's narrative avoided the difficult discussion of genocide, opting instead for a more celebratory approach to displaying Native cultures.⁸

In 2017, a new permanent exhibition, simply titled *Americans*, was unveiled. Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche) and Cécile R. Ganteaume, both associate curators at the museum, co-curated the exhibition. The title—which seems to be used here in an ironic sense—references the term that was originally used to refer to Indigenous of the hemisphere by

8 For a useful anthology of essays the critically assessed the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. see Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb, eds. *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

Europeans. The curators wanted to use the ubiquity of Native American imagery as their starting point for the exhibition. For Smith, the driving question was:

How is it that Indians are present everywhere—in the form of place names, popular culture, advertising, sports team names, weapons systems—yet barely present in history and largely absent from the great national debates of our time?

The main lament being that despite the plethora of representations, Native American remain, to a great extent, invisible. While this could lead to an interesting set of explorations involving a broad spectrum of imagery, what the curators ended up engaging was primarily stereotypical imagery from popular culture—product packaging and mass media imagery. And their take on those foundational tales that are so much part of American history, such Pocahontas, the first Thanksgiving, the Trail of Tears, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

An example is their treatment of Thanksgiving, a national holiday that glosses over the violence that has been at the core of relations between the US and Native nations. In order to dispel some of the myth around this historical event, which has come to operate as something of a nationalist foundation story, they produced a video titled *The Invention of Thanksgiving*. The video is an irreverent and comical take on this American holiday, full of slapstick animation and cartoonish sound effects. It's unfortunate that the opportunity to correct the historical record eventually takes on a very reconciliatory, even fatalistic approach. Smith ends the video by saying: "I'm glad to be here ... better than the alternative."

NATIVE AMERICANS AT THE 2019 WHITNEY BIENNIAL

As far as Native artists gaining representation in a contemporary art venue, this year's Whitney Biennial proved to be significant. The exhibition features nine Native American artist—an unprecedented number.

According to the museum, “the Biennial is the longest-running exhibition in the country to chart the latest developments in American art.” This, of course, brings up the question of where Native artists fit within the international contemporary art world. The nine artists represented many Native nations, with some artists representing more than one. James Luna (Payómkawichum, Ipai, and Mexican-American), Laura Ortman (White Mountain Apache), Nicholas Galanin/Yéil Ya-Tseen (Tlingit/Unangax), Jeffrey Gibson (Choctaw/Cherokee), Caroline Monnet (Algonquin-French), Thirza Cuthand (Cree), Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk/Pechanga), Shin-hwa'ak Krebs Khalil (Ojibway), Zack Khalil (Ojibway), and Jackson Polys (Tlingit). Nonetheless, when it comes to a national identity, participants are denied this possibility. Instead, the labels and other literature feature the place of birth and their current place of residency.

These artists are representative of a spectrum of avant-garde artists whose Native identities deeply inform their work. Both, in terms of content—training their sights on issues affecting Native peoples in the US and beyond—and form—using techniques and materials that are very much part of their cultural legacy—these artists are invested in engaging contemporary art from a myriad of perspectives informed by individual visions, but also by cultural teachings that should be considered on their own national(ist) terms.

The reason for such a high number of Native participants may be due to the extreme backlash the Whitney faced when it hosted *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*, a retrospective of an artist that without much argument could be

claimed as the most successful Native artist alive—that is, if he were actually Native. As it turns out, his claims to a Cherokee identity have been questioned for some time, since at least the 1990s. However, it was this exhibition that precipitated in a fully public discussion of the Cherokee dismissal of his claims.⁹

Native nations exercise their sovereignty in determining their membership. While some determine membership on racial terms—based on blood quantum—others use a variety of different criteria. For the Cherokee, one of the largest Native groups in the US, membership is easily determined. They have a system of enrollment that is carefully documented. Members can easily trace their lineage by determining if their family appears on their rolls.

This year's Whitney Biennial was successful in many ways—particularly around the activism it generated, resulting in the ouster of Warren Kanders, a weapons manufacturer.¹⁰ As far as its diversity, and the unprecedented number of Native artists, this could have been the result of many factors—curators who were attendant to their lack of representation at these venues; an overall increase in Native programming by various museum curators and educators; and a more engaged Native constituency. Nonetheless, the intense attention brought on by the museum's hosting of the Jimmie Durham retrospective must have had an impact as well.

These three examples provide insights into the complicated nature of how nationalism is continuously negotiated within museums. The Metropolitan Museum is enthusiastic about the inclusion of Native arts within its American Art Wing—particularly since it's one of the explicit recommendations made by the Dikers as a proviso for their donation. For

9 For a comprehensive overview and list of literature on this issue, see “Facts and Resources: Jimmie Durham,” *First American Art*, June 8, 2017, <http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/facts-resources-jimmie-durham/>, accessed on October 18, 2019.

10 Warren Kanders used to hold a seat as vice chairman of the Whitney Museum of American Art's board of trustees.—Ed.

the Met, broadening the category of American Art to include Native American art is an idea whose time has come. At the National Museum of the American Indian, an attempt was made to take the term “American” and turn it on its head. In emphasizing the history of the term as originally exclusively referencing Native Americans, the museum blurs distinctions such that both settlers and Native Americans are regarded as American. And, finally, the Whitney Museum of American Art has also become much more inclusive of Native American art, and artists, despite the fact that their Native nationality is not explicitly pointed out.

It's not difficult to analyze the national imaginary promoted by museums for its nationalist agenda. While sometimes subtle, these workings are often laid bare as part of their exhibitory practices, after all it is the visual realm that is most active in these spaces. Discursively, however, things are often not so legible. The duplicity of incorporating Native American art as American Art may not be discernable if it were not for the critical practices of many of the Native artists themselves.

As Christopher Greene has observed:

Expanding the scope of “American art” must also mean changing its methodologies and display practices in ways that respect and maintain Indigenous values. If these values are suppressed, then the Americanizing of Indigenous art will remain a colonizing project—one that redraws the borders of “American art” to contain, rather than honor, claims to sovereignty.¹¹

¹¹ <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/beyond-inclusion/>, accessed on October 18, 2019.

ANOTHER EMANCIPATION IS POSSIBLE

VLADIMIR
SAFATLE

What, one asks, can be the necessity for such a linguistic revolution, if it has been demonstrated that the existing language and its structure are fundamentally quite suited to the needs of the new system? The old superstructure can and should be destroyed and replaced with a new one in the course of a few years, in order to give free scope to the development of the productive sources of society; but how can an existing language be destroyed and a new one built in its place in the course of a few years without causing anarchy in social life and without creating the threat of the disintegration of society? Who but a Don Quixote could set himself such a task?¹

These are the words of Josef Stalin concerning a debate that was raging in the former USSR. The issue at hand was the relationship between language and revolution. Doesn't a political revolution modify the structure of language? Isn't a language a superstructure that is transformed when fundamental social rupture occurs? As we can see, Stalin's answer was no. The life of a language is unfazed by social and economic transformations. It seems to enjoy a political neutrality of sorts. So, destroying an existing language and creating a new one in its place would generate unnecessary social anarchy and serve only to threaten society with disintegration.

In a sense, Stalin was right. When a language tailspins toward rupture, cracks run through the *arché*, dispelling the illusion of origin and fundament. We might take this as our starting point in asking under which conditions political paralyzations occur. Why are there times in which the political imagination seems to suffer a mental block, in which societies, despite their deep-set discontent and all manner of revolt, just can't find the energy to transform? Is it not precisely because there's a new language that must emerge first, but is

¹ Josef Stalin, *Marxism and Linguistics*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1950/jun/20.htm>, accessed on September 20, 2019.

somehow stuck, and so language fails to step up as the driver of political transformation?

As a matter of principle, let's begin by asking ourselves under which conditions social struggles or conflicts become possible—those very struggles and conflicts that lay the foundations for political experience. It's not a matter of operating within the immediate context of social suffering and injustice, but to pitch an even more simple question, namely: how do societies translate experiences of social suffering? How do they interpret processes of injustice? Here, the problem is necessarily associated with the dimensions of "interpretation" and "translation." We may suffer, but translating that suffering into social demands and interpreting it as concerted action are supplementary operations. A society is founded, among other things, upon a grammar that enables the expression of experiences of social suffering as specific modes of articulated demands.

I'm insisting on this point because I believe that what we're dealing with here is the existence of something we might call a "social grammar of conflict." This grammar is the prerequisite for all political experience. It determines the possible forms demands and struggles can take, configures the structure of political subjects, and determines the general modalities of agency and enunciation. In fact, this grammar sets the limits of what is and is not possible for a society to do and imagine. It defines what can be heard and perceived, and so what can affect us. In this sense, it is similar to a linguistic grammar, with its semantics, its syntax, its generative principles.

A question that must be asked is which social grammar of conflicts we respect, which grammar configures the form our revolt takes. I would like to argue here that we continue to respect the same grammar that defines the normal functioning of our sociopolitical bonds. Hence, our demands for rupture tend to reiterate the general modes of social determination. We speak the same language as those we rail against, which leads us to conclude that there is a grammar that is strength-

ened by acting in and through us, even when we seem to be venting our revolt and desire for rupture. Vladimir Mayakovsky argued that there could be no revolutionary art without revolutionary form. We might say something similar: there is no revolutionary politics without a revolutionary linguistic form that is capable of breaking with the social grammar of conflicts so hegemonic in certain societies. And to achieve that rupture, we need to be able to draw upon the grammatically impossible; speak and share grammatically impermissible political statements that are the emerging assertions of something new. In this sense, a vital question is: what is grammatically impossible for us to say today?

The emergence of processes of social transformation relies to the act of lending shape to the impossible. For that to happen, we shall try to plot some general coordinates for this grammar of social conflicts, which requires considering the organizational form of that which we might call the "horizon of possibilities immanent to our liberal democracies." The thesis I would like to put forward consists in saying that impossible statements are, today, those which have no "place of speech," that open up a field of generic implication in which they could be assumed by pretty much anyone. They are statements endowed with that which we might call an "ousting universality," that is, a universality whose emergence dethrones the current forms of presence and existence.

Impossible statements are, therefore, those that depose one of the metaphysical dogmas most deeply entrenched in our social grammar, namely: the one that imposes an ontological distinction between people and things, between that which has agency and volition and that which does not, and so is available for use. It's the distinction between that which is not subject to ownership (people) and that which tends to exist under precisely that condition, or at least potentially so (things).

In this sense, we might ask what would emerge were we to suspend the grammatical interdiction against statements issued by things rather than people, that is, in social situ-

ations in which it is not people who are talking, but things, through those subjects. For us, the result of things speaking within the subject is profound alienation, because it's as if I became a thing, attained an advanced stage of self-reification. However, we need to ask ourselves whether one of the deepest trenches of our servitude does not reside precisely in the illusion that everything that is a thing must be understood in terms of the absence of freedom and action. What sort of world would it be in which things acted through us freely, in which things affected us beyond the paradigm of will? Perhaps one of the masterstrokes of real emancipation lies in the understanding that we ought not to fight solely for the emancipation of subjects, but also, and maybe especially, for the emancipation of things.

THE METAPHYSICS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

To discuss this point further, we must first take a step back and ask ourselves what it is actually possible to say in our liberal democracies. I'd like to argue that the fundamental stress of the horizon of possibilities immanent to our liberal democracies does not lie on the *demos*, that is, the people, those who speak as a people, and so confer legitimacy. Instead, the stress lies on the *kratos*, the exercise of sovereignty and power. What sort of power does democracy recognize, how does it configure its possible subjects, how does it define its existence? These questions determine the horizon of the social grammar of conflicts to which we submit.

These questions are not only relative to the field of political philosophy, even if it may initially seem that way. When we ask about what type of power is meant by democratic "power of the people," we are not just talking about forms of government. In fact, we're talking about the modes of state-building

wielded by agents who want to be socially recognized as subjects. Every subject is endowed with agency, and that agency presupposes some form of power, a specific dynamic of decision-making whose configuration needs to be our topic for analysis. Normatively speaking, democracy implies a certain form of agent and agency, but what sort of agency are we talking about here? Who is the democratic subject, and, moreover, what are her engrained metaphysical precepts? How can we critique and rebuild that subject?

The thesis to be defended here is that power in democracy, especially in its liberal version, has three core attributes. First, it is the expression of an *ipseity*, the exercise of a "being with oneself and belonging to oneself." As Derrida reminds us, the *kratos* in democracy is, above all, an *ipse*.² In this sense, it can only define the modes of existence and organize regimes of speech through political uses of the notion of identity and property, as, in democracy, power is a property invested in its agents, not something channeled through them. Social demands come into existence as a multiplicity of demands organized under an identity-bestowing statement. In this context, liberty means being under one's own jurisdiction, belonging to him or herself, as acquired autonomy.

Second, in democracy, *kratos* is a power exercised through the plasticity of representation. Representation is the grammar that determines the mode of existence of the identities democracy harbors; it is the general device by which the common field is organized. In this sense, even what occurs in anti-institutional, anti-state domains tends to do so through representation because, in a democracy, things must be representable in order to exist.

Lastly, the *kratos* of democracy is a power indissociable from the internalization of its own suspension. The normal functioning of liberal democracy requires that the powers of the *demos* be restricted to electoral constituencies, while the multiple spheres of economic relations between class-

2 See Jacques Derrida, *Voyous: deux essais sur la raison* (Paris: Galilée, 2003).

es, labor relations, gender and race relations, as well the “exceptional” use of force during periods of civil unrest, are generated through violence and anomie. The ground the social movements have gained in terms of modifying the legal framework to better defend the vulnerable is still tentative, provisional, and extremely limited in scope. Democracy is not a regime that guarantees the integrity of subjects under the rule of law. It is a regime that enables multiple forms of suspending the law and a great deal of flexibility in its application. There is no liberal democracy without disciplinary violence; the silent, not legally ordained violence that prevails on the factory floor, in schools, in hospitals, and in the fields. The violence of HR, of assembly-line ergonomics, of medicating against psychological pain.

THE LIMITS OF RESISTANCE

Taking this into account, we ask how statements of resistance are organized today. First, they obviously assume identity-affirmation strategies. An identity is a form of attributive determination. What defines my identity are the predicates I possess and which set me apart. These predicates are properties of the subject. In other words, the existence of the subject is defined by the sum of its predicates.

Seen from this angle, what leads me to existence are the predicates that distinguish me and confer visibility. It’s as if it were a matter of modifying the power structure through the act of opening up space to imperceptible identities, those deprived of that visibility. Put another way, it’s about modifying the horizon of the visible, broadening the field of those who have a voice, but without altering the grammar that defines the general regime of speech and visibility. It’s a question of owning a space within an already-structured field that determines under which conditions something becomes visible.

The result could not be other than to authenticate the very principle that defines our subjecthood, namely, the idea that whoever speaks speaks only for him or herself, solely in the name of that which is his or her own, of that which belongs to him or her. The speaker speaks with a view to strengthening that which pertains to him or her, defining the horizon of his or her own attributes. Ultimately, there are only proprietary individuals. The question revolves around who the real owners are, who has the right to occupy specific places of speech. The grammar of our political experience is a grammar of ownership, even when it speaks in collective terms, about common ground. Collectives congeal around generalized identities very often based on the sharing of general experiences of suffering and violence. Common property is merely another form of ownership, a possession of the community as a collective individual. So shaking off the hegemony of ownership is an operation far more complicated than it first appeared.

Here we might ask ourselves how it might be possible for a form of speech to succeed in breaking with the grammar of possession and attributes that seems to colonize our minds in the form of political statements. A speech of this kind could well pave the way to a new form of existence, radically different from that which is authorized within our hegemonic forms of life. I would like to suggest that this is only possible through a new recovery of universalist positions. But to raise that topic anew, one first needs to revisit what is meant by universalism in this context.

For decades, all universalist perspectives were seen as profoundly normative and incapable of lending space to the production of singularities. Universalism was synonymous with the general sharing of attributes and norms, the constitution of a horizon of homogeneity as if it were a matter of cobbling together sets whose elements were defined by the presence of the same attributes and characteristics. We had, in this case, a universalism by generalization of shared attributes.

It's not hard to argue that this universalism was, at the end of the day, a colonial strategy based on a concentric notion of world history firmly rooted in European soil. Everything unfolded as though the experiences of emancipation and social conflict that occurred in Europe had to be gradually repeated elsewhere around the globe, rationalizing social life by generalizing a model whose origin and template were always European. In other words, it was as if there was a ripple effect exporting change from the center to the fringes.

Of course, this model has to sustain a vision of historical process marked by the dynamics of societies running ahead of, or behind, the times, with some social experiences being retarded in places that had preserved archaic structures that could only be replaced through contact with more advanced societies, those leading the developmental field.

The logic of this concentric strategy resides in elevating a society of individuals vis-a-vis the global horizon of social emancipation. The figure of the individual, which emerged historically in Europe in the 17th century, the result of a deep-rooted articulation of theological, psychological, and economic themes, was, it transpired, the real basis for these universalist propositions. It's as if social struggles in various parts of the world were, in the last analysis, struggles to generalize the figure of the individual, with his or her rights, freedoms, and interests raised to the level of real vector of global emancipation. The universalism we have known so far is not just an attempt to generalize a masculine, phallogocentric, white, and heteronormative social horizon, but an attempt to generalize the individual after the general mode of existence of subjectivities. Universal history is not just the history of the universalization of capitalism as the general means of production, despite the various different structures of development within a center-periphery system. Universal history has thus far been an attempted generalization of the individual as a form of existence and emancipation.

In this context, we might insist that a de-colonial universality would be both non-concentric and radically de-identical and anti-predicative. The first aspect ties in with another notion of universal history. There is a universal history that is not the irresistible description of the contagious spread of political struggles and experiences that initially occurred within the heart of global capitalism. In fact, there is a global history that does not function concentrically, but as resonance. Its principle is that experiences of emancipation and liberty are present in all geographically and historically disparate forms of life. These forms can "tune into each other," that is, local experiences can resonate those from other places, creating a constellation of echoes. In other words, it's not a matter of counterposing world history with a perspective that unleashes the power of singular localities and territories but of pitting a false world history against a de-colonial world history capable of placing multiple freedom-focused local emergences on equal footing. Of course, that means that these disparate experiences of liberty are not indifferent to each other. They rub off on one another, but they can only do that within a world history.

ANOTHER ORDER OF THINGS

Here we can see how an idea of this nature allows us to imagine a *kratos* that is no longer an expression of the proprietary affirmation of self-identity. A *kratos* that can no longer be thought of as the expression of an associative exercise of individuals in defense of their systems of interests or capacity for joint deliberation as associates. We can work this *kratos* out on three levels of social relation: with objects, with subjects, and with the self.

The first of these levels, relations with objects, is usually the most neglected when it comes to reflections on dynam-

ics of emancipation, so deeply colonized are we by the idea that work produces the right to possession. That on which I work is mine. A people, as a collective political subject, as a collective worker, should also be able to figure as an owner of the things on which it works. According to that schema, social emancipation can only be understood as the act of taking possession of things that derive from my work or the work of the people to which I belong.

In other words, the “thing” appears here as that which lies in the service of “people”; that which can be submitted to a relationship of personal ownership. We see here a form of emancipation that does not escape from the generalization of relationships of ownership and of use connected to property. In this sense, we might say that only in a society of owners, in a society in which the first statute of membership is conflated with that of ownership, can “things” exist. In societies in which “people” are free, the price that needs to be paid for that freedom is that “things” must be yoked into servitude. So, if Saint Thomas declared that the “person” was the inner space in which reason could express mastery of its own acts, as the author of those acts, it is because, for us, things do not act, but are activated by us.³

However, we can ask ourselves whether the actual concept of social emancipation might not englobe a society of free subjects *and* objects. It just might be that the emancipation of things is the prerequisite for the emancipation of subjects, which would oblige us to accept the existence of a *kratos* that comes from things; which is, in effect, the affectation of things in subjects via an involuntary and external dimension.

On the other hand, to speak of the emancipation of things implies that, far from being instruments for affirming relations of possession, things can also present themselves as that which causes us and acts within us, without being tied to any person’s will or being the object of any individual conscious-

3 Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998, vol. I, q. 29, art. 1).

ness. One could say it’s a little like these works of art that affect us without being the expression of anyone’s deliberations, because they are not merely sedimented circuits of the histories that comprise them, but also their physical, material power and the transformations that materiality has undergone—in short, things have “lives of their own”. A *kratos* freed from the metaphysics of ownership would be the very expression of the recognition of the power of things in us, in our actions.

The exercise of that *kratos* might be the condition for a society in which things affect us in their freedom as inapproprable objects, as non-property; in which they are neither individual nor collective possessions, but the assertion that we live in a world of objects that have a bearing on us without belonging to us. A democratic society would be that in which things no longer existed to be owned. No reconstitution of the biopolitics that governs us can be done without first dislodging relations of ownership from their centrality in defining social life.

Of course, this interferes with the very notion of what we understand by “subject.” Subjects would be marked by the objects that affect them and which they bear. Subjects would carry the nucleus of the object inside themselves, thus radically altering what we mean by “the self.” The advent of these new political subjects is indissociable from the emergence of a subject shunted from the center, subjects de-centralized by that which appears to them as involuntary, nonconsensual, and opaque, that is, as an object. This decentralization obliges us to rethink the paradigms of decision-making and deliberation as the calculators of the means and ends that have accompanied us since Aristotle.

On the other hand, a *kratos* no longer forced to remain identical in itself would be an exercise in acting on the basis of that which we de-possess. And that means acting out of that which de-constitutes our formation as a people because this power constitutes neither a collective identity nor an interdependency based on necessary solidarity in the face

of the recognition of our vulnerability. This model based on cooperation among autonomous subjects is still highly dependent on the model of agency grounded in self-mastery, in disciplinary dominion over the self by a consciousness that is defined as a system of interests. But politics can become the space in which to de-constitute identity and permit the emergence of a communality that is more than just the unlimited extension of the potential of human relations—politics as the integration of that which was hitherto considered nonhuman, mere thing.

HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER IN DARK TIMES?

PETER
PÁL PELBART

We can no longer satisfy ourselves with Barthes' beautiful reflections on Athos Mount monastery, where monks share moments of prayer or repast, and each is assured his own rhythm, his idiorhythm. Not because such rhythmic singularity should be sacrificed in favor of this chronopolitics of temporal flattening, the fruit of infinite acceleration, but for even more radical reasons. We owe Jacques Rancière a keen reflection on time not as a straight line running from the past into the future (as so many others would have us believe), but as a "way of life." In other words, there are two separate forms of life: those that have time and those that don't.¹

And they have nothing in common. Instead, it is only through the power struggle between them that one can speak of time at all—albeit in division. The poet's task, as Emerson saw it in the American case, was to meld the heteroclitic times into a present time of ordinary life, of a coexistence devoid of hierarchy. It would be a "democratic" time, escaping the division Aristotle establishes between simple succession (typical of those who do not have time) and the fiction-infused causal chain of those who do. Is it not the role of the poet to articulate contradictory temporalities, imbuing the mundane world with spirituality (art)? How can we give things—prosaic situations and forms—another value, one that makes them a symbol of a new form of collective life?, asks Emerson. That's precisely the challenge Rancière embraces: "to build a new common meaning, a new sensible fabric in which prosaic activities receive a poetic value capable of turning them into elements of a common world."²

Lend a worldly shape to a process as yet formless and chaotic. Build a time that is common to beings and things. Rancière calls attention to the fact that in the same year Emerson published his lecture, in 1844, Marx brought to light his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. In contesting the contention that rational thought coincides with a rational-

1 Jacques Rancière, *Les temps modernes* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2018), 53.

2 Ibid., 61. All excerpts from this book have been translated for this publication.

ized world, he underscores the disconnect that is rending the present: the Prussian State, feudal and bureaucratic, is lagging when it comes to freedom of thought. A time of free thinking, and a time of servility on the ground. On the other hand, the French establishment, from which the Germans siphoned off the energy to erect their speculative edifice, is making ground against its unfortunate reality.

But the question Rancière poses is who can, in this torn present, poetically foreglimpse, out of ordinary reality, a common future time. It's what Walt Whitman would have done in the times of Emerson, the artists in the years of the Russian revolution, or Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera*. Rather than proposing a new political organization, communist activity, revolutionary cinema (not cinema *about* revolution) aim to propose a new common fabric of experience. As such, it unravels a narrative hierarchy, establishing a coexistence between all manner of events, the most trivial occurrences of quotidian city life, all wrapped up in a single day (a single time), as in Vertov, but also in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, or in Virginia Woolf, who sought the truth of experience more in a hail of atoms than in causal intrigues. In Vertov's film, Rancière sees not so much an elegy to the machine or to production as an equivalence and fraternity between all the work of diligent hands, just as Whitman spins a spiritual fiber that threads together the activities of the most varied social strata and layers, producing a jumble of different times.

What is communist is not the nature of these activities, but the link that unites them in their disparity. It is, therefore, a complex temporal game that this film installs. It is avant-garde, insofar as its constitution of a shared time presages this communist sensible world that, for the Soviet chairmen, cannot be but the result of a long building process. This common time is itself wrought of a multitude of movements that belong to heterogeneous temporalities.³

3 Ibid., 72.

But what are we to do with that difference we started out by drawing between those who have time and those who don't? We might think of the distinction Aristotle makes between the rest of those who work, and need a restorative pause between shifts at the grindstone, and those who enjoy ample leisure time to plan their activities or reaffirm their capacity to act. The downtime of servitude and leisure of freedom are two completely different types of inactivity, and the movement Rancière attributes to Vertov is precisely the one that abolishes the existing hierarchy between men submitted to mechanical movements and those available for free movement. This free movement (of the film, through its editing) that abolishes the difference is the one that gives a "fore-taste" of communism.

Twenty years of active participation in the Companhia Teatral Ueinz have perhaps helped me understand Rancière's observations. The fact that each actor lives in a temporality all her own is the most convincing proof. I'm not referring to an epochal shift—where one lives in medieval times, another in Ancient Rome, yet another in his or her own childhood, but a temporal modality, a time of bottomless collapse, or of infinite wait, of the reiteration of a single moment, or of an impending end of the world and of time, or that of being trapped inside an ancient scene—a little like what Alan Lightman does in *Einstein's Dreams*, where he describes different countries with their own, private flows of time... the types of pathological temporality explored by Minkowski, Maldiney, or Tosquelles.

The question is how we can forge, poetically, a common time, in which there's a place for all these temporalities, inscribed within a community of times, comparable, perhaps, to the "communist foreshadowing" of which Rancière speaks. There, each gesture, however tiny, each voice, however inaudible, has the same "worth," the same "weight," the same "importance." Downcast, haughty, reeling, out of control, stuttering... Everyone is included in the scenic plane, almost as in the operation described by Rancière for Vertov, but

moving in the other direction, more toward the slowing-down that characterizes the Ueinzz Company than to the Russian filmmaker's dizzying acceleration. "It's a communist activity, one whose articulation of the collective creates communism, not *qua* political organization, but as the new fabric of sensible experience."⁴ Or, elsewhere, "it is in discord, in the barbaric jumble of temporalities that one must find the thread capable of unifying the new community."⁵ If the rhythms of both aesthetic experiences seem to clash, we might consider the other, literary example Rancière gives, sourced in Joyce or Virginia Woolf. To put it schematically: up until then, as Aristotle elucidates, there were two narrative models: one that described events as they happened; and a second that narrated them as they could have happened. The former is the time of passive men, who don't live their time freely, in the sense of being able to order it themselves, but simply receive it passively; while the second pertains to the active men, free men who can order their time by creating causal connections through the exercise of fictional rationality. For Rancière, modern fiction escapes from both of these schemas in order to create a third form, one in which quotidian times rally a

multiplicity of microscopic sensible events of equal importance that connect the life of each individual with wider anonymous life, which knows no hierarchy. Hence the causal chain of significant events is not merely swapped for the framing of a day. More profoundly, it substitutes the time of succession—a hierarchical time—for an egalitarian time of coexistence.⁶

4 Ibid., 65.

5 Ibid., 71.

6 Ibid., 119.

This is where we run up against that surprising notion of "fictional democracy," the matrix of a new "common sense/meaning (*sens*)," a "sensible continuum." Here, fragmentation is not a means toward separation, but unification. Speaking about Vertov: "It is thus that the film understands responding to the task set by its day: it builds, sensibly, the common time of new life through the use of the cinematographic time that homogenizes all the occupations and makes them stand one for the other. This time is the opposite of the traditional time of fiction's causal chains." And the author designates this the time of performance.⁷ In the case of theater, it's not exactly obvious that one can speak of homogenization, but perhaps a scenic "treatment" that can make times belong to the same plane.

But there's another time that appears in Rancière, and he derives it from the films by Pedro Costa, especially *Juventude em marcha* [*Colossal Youth*], which depicts the life of zombie-like, walking-dead immigrants from Cape Verde whose bodies carry the immense weight of colonial history, like ghosts wafting back from Hell to witness History. Impossible to integrate into the quotidian description or any narrative sequence, they reveal this existence suspended somewhere between life and death, almost like a voice from the beyond, attesting to the passage of History through their bodies. Theirs is the outside-of-timeness of the irreparable and of myth, spiriting itself into the heart of chronicle, preventing any redemption, bringing to bear only the violence of rejection, revealing the schism between the "script of justice and the time of progress."⁸ As an equivalent to Pedro Costa's characters, outside time and in between life and death, I see the "life and work" of the actor Alexandre Bernardes, a "social suicide" who spent twenty years building the skeletal structure of Cia. Teatro Ueinzz, and who died as the result of medical error in 2017, after the company's return from a tour in Amsterdam. With some industrial-grade psychiatric

7 Ibid., 123.

8 Ibid., 144.

history behind him, he was a sort of rough-hewn thinker who never ceased to ask himself, and all those he came across, the most vital questions at point-blank range: “Who is alive? What about the poor? Who is going to survive the present wars? Why doesn’t she love me? What about man’s domination by machines? Have you been sleeping well?”

With his libido on overdrive and a provocative spirit, his poetic terrorism left nobody indifferent. He would lie down on the ground, petrified, for hours on end, or just disappear for a while, or propose the most absurd ideas: “Let’s make a clothesline and hang pieces of meat on it, along with a photo of Datena,⁹ and some cartons of under-the-counter drugs.” Sometimes he’d silently read other people’s thoughts with precision and humor—I lost count of the number of times he just turned around to me and said: “You’re depressed today,” or “You’ve joined the bourgeoisie,” or asked me something like “Are you still stepping up to the plate in the bedroom?” He proffered diagnoses left, right, and center, and was, in his own way, our therapist. When the German director Christoph Schlingensiefel was looking for actors for a staging of Wagner’s *Ghost Train* at Sesc Belenzinho, in São Paulo, and wanted to meet us, Alexandre asked him if he’d ever shagged a corpse and we were hired on the spot. It was precisely this sort of unfiltered presence that he needed for the play. On stage, he could hold moving dialogues, or raving monologues, or bark out the most absurd exhortations (“You lot need more sex!” he once yelled at a stunned Finnish audience, in Helsinki). If he walked across the stage in silence, head down, hand slapped to his forehead, body arched, he could make it look like he was carrying the whole world on his shoulders. And inside his skull, all the voices of the planet were locked in relentless battle, without truce.

He used to say that art was no consolation to him. At the Van Gogh museum, he let out this blood-curdling scream, bringing all the security guards running. He was, of course,

9 Datena is the host of a popular sensationalist news program that focuses on crime and catastrophe.

kicked out. If Van Gogh had been standing by his side, they’d have screamed together. Alexandre rejected museum life, museumified life. His solitude was immense. During our performances in Amsterdam, he’d sometimes stay oddly silent and sometimes fly across the stage like an astronaut from some other planet, stuffed inside five-layered overcoats, as if to stave off some otherworldly cold that, of course, came from inside, whilst repeating over and over “Coming through, coming through.” Condensed within that strange act was his entire life or the way the history of it had pervaded his body. As Alejandra Riera put it, “He was a deserter in his own way, like many of us. He needed to make himself heard! Not to say something articulate, like the philosophers, or something just, as the politicians and militants purport to do, no, that sort of speech irritated him. He needed his whole body to be heard.”¹⁰

WHAT CHANGED?

Solitary figures are never solitary, as we all know. They carry with them the world that rejects them or are inhabited by various worlds there’d be no place for in this one. Thirteen years ago, on occasion of the Bienal de São Paulo entitled “How to live together,” curated by Lisette Lagnado, I was invited to present a Barthesian reflection on the theme. Given the little spin I intended to put on it, Lagnado suggested that I change the title to “How to live alone.” A lot has changed since then, and it’s hardly surprising that I’ve been asked to update that particular reflection in the light of now. Those were other times, the opposite in every way to those we’re living today. My text for the 27th Bienal ended with a reference to sympathy. Let me revisit here the quotation from Deleuze from which I drew the term:

10 See Peter Pál Pelbart, *Ensaio do assombro* (São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2019), 286–289.

Against the European morality of salvation and charity, a morality of life in which the soul is fulfilled only by taking to the road, with no other aim, open to all contacts, never trying to save other souls, turning away from those who produce an overly authoritarian or groaning sound, forming even fleeting and unresolved chords and accords with its equals, with freedom as its sole accomplishment, always ready to free itself so as to complete itself. According to Melville or Lawrence, brotherhood is a matter for original souls: perhaps it begins only with the death of a father or God, but it does not derive from this death, it is a whole other matter—‘all the subtle sympathizings of the incalculable soul, from the bitterest hate to passionate love.’

Further on, he adds: “This requires a new perspective, an archipelago-perspectivism ... It requires a new community whose members are capable of trust or ‘confidence,’ that is, a belief in themselves, in the world, and in becoming.”¹¹

However beautiful such texts might be, they can also sound like “waffle” in the face of the concrete brutality that has taken hold of our country. However, we don’t want, and can’t afford, to dispense with them. Not because they’re sacrosanct or contain some magic formula, but because they enable us to put the various different scales, major and minor, micro and macro, molecular and molar, and all their heterogeneous elements into some intelligible relation. That a solitary writer can be the bearer of a “collective enunciation, which no longer forms part of literary history and preserves the rights of a people to come,”¹² this is what Deleuze defines as literature’s “schizophrenic” vocation: “even in his catatonic or anorexic state, *Bartleby* is not the patient, but the doctor of a sick America.” This means that, on all scales, everywhere, whether in a film by Pedro Costa, a play by the Ueinzz Group, a mass street demonstration against a rise in bus fares, an ur-

11 *Ibid.*, 101. Translated for this volume.

12 *Ibid.*, 103. Translated for this volume.

ban occupation resisting the powers-that-be, in all of these examples we see the same horizon of the “common,” inflected to suit each scale and each case, testifying to the various ways we can share time, space, land, gestures, dreams. But we must probe one of the most challenging questions to elucidate—namely, how, despite the concrete defeats, experienced on a given level of visibility, is a virtual arrow sent soaring into the beyond, nourishing a new possibility?

SPECTRAL SOLITUDE

In a recent text, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro showed us what happens in the voluntary isolation which the indigenous peoples are proposing as a solution against their own extinction. Every time they are forced into contact with the whites, an even more isolated group appears elsewhere, like specters that, in their virtuality, resist and underscore their remnant status, or what the author calls their “*rexistence*.” The spectral duplication of a “contacted” community is a mode of survival, ensuring an archipelago of communities that are resisting being swallowed up by the white invaders.¹³

While the dynamic of devastation in the Amazon obliges us to conclude that the time when, objectively, there’ll be no more isolated tribes is not all that far away, there’s a sense in which you could say that these peoples will never end up ending. They will always be out there, roaming the existential wilds around tribes in formal interaction with the white man’s institutions. It all seems to proceed as if, with every “pacification” by the whites, a double is created that shrinks away from contact. We’re all familiar with the tales of indigenous “attraction and pacification” in which there

13 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Brasil, país do futuro do passado* (São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2019).

always seems to be news of “braves” skulking around out there, in the environs. These recalcitrant doppelgangers might be contacted later themselves, but for as long as they remain isolated, that is, present as an absence—an existence suggested in negative, gleaned from vestiges, footprints, tracks, noises, fleeting shadows—they seem to disappear only on condition of some future reappearance. The “revelation” of an isolated people induces the *hidden presence* of another, even more so. For every group that is contacted, there’s another that remains isolated, like a dated image of itself, a lag that lengthens all the more as the contacted people adopt new habits and techniques, and on it goes until the hidden double all but vanishes from empirical reality, “involving” into ghostdom. Deleuze and Guattari said that “the extermination of a minority creates the emergence of a minority of that lost minority”; and we might say, analogously, that contact with an isolated people gives rise to an isolated remnant of that no-longer isolated people.¹⁴

The result is the emergence, Brazil-wide, of new “indigenous isles” where before there were islands, even if this occurs in the mode of virtual peoples, among “smallholder farmers, fishermen, backlanders, and caboclos who rediscover their indigenous souls and start demanding their constitutional rights to protection, just like the ‘Indians in general,’” adopting signs that allow them to speak of an “Afro-indigenous” subjectivity, and so the generation of new political players. Alongside that, the tendency toward the federalization of certain groups, or the expulsion of whites from their territories, lends meaning to the unusual slogan: “Autonomy is to be alone.”

And here we have a new conjunction between solitude and community, isolation and connection. It’s no longer an issue of starting from the dialectic between the individual and the community, but from the agonistic relations between a

¹⁴ Ibid. Translated for this volume.

community at risk and the enemies that threaten it. Perhaps, here, we catch a glimpse of a new horizon, albeit one that pulls against the tyrannical commandment of “integration,” a synonym of extinction. It’s not just a matter of defending the existing minorities’ universal right to life, but their right to distance from the universal models, and, more radically, the right of virtual minorities to develop at a distance, or the capacity to accompany the processes of minority proliferation at the distance they need to take hold, or processes of singularization based on a cauldron of memory open to unlikely hybridizations (“Afro-Indians”) that challenge the white parameter. Deleuze and Guattari need the series of minor becomings in order to break with the hegemonic model of the rational-European-white-man, whose universalization, imposed by hook and crook through colonization on a quasi-planetary level, was responsible for the predomination of a homogeneous mode of life, the collapse of which, in its incapacity to deal with alterity, or with the planet, is becoming clearer by the day, even if none of that seems to diminish its voracity and violence *tout azimuth*. Whence the limits of the aspiration towards living together, because the whole question concerns the meaning of togetherness, the “how” of togetherness, the “who” of togetherness, or the “together with whom”... Only with those who can tolerate the apartness, perhaps...

—

It’s time to end. I’m not sure we have managed to formulate any differently the question that has pressed itself upon us in recent years and which today literally leaps at our throats in the most varied ways: How to live together, how to live alone, how to live alone, together. There’s no contemplating that question without postulating the multiple worlds out of which it might pose itself, overstepping the intersubjective dimension to which it is used to being confined. But for that, there has to be a “world.” As Benjamin wrote:

On this planet, a great many civilizations perished in blood and horror. Naturally, one hopes that someday the planet shall know what it's like to host a civilization that has abandoned blood and horror; in fact, I am inclined to suppose ... that our planet hopes for that too. But it is terribly doubtful whether we shall manage to bring such a gift to its 100 millionth, or even 400 millionth, birthday party. And if we don't, the planet will finally punish us, even as we sing its many happy returns, by presenting us with the Final Judgement.¹⁵

Hardly surprisingly, when he described to his friend Scholem how he felt, it was as follows: "Like one who keeps afloat on a shipwreck by climbing up an already collapsing mast. But at least from there, he has a chance to signal for rescue."¹⁶

15 Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, vol. II, 698, quoted in Hannah Arendt, *Homens em tempos sombrios* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008), 207. Translated for this volume.

16 Benjamin quoted in Arendt, *Homens em tempos sombrios*, 186. Translated for this volume.

EMERGENCE IN EMERGENCY

LAYMERT GARCIA
DOS SANTOS

Since the 1970s, when the inventor Richard Buckminster Fuller, analyzing the evolution of technological progress throughout the 20th century, discovered a socio-technical phenomenon which he called *ephemeralization*,¹ we've been living in the thrall of exponential acceleration—i.e., the acceleration of acceleration. The impact this has had on all dimensions of human and nonhuman life is tremendous, at all latitudes and longitudes of the globe, but we insist on imagining that we're the same as ever, guided by the same values and parameters as before the “cyber shift” that has reconfigured life, labor, and language, and, thereby, all of human experience.

In fact, the advent of exponential acceleration should not be considered a major novelty anymore, as we've been living it for half a century now! However, as few scholars have bothered to examine the ontological and epistemological implications of this shift, we continue to feel and suffer the transformation almost as a destiny, without really understanding where we are and where we are heading. This happens because we're still laboring under a “me or you”-based scarcity logic allied with an instrumental vision of technology as if it were merely a tool at our disposal, which we use as we see fit. As the philosopher Gilbert Simondon so magnificently pointed out, we nurture an autocratic philosophy toward “technical objects,” one grounded in a relationship of domination, in which we are masters over and/or slaves to machines.²

The “law of the strongest” and the ignorance fed by this philosophy prevent us from really nailing the meaning of this shift, but not of experiencing it in body and spirit. We're living at “escape velocity,” to use the astronomical term for the minimum speed required for a spacecraft to leave the earth's orbit.

For some “measure” or “technological unit of time”, if one might call it that, of the impact this breakneck technological acceleration is having on contemporary human life, suffice it

1 Richard Buckminster Fuller, *Critical Path* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1981).

2 Gilbert Simondon, *De mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969).

to read the words of Konstantinos Karachalios, a former specialist at the European Patents Office, who spent much of the last decade creating future scenarios for the organization:

The whole 20th century is equivalent to only 16 years of technological progress measured by the year 2000, i.e., technologically seen, the whole century could be compressed within only 16 years, with developments concentrated more and more towards its end. Taking into account this accelerating effect, could you imagine how many such time units we and our children will experience and must cope with during the 21st century? There will apparently be more than 100, but can you imagine how many? Well, if you simply extrapolate the current trend, assuming no large-scale and long-term disasters, it may be that we will have to accommodate a technological progress equivalent to 25,000 years, based on year 2000 technology, within two generations. Even if you take “only” 1,000 years, we will be faced with challenges similar to the ones that are still facing most populations in Africa, which were catapulted from the Iron or Stone Age into modernity within two to three generations.³

If Karachalios is right, we must ask ourselves the following: how is human experience “processing” this acceleration, which the specialists are describing as a “technological avalanche”? The analogy with indigenous tribes sounds exciting, not because they are “backward” or “archaic” in socio-cultural terms but because they have chosen not to join us on the ever-faster traveller of technological development. Anyone who has been in a Yanomami village, for example, will know just how wide a gulf separates their way of life from our technologized world, and the difficulty they have in handling our machines. In that case, however, the problem lies not

3 “Inside Views: A Look At The EPO Project On The Future of Intellectual Property,” *Intellectual Property Watch*, 2006, <http://www.ip-watch.org/weblog/index.php?p=376&res=1600&print=0>, accessed in September 2019.

with their society, but with ours, the social organization of *the white man*. The irony is that we are being confronted more and more with the dizzying acceleration our society produces and the inescapable effects it generates. It’s as if we were becoming a primitive tribe within our own culture!

It is already clear that it’s beyond our control; nobody can absorb it. We simply don’t have time to process and assimilate what’s happening to us, and that, itself, is one of the first effects of exponential acceleration. It’s a paradox, indeed, seeing as, a priori, man invented machines in order to save time. And yet, the more technologized the various spheres of life become, the less time we have! Evidently, we’re doing a lot more now than ever—and we want to do even more! But we’re always caught between minds, always catching up, running late. There’s an irredeemable deficit.

Capitalism is unbeatable when it comes to generating debt because it pushes scarcity logic to its most absurd consequences. In Buckminster Fuller’s view, we’ve had the technology to ensure a good life for all humanity since the 1980s, not just in material terms, but on an experiential and even spiritual level too. It’s what he calls the conversion of the *killinrgy* of competition into *livingry*.

However, what neoliberal capitalism foists upon us is unconditional adherence to *killinrgy* through the radical optimization of performance, with or without machinery, and the total colonization of time. It even suggests we sleep less because sleep is considered unproductive, as Jonathan Crary showed in his book *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*.⁴ After all, since the advent of a network of global cities in the 1990s, clustered around the command centers of New York, London, and Tokyo, the financial market has ceased to sleep—when one trading floor opens, the second is in full swing, and the third is just about to close. If capital never sleeps and informational machinery can run nonstop, why

4 Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Princeton University Press, 2013). See also Helmut Rosa, *Accélération – Une critique sociale du temps*, trans. Didier Renault (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

should humans slump into the downtime of vigil? It's hardly surprising that cocaine is the drug of choice for the global trader, as it boosts performance.

According to neoliberal dogma, *homo oeconomicus* (so well studied by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*⁵) is himself capital, as all his resources, innate or acquired, must be permanently deployed and operated as investments. In this sense, it's no accident that we're seeing the wholesale eradication of manual labor, even as a heuristic category: brought to full fruition, there's no place in the neoliberal order for the worker, to be replaced summarily by the entrepreneur, the self-capitalizing capitalist.

Now, the consecration of the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* prepares the ground for the deconstruction and "outmoding" of man. If I'm not mistaken, the first thinker to warn of "human obsolescence" was the philosopher Günther Anders, back in 1956.⁶ Years later, the poet and playwright Heiner Müller spoke of the "disappearance of the human being through the vector of technology" and despaired of *Hamlet's* descent into *Hamletmaschine*,⁷ replacing modern man's existential doubt with ponderations generated by the contemporary cyborg (with the computer, cellphone, and internet as its most eloquent interfaces). Since then, the development of techno-science, digital and genetic, i.e., advances in AI and nanotechnology, on one side, and in biogenetics, on the other, has roused countless doubts and responses as to the surpassing of basic humanity as a species. As human performance runs up against obvious limits and displays visible signs of burnout, a fundamental question arises: when and

5 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

6 The Italian edition was consulted for the present essay: Günther Anders, *L'uomo è antiquato. 1. Considerazioni sull'anima nell'epoca della seconda rivoluzione industriale*, second edition, trans. Laura Dallapiccola (Turin: Boringhieri, 2005).

7 Heiner Müller, *Manuscripts de Hamlet-Machine – Transcriptions-traductions*, trans. Jean Jourdeuil and Heinz Schwarzingler, transcription by Julia Bernhard (Paris: Minuit, 2003).

how will man be replaced and/or reconfigured? We find ourselves in a new field of discussion concerning the post-human and transhuman.

It's a discussion that unfolds along four broad lines: the first sees humanists advocating the creation of limits for techno-scientific progress in order to preserve the integrity of our species; the second, already stepping into post-humanism, foresees the gradual phasing out of our kind through artificial intelligence, whether in favor of autonomous robots, or "souped-up" humans kitted with increasingly sophisticated prostheses; the third argues for the emergence of a new human species engineered through biogenetic modifications, first somatic, then generative; and the fourth, the transhuman perspective, claims that humanity is not yet obsolete. Quite the contrary, in fact: now is the time to fully realize human potential by marrying it to the capabilities of machinery, in a synergy that dispels once and for all this demiurgic approach to tech.

Obviously, here is not the place to explore these perspectives in any depth, but it is crucial to present them, as they are likely to frame man's horizons going forward and, therefore, the decisions we must take now. Moreover, the concepts of the post-human and transhuman cannot be dissociated from the environmental crisis already threatening the planet's future. It's always good to recall the observations of Buckminster Fuller:

Humanity is an experimental initiative of Universe. The experiment is to discover whether the complex of cosmic laws can maintain the integrity of eternal regeneration while allowing the mind of the species *homo sapiens* on the little planet Earth to discover and use some of the mathematical laws governing the design of Universe, whereby those humans can by trial and error develop subjectively from initial ignorance into satisfactorily informed, successful local-Universe monitors of all physically and metaphysically critical information and thereby serve ob-

jectively as satisfactory local-Universe problem-solvers in sustaining the integrity of eternally regenerative Universe.

In this sense, and in ecological terms, men's failure to fulfill their cosmic mission

simply means the death of this particular planetary installation of mind-endowed individuals. The failure of humans means the function must be performed in local-Universe by other phenomena capable of reliably serving the information-agglomerating and problem-solving function.⁸

It's not a matter of catastrophe or apocalypse. It might not be the end of the world, but it will be the end of a world. One thing is for sure, man has to convert *killingly* into *livingly*. But what does that mean? The philosopher Gilles Deleuze had already heralded a new historical formation in which life, work, and language would be transfigured by a new operational logic which he called the *unlimited finite*, a logic of recombination "in which a finite number of components yields a practically unlimited diversity of combinations."⁹ That's the post-cyber-shift logic, the logic that commands digital and genetic informational operations, in which information can be defined as the difference that makes the difference, to use Gregory Bateson's ingenious formulation.¹⁰

We might ask, at this point, to what extent the logic of the unlimited finite ties in with contemporary logic not just in the West, but within other ontologies and epistemologies from different parts of the world.

The traditional/modern dichotomy no longer applies, because, from the contemporary perspective, the parameters

8 Buckminster Fuller, *Grunch of Giants* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), XXIV and XXVI-XXVII.

9 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 131.

10 Gregory Bateson, "Men Are Grass," in *Gaia - A Way of Knowing: Political Implications of the New Biology*, edited by W.I. Thompson (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Press, 1987).

of the modern are just as "archaic" as those of different traditions. Moreover: everything the modern dismissed as *passé* seems to be reemerging as contemporary again in the western world, albeit understood in a different light.

The world of modern historical formation we're leaving behind is an eminently Eurocentric world. Techno-science, like globalization, was nurtured and developed by the West, particularly the Anglophone West. But it's important to recognize that both are now being appropriated, expanded, and reformulated by other world powers, tilting the geopolitical axis towards Asia, especially since the emergence of China, Russia, and India, the new China-Russia alliance, and the inclusion of Japan and various Near-, Middle-, and Far-Eastern nations (plus some European and African countries) on the New Silk Road project. Today, specialists agree that techno-science and globalization have slipped out of Western control and that the recent political transformations in Europe and the United States (Brexit, Trump, the EU crisis) amount to protectionist, defensive, and regressive pushback on their part, fighting in vain to maintain a hegemony that is contested with increasing confidence.

Clearly, this whole problematic affects contemporary art. Not only because this "technological avalanche" has stolen art's fire in terms of modeling and modulating human experience through its omnipresence and the radical nature of its effects, but also because the very concept of "art" has been transfigured and reevaluated. It's paradoxical if we consider that technology's usurpation of art's status as unrivaled agent of transformation comes at a time when the art market is experiencing a record boom and when any global city worthy of the name simply has to have a reputable contemporary art center or museum.

Faced with this new context, art seems to be complexifying in at least three directions. First, new information technologies are having an increasingly significant impact on the way art is produced, circulated, and consumed (consider the importance of installations; the part new media play in art

creation and the transformation of the exhibition space; the democratization of access; the promotion of works; the internationalization of artists; the dynamism of auctions, etc.). On the other hand, and as a makeweight, there's a whole new artistic movement that is placing more store on thematizing human and nonhuman life, both individual and collective, natural and social. Finally, in the wake of globalization and this shifting geopolitical axis, we're seeing the onset of a process intent on subverting the hierarchies established by the art field itself.

It's interesting to see an astute and refined specialist like Hans Belting, the author of *The End of the History of Art*,¹¹ turning around and focusing on what he calls *global art*, that is, a perspective that attempts to encompass everything from art created in line with Western standards to all that other stuff which never fit those criteria and so was consigned to museums of ethnology under the label "ethnic art." In this sense, *global art* would be an overture towards an "opening" and resolution of the art/ethnic art modern dichotomy, creating new parameters that "move beyond" the earlier standards of aesthetic judgment. As Belting keenly observed, *global art* is western art's last-ditch attempt to preserve its hegemony by attempting to retain for itself the right to decide what is or is not art.¹²

That movement finds a parallel in the way in which western scholars of multiculturalism are demanding perfect privileges over theoretical thought on the *postcolonial*. Of course, there is no guarantee these maneuvers will work in the long term. The concepts of *global art* and the *postcolonial* are already being questioned and contested by artists and theorists who take the Eurocentric reference as just one among

11 Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

12 Hans Belting, "Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age," in *Contemporary Art and the Museum. A Global Perspective*, edited by Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007). See also Laymert Garcia dos Santos, "How Global Art Transforms Ethnic Art," in *The Global Art World – Audiences, Markets and Museums*, edited by Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009).

many in the contemporary constellation—if at all! That's the case with the critique of "postcoloniality" leveled by emerging nations within the ambit of the South-South dialogue.

How are we to understand the novel directions art is taking in the context of these new operational logics? By way of illustration, I'd like to end with an example.

It concerns the Chinese painter Shen Qin. According to those who know his work, he's created a new, unique language that combines the poetics of traditional China ink on paper with a contemporary aesthetic. Indeed, a comparison of his paintings with more classical Chinese compositions reveals a significant gap. And yet they couldn't be more disturbingly close! Shen Qin masters the two traditional components of Chinese high painting: brush and paint. This enables him to conjure, in dense layers, that mysterious blend of reality and illusion, subtlety and tranquility that makes the work of the old masters so enthralling. After the painters of the Song Dynasty, his inspiration, Shen Qin's subject of choice is the landscape, considered the quintessence of painting. Mastering China ink like his ancestors, Shen Qin's monochrome compositions strike an uncanny balance between the figurative and the abstract, not through technique alone, but through recourse to a concept rooted in Taoism. His images become all the more intriguing because their center is often filled with a void of pure light—their serene thrum contrasting strikingly with the tunnels of glare boring into Turner's latest works, for example. Shen Qin does not paint landscapes; he paints the spirit of landscapes, in their cosmic dimension. In a word: their existence/nonexistence. In them, we can see what the famous 18th-century painter Shitao meant when he wrote, in his *Monk Bitter-Pumpkin's Reflections on Painting*: "The work is found not in the brush, which transmits the work; not in the ink, which makes it visible; nor in the mountain, which allows it to express immobility; nor in the water, through which it expresses movement; nor in Antiquity, which allows it to be boundless; nor in the present, which leaves it unblinking. So if the succession of eras is not disorderly, and the

brush and the ink remain throughout time, it is because they have penetrated intimately into the work. That work rests upon the principle of discipline and life: through the One, we master the many; through the many, we master the One; not through the mountain, nor the water, nor the brush, nor the paint, nor the Ancients, nor the Moderns, nor the Sages. That is the true work, that which rests upon its own substance.”¹³

Shen Qin is a master painter perfectly adapted to the present times. Times of emergence in emergency, because he knows how to model the pell-mell with calm and perfection.

13 Pierre Ryckmans, *Les propos sur la peinture du Moine Citrouille-Amère – Traduction et commentaire de Shitao* (Paris: Plon, 2007), 137. Translated for this volume.

IN SEARCH OF STOLEN TIME¹

GUILHERME
WISNIK

If the 20th century was bacteriological, based on the bipolar paradigm of the I's immunoreaction against the infectious threat of the other, to use the words of the philosopher Byung-Chul Han, the contemporary pathologies are, on the contrary, essentially neuronal—depression, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, burnout syndrome—caused more by the I's excesses against itself than by any external invasion.² In other words, they are not brought on by the *negativity* of something immunologically foreign, but by an excess of *positivity* on the part of the organism itself.

And so, if the dominant mentality of the 20th century was organized as per some military-style division between inside and out, between strategies of defense and those of attack, in policies of isolation from all foreign bodies—hence the hygienic asepsis of modern architecture, inspired by the sanitary model used to contain tuberculosis—today we're living in a globalized society marked by the suspension and removal of all boundaries and obstacles. It's an age poor in negativities, as Han puts it, and brimming with pacified permissiveness, as processes of hybridization represent the opposite of the principle of immunization. Ours is a society in which alterity and foreignness are replaced by *difference*, which provokes no immunological reaction within the individual. Wrought by positivity, the violence of this society is more invisible than any before it, based on discipline and the explicit prohibition of fences, railings, and watchtowers. Its violence does not exclude; it exhausts.

Inaugurated symbolically by the fall of a wall—the Berlin Wall, in 1989—our epoch has seen the world throw all its gates open to the promiscuity of globalization, in which everything is stirred into one big Same. Likewise, the paradigm

- 1 This essay is a reworking of some of the themes present in Guilherme Wisnik, "Baixa definição: nuvens de capitais, nuvens digitais," in *Dentro do nevoeiro: arquitetura, arte e tecnologia contemporâneas* (São Paulo: Ubu, 2018), 49–85.
- 2 See Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, Stanford Briefs, 2015), 1–15.

of disciplinary society so well analyzed by Michel Foucault, instituted by hospitals, mental institutions, prisons, barracks, and factories, gives way to a society of achievement, with all its fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, and shopping malls.³ Entrepreneurs of themselves, the denizens of this new world are no longer expected to comply, but they are expected to achieve and produce, they are driven by the motivational mantra “yes, we can”—Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign slogan. Incited to personal initiative, the contemporary subject internalizes discipline as a sort of apparent freedom of action. And so, as Han explains, while the old disciplinary society created madmen and delinquents who needed locking away, today’s achievement society produces losers and depressives, paralyzed by the belief that nothing is impossible.

Where the symbol of the modern world was the Panopticon—a watchtower with no blind spots—today, power has become diffuse and extraterritorial. As Zygmunt Bauman argues, in the heavy stage of modernity, capital, administration, and labor were bound together by the combination of sprawling factories, heavy machinery, and a massive workforce. To survive in that context, capitalists had to create clear boundaries and defend their territories with high walls and barbed wire. Hence Henry Ford, in a last gasp attempt to brake rampant staff turnover, decided to double his workers’ pay in order to keep them inside his “industrial fortress” during their punishingly long working days.⁴ Symptomatically, the great modern dystopias of Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*, 1932) and George Orwell (1984, 1949) shared the same foreboding of social engineering oriented toward order and steeped in authoritarianism; a strictly controlled world in which we see ourselves as puppets on strings. Faced with that prospect—the “steely casing” described by Max Weber—the usual left-

³ See Han, *The Burnout Society*, 17.

⁴ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000), 58.

wing response was to criticize totalitarianism and defend the subject’s autonomy, freedom of choice and self-affirmation, and the right to be different.

That’s the position we find in the scathing criticism of capitalism presented by Herbert Marcuse and the generation of students and intellectuals associated with Paris 68, for example. It was a critique that, paradoxically, ended up plying capitalism with the raw materials for a renewal of *spirit*, enthroning the critical principles of autonomy and flexibility as supreme values assimilated through positivation, and so destroying the hard-won stability workers had achieved over long decades of union-led strikes and walkouts. The atomization of collective rights in the name of individual emancipation triggered a new reality in which the worker gradually transformed into an entrepreneur of himself, and his personal relationships began to figure as the symbolic capital of productivity and self-promotion. Hence Bauman’s question as to whether the worker’s liberation from the yoke of industrial capitalism was really a blessing or a curse.⁵ Recalling a passage from Homer’s *Odyssey* in which Odysseus breaks a spell cast by Circe, which had transformed his crew into hogs, Bauman quotes the sailor Elpenoros’ bitter scolding of his master for having restored him to the “liberty” of that hateful life.

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello x-ray the emergence of the connectionist world we live in today, based upon flexible work and born from the capitalist integration of the demands for creativity and autonomy that flowered in the 1960s against the “misery of everyday life” under the empire of technocracy. A social and aesthetic critique, according to the authors, that mirrored the context of a highly educated youth that eschewed repetitive, mechanized labor, and expressed a discontent which the unions could neither channel nor address. And so, from the 1980s on, when market deregulation and severely weakened job security worked an internal transformation in capitalism

⁵ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 18.

(now in its late stage and under the banner of neoliberalism), new, more flexible and attractive forms of employment became prevalent, replacing the old authoritarian business management with semiautonomous, self-regulating work groups. In the words of Boltanski and Chiapello, “autonomy was exchanged for security, opening the way for a new spirit of capitalism extolling the virtues of mobility and adaptability, whereas the previous spirit was unquestionably more concerned with security than with liberty.”⁶

For Bauman, the *liquid modernity* that characterizes our times represents the radical melting away of the fetters that, in the solid phase of modernity—industrial capitalism—were suspected of limiting individual freedoms but were, in fact, responsible for establishing bonds of collective identity around shared, common interests. And if during that earlier phase, citizenship walked hand in hand with the idea of settlement, relegating nomadism to vagrancy, today we’re seeing nomadism exact its revenge on the principle of territoriality. Ours is a historical moment in which the settled majority is being dominated by a nomadic, trans-territorial elite—perversely and cruelly mirrored by the growing number of refugees spawned by the same process. Today, it’s entirely possible to master others without having to worry about managing and administrating that domination. “Traveling light, rather than holding tightly to things deemed attractive for their reliability and solidity—that is, for their heavy weight, substantiality and unyielding power of resistance—is now the asset of power.”⁷ Suffice it to observe that multinational corporations no longer congeal their capital in flagship premises intended to anchor the brand’s social reliability, but opt instead for rented offices in global cities which they can vacate overnight at the first sight of a market funk, simply disappearing into thin air.

6 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London, New York: Verso 2005), 199.

7 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 13.

Significantly, in the era of media and electronics, even architecture itself seems to strive for a certain dematerialization, contradictorily freeing itself from the effects of gravity, the resistance of its materials, and the physical efforts to which buildings are submitted, aiming instead for a “liquified” feel that abandons the anthropomorphic reference and Vitruvian principle of *firmitas* (solidity), essential pillars of the classical tradition. How are we to express “increasing turbulence in a stable medium”?⁸ That’s the provocative question in which Rem Koolhaas couches the paradox of present-day architecture. Elsewhere, he adds: “The irony is that where before architecture was called upon to convey (corporate) certainty, now it’s enlisted to house change, to be the vehicle through which change is, in turn, realized and expressed.”⁹

Metaphorically speaking, it’s as if we are finally seeing Hermes, the Ancient Greek god of movement and trade, triumph over Hestia, the settled, stable, stay-at-home goddess of the ancestral hearth. According to Jean-Pierre Vernant, Hermes, the traveling messenger, represents passage, flow, mutation and transition, contact among foreign elements. “In the house, his place is at the door, protecting the threshold, repelling thieves because he is himself the thief ... for whom no lock, no barricade, no frontier exists. He is the wall piercer who is depicted in the *Hymn to Hermes* as ‘gliding edgewise through the keyhole of the hall like the autumn breeze, even as *mist*.’”¹⁰ Refreshing the metaphor with further examples from Bauman, we’re now substituting Rockefeller’s business model, with its factories, railroads, oil towers, and skyscrapers, with that of Bill Gates, who “feels no regret when parting with possessions in which he took pride yesterday,” as he knows it’s “the mind-boggling speed of circu-

8 Rem Koolhaas, “Atlanta,” in *S, M, L, XL*, by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 847.

9 Juan Antonio Cortés, “Delirio y más,” *El Croquis* (El Escorial), no. 131–132 (2006): 32. Translated for this volume.

10 Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, trans. Janet Lloyd with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 159. Italics added by the author.

lation, of recycling, ageing, dumping, and replacement which brings profit today.”¹¹ In short, while politics consists in keeping the roads open to the nomadic movements of information and capital, its flipside is a disengagement with and disintegration of deep-run, thick-set social networks, considered obstacles to this perpetual expansion.

We’re living in what Jeremy Rifkin calls the “Age of Access.”¹² In other words, in a world in which change is the economic regime’s only constant; in which it makes less sense to own, maintain, and accumulate property because ownership has been substituted by access. The old model of purchase and sale of goods and services has been ousted by network-based systems of provider-to-user supply, such as Airbnb, Uber, Netflix, and Spotify, among many others—note that this new empire of access, dethroner of the once sovereign value of property, also generates an ethos of sharing and appropriation in which, as observed by Nicolas Bourriaud,¹³ the artist becomes less a creator than an agent of an ampler “postproduction” network. According to Rifkin, today, it’s not just goods that convert into merchandise, but above all human relations, as retaining customers involves controlling as much of their time as possible.¹⁴ “The customer is no longer a market target,” says Laymert Garcia dos Santos, based on Rifkin, “she is the market, and her potential must be ascertained, prospected, and processed.” As such, “it’s not a case of selling a single product to the highest possible number of customers, but of selling the highest possible number of products to a single customer over the longest possible pe-

11 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 14.

12 See Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000).

13 See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction – Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002).

14 Jeremy Rifkin quoted in Laymert Garcia dos Santos, *Polítizar as novas tecnologias: o impacto sociotécnico da informação digital e genética* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2003), 142.

riod of time.” In other words, “you’ve got to be able to access the customer and tap that potential.”¹⁵

At the same time, in the physical space of the cities, many long-standing residents are being driven out by real-estate prices inflated by the existence of Airbnb and co., which not only threatens the hotel business but leads to prohibitive hikes in rent. Add to that the recent adoption of golden visa/citizenship-for-investment policies by many countries, and the situation deteriorates still further. As a consequence of these processes, what we see is not just common-or-garden gentrification, when grassroots residents are displaced to the outskirts as the central heartlands are overrun by affluent buyers, but also the transformation of cities, or parts thereof, into temporary bases for a fluctuating, seasonal population that neither engages with the interests and demands of the local citizenry, nor forms deep community bonds with the adopted neighborhoods.

Going back to the analysis of Byung-Chul Han, one can identify a sinister parallel between the dematerialization of things, under the auspices of financial capital and digital information, and the unproductive super-occupation of our everyday lives. In the end, the financial economy does not add riches to the world; it merely generates value through predatory speculation. And contemporary life, dominated by permanent connection to the internet through mobile technologies, and by the prevalence of flexible modes of work, whether at home or on the move, colonizes the spare and leisure time we used to have with supposedly productive activities, killing creative boredom with the constant, compulsive exchange of information.¹⁶ That’s why Han says we’re living through a critical paradigm shift in which the values of alterity and negativity are being replaced with homogenizing positivity.

Hence the frequent, distressing sensation that we’re wrapped up in a snowball of daily chores that just keeps

15 Santos, *Polítizar as novas tecnologias*, 143. Translated for this volume.

16 Han, *The Burnout Society*, 25–29.

growing, leaving us feeling as if we've no control over our actions and decisions. Forever trying to catch up with a train of tasks, the wheel of life keeps spinning, but there's never an end in sight, nor moments of epiphany en route that might prove transformative or freeing. Forced to multitask, our scattered attention is not, Han argues, part of any civilizational progress, but a retrocession, blowing us all the way back to the state of round-the-clock alertness our ancestors were forced to maintain on the predator-filled plains, where we never knew where the next threat would spring from. Faced with the transitoriness and superficiality of our life and world, we react with the hyperactive hysteria of production, almost like a form of occupational therapy. But the undiluted anxiety generated by information overload is sterile. By shallowing out our attention, it hobbles the development of culture and thought, which are, on the individual level, the forge of the subject's psyche.

The fundament of our argument here is that we are, today, living through an intense reconfiguration of paradigms in which not only ideological conflict and the notion of history are called into question, but also the very definition of humanity (and its genders). The world today is one in which social and spatial exclusion is growing, and in which, ecologically speaking, we find ourselves all clumped together in the same sinking boat. It's a historical moment of profound instability and uncertainty, structured within the theater of an invisible war, where everything seems distorted and manipulated. A world, in short, in which an excess of activities is, paradoxically, the driving force behind a considerable and fundamental passivity.

That's the theme of one of the most potent reflections on the contemporary world penned in recent years: Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. Crary's initial aim was to analyze US military studies on how to lower its commandos' need for sleep without reducing their ability to function productively and efficiently. In short, to create

"sleepless soldiers." Of course, hidden insidiously within that ostensibly military objective was the real goal of creating the sleepless shopper, willing and able to consume and communicate nonstop, bursting through the age-old and—from a perversely market perspective, mostly unproductive—barrier: the need for shut-eye. Hence the book's title, *24/7*: round-the-clock availability, open for business Sunday to Sunday, responding immediately to stimuli all year through. It's a wakeful world in which sleep, already chewed at from either end, becomes intermittent, with a growing number of people waking up during the night to check their messages, tally their likes, and see how many retweets they're getting.

The 1990s and 2000s, Crary argues, were riddled with technological transformations that revolutionized our models of vertical integration, reinventing subjects and intensifying digital control systems. All of a sudden, we could now manage our bank accounts and friendships through the same electronic device or identical machinic operations. And, given our growing dependence on this hardware, their operating systems and apps, which now house our entire data history (contacts, messages, passwords, photos, etc.), we find ourselves sucked into a cycle of constant upgrades, lest we fall behind in the sphere of communication or personal life management.¹⁷ In other words, consumption and survival today depend on the subject's degree of insertion into the accelerated dynamics imposed by the union between techno-science and global capital. As Laymert Garcia dos Santos notes, to make it in this consumer world, "you have to race against the countdown of inbuilt obsolescence to which people, processes, and products are subject with each new technological wave and rapid capital migration. In order to survive and consume, you must be ahead of the game." Otherwise put, you've got to "read the future to be the future."¹⁸

¹⁷ See Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York/London: Verso, 2013), 43.

¹⁸ Santos, *Polítizar as novas tecnologias*, 127. Translated for this volume.

At a subliminal level, that process has plugged us into an intricate control network that integrates all our password- and biometrics-protected accesses with the informational patterns gleaned from our online purchases and social-media posts in order to dissect our data, predict our behavior, ascertain our whereabouts, and dangle our wish lists enticingly before us. It also means we can be targeted with political messages and news, fake or otherwise, as demonstrated by the recent scandal involving the manipulation of Facebook data by the marketing firm Cambridge Analytica during the Brexit campaign in the UK (2016), US Presidential Election in 2017 (pro-Trump), and Brazilian Presidential election in 2018 (pro-Bolsonaro). We're subject to powerful digital surveillance that has no need for cameras following us around. We are, according to Crary, living in a post-political world under a 24/7 regime reinvented by multinational corporations.¹⁹ Normalizing the idea of a continuous interface that requires our constant attention and response, companies like Google and Facebook have created an "attention economy" that dissolves the boundaries between personal and professional, entertainment and information, everyday life and organized institutional media.

So, if sleep represents an oasis of rest and darkness in our lives, a refuge for the regeneration of body and mind, the metabolization of the day's events and, therefore, a pause redolent of the cyclical time of the seasons and alternation of day and night, the 24/7 regime, for Crary, represents the onset of the continuous, homogeneous, artificially lit time of prolonged work and unbroken, unbounded consumption marked by indifference and absolute availability gorging nonstop on an overabundance of services and images. It's a thinned-out world whose fraudulent light expels all intrusive specters or even the remotest suggestion of mystery. "Current arrangements are comparable to the glare of high-intensity illumination or of *white-out* conditions, in which there is

¹⁹ Crary, *24/7*, 33–34.

a paucity of tonal differentiation out of which one can make percentual distinctions and orient oneself to shared temporalities," observes Crary. Because "glare here is not a phenomenon of literal brightness, but rather of the uninterrupted harshness of monotonous stimulation in which a larger range of responsive capacities are frozen or neutralized."²⁰ This shadowless, permanently lit world is, the author adds, "the final capitalist mirage of post-history, of the exorcism of the otherness that is the motor of historical change."²¹ Thus Han offers his staunch defense of restorative sleep, our last redoubt against the lethal effects of accumulation, financializing, and waste. Han's "tiredness" is an inertia associated with a certain inactivity and repose from compulsive activity,²² something akin to Marcel Duchamp's "vertigo of delay" in the field of art.²³ It's a founding, eminently critical doubt that poses some resistance to the voluptuousness of the pragmatic, compulsive response. Revisiting Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, it's more important now than ever to know when and how to say: I'd really prefer not to.

²⁰ Jonathan Crary, *24/7*, 34. Italics added by the author.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²² Inspired by Peter Handke, Han advocates a chimeric, clairvoyant, and conciliative lassitude, a "serene idleness" deriving from a negative power. It's a tiredness much unlike our usual notion of a solitary, individual burnout produced by physical or mental exhaustion in the face of the undeliverable demands of our performance society.

²³ Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp, or, The Castle of Purity*, trans. Donald Gardner (London: Cape Goliard, 1970).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AMARA MOIRA — Holder of a doctorate from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Moira is a transvestite, feminist, and militant for LGBTQI+ and prostitutes rights. She is a member of the Warrior Women Association, the Identity Group, and the TransTornar Collective, and the author of the work *E se eu fosse puta* (hoo editora, 2016). She also writes a column for Mídia Ninja.

CLARISSA DINIZ — Curator and lecturer at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage. Former editor of the art criticism magazine *Tatui* (2006–2015), guest curator of the Centre for Curatorial Leadership, MoMA (2014), and co-curator of various exhibitions, including *Museu do Homem do Nordeste* (MAR, 2014) and *À Nordeste* (Sesc 24 de Maio, 2019).

GUILHERME WISNIK — Lecturer at Universidade de São Paulo's Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, he was curator-general of the 10th Bienal de Arquitetura de São Paulo (2013). He is the author of *Infinito vão: 90 anos de arquitetura brasileira* (Casa da Arquitetura de Portugal, 2018, with Fernando Serapião) and *Dentro do nevoeiro: arte, arquitetura e tecnologia contemporâneas* (Ubu, 2018).

JOÃO SILVÉRIO TREVISAN — Author and activist, he founded the first homosexual identity group (Somos) and the first journal geared towards the gay community in Brazil, *Lampião da Esquina*, back in the 1970s. His study *Devassos no paraíso (A homossexualidade no Brasil, da colônia à atualidade)* was republished in 2018. In 2017, he published his first autobiographical work, *Pai, pai* (Alfaguara).

JULIANA BORGES — An anthropology researcher, Borges served as associate-secretary for women's policy at São Paulo city hall (2013), and as an articulator from the Black Initiative for a New Policy on Drugs. She is a columnist on the site *Justificando* and author of the book *O que é encarceramento em massa?* (Letramento, 2018).

LAYMERT GARCIA DOS SANTOS — Professor with the sociology department at Unicamp, Santos coordinates the Laboratory for Network-based Culture and Technology at Instituto Século 21, São Paulo. His published works include *Amazônia transcultural* (Edições n-1, 2016) and *Polítizar as novas tecnologias: o impacto sócio-técnico da informação digital e genética* (Editora 34, 2003).

LUCY R. LIPPARD — Author, activist, and curator, she researches activism in art, feminism, archeology, and land use. Her published works include *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics and Art in the Changing West* (2014) and *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (1990). Holder of a Guggenheim Fellowship, she lives in New Mexico, USA.

LUISA DUARTE — Art critic, curator, lecturer, and former member of the advisory board to MAM São Paulo (2009–2012). In conjunction with Adriano Pedrosa, she edited the book *ABC – Arte brasileira contemporânea* (Cosac Naify, 2014). Her recent curatorial projects include *Quarta-feira de cinzas* (Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, 2015) and *Tunga – O rigor da distração* (MAR, 2018), both in Rio de Janeiro.

MÁRCIO SELIGMANN-SILVA — Lecturer in literary theory at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, his themes of research include German romanticism, media theory, 18th- to 20th-century aesthetics, and the work of Walter Benjamin. He is the author of *Ler o livro do mundo* (Iluminuras/Fapesp, 1999), for which he won a National Library award, and *O local da diferença* (Editora 34, 2005), winner of the Jabuti Prize in the literary criticism category.

MARIA RITA KEHL — Psychoanalyst, journalist, and author. Contributed to opposition vehicles during the Brazilian dictatorship, investigated human rights abuses against peasants and indigenous populations for the National Truth Commission (2012–14). Her published books include *Bovarismo brasileiro* (Boitempo, 2018). She practices at open clinics in São Paulo.

MARIANA CAVALCANTI — Anthropologist and professor at Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro's Department of Social Studies, where she researches cities. She coordinates Grupo Casa, which studies housing and the city, co-directed the documentary *Favela fabril* (2012), and co-edited the collection *Occupy All Streets: Olympic urbanism and contested futures in Rio de Janeiro* (Terreform, 2016).

MARIO A. CARO — Researcher, independent curator, and contemporary art critic, Caro lectures at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he researches the history and theory of contemporary indigenous arts. He also works with various communities to promote global cultural exchange.

MARISA FLÓRIDO CESAR — A lecturer at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Cesar holds a degree in architecture and urbanism and a doctorate from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro's Fine Arts School. She conducts research in the fields of the history of art, art criticism, and curatorship. Author of *Nós, o outro, o distante na arte contemporânea brasileira* (Circuito, 2014).

PETER PÁL PELBART — Professor of philosophy at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. His published works include *Ensaio do assombro* (n-1 edições, 2019). He is the Portuguese translator of the oeuvre of Gilles Deleuze. Coeditor of n-1 edições publishing house and coordinator of the Ueinzz Theater Group, formed by psychiatric day patients from the A Casa hospital.

VLADIMIR SAFATLE — Lecturer in philosophy at the Universidade de São Paulo, his research subjects include the epistemology of psychoanalysis and psychology and the philosophy of music. He is the author of *O circuito dos afetos: corpos políticos, desamparo e o fim do indivíduo* (Cosac Naify, 2015). He coordinates the Social Theory, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis Research Lab at FFLCH USP.

21ST CONTEMPORARY
ART BIENNIAL
SESC_VIDEOBRASIL

exhibition
coordinator
MARCOS FARINHA

international relations
DANIEL ESCOREL

direction and curatorship

artistic director
SOLANGE O. FARKAS

producers
TATI FARIAS
LARISSA ALVES
MÁRCIA VAZ
MIGUEL SALVATORE
THAIS FREIRE

curators
GABRIEL BOGOSSIAN
LUIZA DUARTE
MIGUEL A. LÓPEZ

assistant producer
CAROLINA MENEGATTI

selection committee
ALEJANDRA MUÑOZ
JULIANA GONTIJO
RAPHAEL FONSECA

production support
LARISSA SOUZA
MARCELO LAUTON

curatorial assistant
CLARISSA XIMENES

logistics
ADELE LAMM

research and archive

technical consultants
MIT ARTE
MARCOS SANTOS

coordinator
RUY LUDUVICE

technical producer
ANDERSON ARAÚJO

researchers
JULIANA COSTA
REGIS ALVES
VIVIANE TABACH

expography

african jewelry consultant
RENATO ARAÚJO

exhibition design
ANDRÉ VAINER
ARQUITETOS |
TIAGO WRIGHT,
FERNANDA JOZSEF,
MAYTÉ COELHO

platform editor
GUILHERME TEIXEIRA

technology
FABIO KAWANO

lighting design
FERNANDA CARVALHO

production

assistants
CRISTINA SOUTO,
LUANA ALVES

executive producer
CAROL RIBAS

electrical, structure,
and safety
JARRETA PROJETOS |
MURILO JARRETA

production coordinator
CASSIA ROSSINI

climatization
HYPOCAUSTUM |
BRUNO FEDELI

art direction and
signage

visual identity
and graphic design
CELSO LONGO +
DANIEL TRENCH

assistant
CATERINA BLOISE

editorial

coordinator
TETÉ MARTINHO

assistant
RAFAEL FALASCO

translators
ALEXANDRE BARBOSA
DE SOUZA
ANTHONY CLEAVER
ANTHONY DOYLE

copy proofreading
PAULO FUTAGAWA,
REGINA STOCKLEN

educational action

curator
VERA BARROS

coordinator
CARLOS NEGRINI

guided tours
GUILHERME TEIXEIRA
MARILIA LOUREIRO
THAIS RIVITTI

communication

coordinator
GABRIELA LONGMAN

assistant
ARTUR HIROYUKI ABE

social media
MARCOS VISNADI

media producer
ISOLDA LIBÓRIO

design
JULIA CONTREIRAS

web development
CARLSOM A. SOARES

press relations
A4&HOLOFOTE
COMUNICAÇÃO

photographers
EVERTON BALLARDIN
PEDRO NAPOLITANO
PRATA

video
MARCO DEL FIOLO
MÃO DIREITA

voice-over
HABACUQUE LIMA
TRAMPOLIM ESTÚDIO
CHARLY COOMBES
HURSO AMBRIFI

management

financial coordinator
VAN FRESNOT

assistant
DIVY CRISTINA

support
ALINE NASCIMENTO

legal advisor
OLIVIERI ASSOCIADOS

residency partners
INSTITUTO SACATAR
(SALVADOR, BRAZIL)
MMCA RESIDENCY
CHANGDONG
(SEOUL, COREA)
SHARJAH ART
FOUNDATION
(SHARJAH, UAE)

acknowledgements

AMPAM KARAKRAS
ANA PAULA COHEN
BEL HARARI
CARMEN FERREIRA
SILVA

CARLA CAFFÉ
DIANE LIMA
ELVIS STRONGER
FERNANDA D'AGOSTINO
KAMIKIA KISEDJÉ
LISETTE LAGNADO
MARILIA LOUREIRO
NYDIA GUTTIERREZ
PABLO LAFUENTE
PAULO HERKENHOFF
PAULO MENDEL
VITOR GRUNWALD
SUELY ROLNIK

READINGS

editor
LUIZA DUARTE

graphic design
CELSO LONGO +
DANIEL TRENCH

assistant
CATERINA BLOISE

editorial coordination
TETÉ MARTINHO

editorial assistant
RAFAEL FALASCO

editorial producer
CLARISSA XIMENES

translation
ANTHONY CLEAVER
ANTHONY DOYLE

proofreading
REGINA STOCKLEN

graphic production
SIGNORINI PRODUÇÃO
GRÁFICA

ASSOCIAÇÃO CULTURAL
VIDEOPRASIL

research coordinator
RUY LUDUVICE

advisory board

archivist
JULIANA COSTA

BENJAMIN SEROUSSI
CECILIA RIBEIRO
FABIO CYPRIANO
LISETTE LAGNADO
PATRICIA ROUSSEAU
ROSÂNGELA RENNÓ
TATA AMARAL
THEREZA FARKAS
VIVIAN OSTROVSKY

technology
EDUARDO HADDAD
FABIO KAWANO

communications
coordinator
GABRIELA LONGMAN

design
JULIA CONTREIRAS

board of directors

social media
MARCOS VISNADI

managing director
SOLANGE O. FARKAS

administrative assistant
DIVY CRISTINA

financial director
PEDRO FARKAS

administrative support
ALINE NASCIMENTO

programme
coordinator
THEREZA FARKAS

Rua Jaguaré Mirim, 210
Vila Leopoldina
05311-020
São Paulo SP Brazil
Tel. (55 11) 3645 0516

audit committee
MARIA FARKAS

team

FB/ACVideobrasil
TW/videobrasil
INSTA/videobrasil
FLICKR/videobrasil
YOUTUBE/VideobrasilVB
videobrasil.org.br

general director and
curator
SOLANGE O. FARKAS

international relations
DANIEL ESCOREL

curatorial assistant
CLARISSA XIMENES

executive producer
VAN FRESNOT

production coordinator
CAROL RIBAS

assistant producer
CAROLINA MENEGATTI

SESC –
SOCIAL SERVICE
OF COMMERCE
regional administration
of São Paulo state

chairman of
the regional board
ABRAM SZAJMAN
regional
department director
DANILO SANTOS
DE MIRANDA

assistant directors

social technician
JOEL NAIMAYER
PADULA

social communication
IVAN GIANNINI

administration
LUIZ DEOCLÉCIO
MASSARO GALINA

technical and
planning advisory
SÉRGIO JOSÉ
BATTISTELLI

departments

visual arts and technology
JULIANA BRAGA
DE MATTOS

studies and development
MARTA RAQUEL
COLABONE

education for sustainability
and citizenship
DENISE BAENA

graphic arts
HÉLCIO MAGALHÃES

diffusion and promotion
MARCOS RIBEIRO
DE CARVALHO

audiovisual
production center
SILVANA MORALES
NUNES

Sesc Digital
GILBERTO PASCOAL

hiring and logistics
ADRIANA MATHIAS

property and services
NELSON SOARES
DA FONSECA

international affairs
AUREA LESZCZYNSKI
VIEIRA

legal department
CARLA BERTUCCI
BARBIERI

press relations
ANA LÚCIA DE LA VEGA

Sesc 24 de Maio
PAULO CASALE

team Sesc
ADRIANA IERVOLINO
ADRIANE DA SILVA
RIBEIRO

ADRIANO ALVES PINTO
ADRIANO TED DE SOUZA
ALBERTO SILVA CERRI
ALEXANDRE DE
OLIVEIRA

CAROLINA BARMELL
CRISTINA PAPA
CRISTINA TOBIAS
DIOGO DE MORAES
EDUARDO BIANCO
FABIO LUIZ

VASCONCELOS
FERNANDO FIALHO
FERNANDO TUACEK

FLAVIA FÁVARI
GABRIELA XABAY
HELOISA PISANI
ILONA HERTEL
ISABELLA BELLINGER
JOANA ROCHA EÇA
DE QUEIROZ
JOSÉ ARTUR AMARO
JULIANA OKUDA
CAMPANELI
KARINA MUSUMECI
LARISSA TODOROV
LEONARDO DE ASSIS
AZEVEDO
LEONARDO BORGES
LIGIA ZAMARO
LUCIANO BUENO
QUIRINO
MALU MAIA
MARCELO CORREA
MARCIO DONISETTE
LOPES
MARINA BURITY
MAURO MARÇAL
NATHALIA CANDIDO
NILVA LUZ
OCTÁVIO WEBER
PAULO JOSÉ RIBEIRO
RODRIGO SOUZA
SAMANTA SADOIAMA
SAMARA EIRAS
DOS SANTOS
SANDRA KARAOGLAN
SIMONE WICCA
SUAMIT BARREIRO
SUELLEN BARBOSA
THAÍAS DIAS
THIAGO FREIRE
TIAGO EFIGÊNIO
TINA CASSIE
VALÉRIA BOA SORTE
VANESSA DE SOUZA
WALTER BERTOTTI
DE SOUZA

B4768L

21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil: Imagined Communities: Readings / Serviço Social do Comércio; Associação Cultural Videobrasil; editor: Luisa Duarte; editorial coordination: Teté Martinho.

São Paulo: Sesc: Associação Cultural Videobrasil, 2019.
224 p.

ISBN 978-85-7995-241-8 (Associação Cultural Videobrasil)
ISBN 978-85-7995-239-5 (Edições Sesc São Paulo)

1. 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil. 2. Seminars. 3. Essays.
I. Readings. II. Serviço Social do Comércio. III. Sesc. IV. Associação Cultural Videobrasil.
V. Duarte, Luisa. VI. Martinho, Teté.

CDD 700

**AMARA MOIRA
CLARISSA DINIZ
GUILHERME WISNIK
JOÃO SILVÉRIO TREVISAN
JULIANA BORGES
LAYMERT GARCIA DOS SANTOS
LUCY R. LIPPARD
MÁRCIO SELIGMANN-SILVA
MARIA RITA KEHL
MARIANA CAVALCANTI
MARIO A. CARO
MARISA FLÓRIDO CESAR
PETER PÁL PELBART
VLADIMIR SAFATLE**

ISBN 978-85-7995-239-5



ISBN 978-85-7995-241-8

