



**ON GESTURAL APPARATUSES  
FOR A MEMORY TO COME**

Luis Guerra





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Only true hands write true poems. I see no basic distinction between a handshake and a poem. (...) We live under dark skies, and –there are few human beings [*Menschen*]. This is probably why there are also so few poems.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Celan

1 Paul Celan's letter (May 1960) sent to editor Hans Bender against the accusations of plagiarism. This letter appeared cited in John Felstiner, *Paul Celan, Poet, Survivor, Jew*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, 155.





# Apparent introduction

i.

The history of the echo is the history of de-embodiment. Despite surrendering to the materiality of the stone, the echo remains deprived of materiality, as a 'runway print,' a runway trace, which situates itself between what remains existent and what concedes to the in-existent. An inexistence that remains as an effect, barely as a discrete entity imprinted in the air. As Aristotle has said, 'It seems that echo always occurs although it is not clear.' This lack of sharpness describes the low intensity of the existence of echo. The echo has no relation with the evidence but with what is vague. The vanishing of the body and the petrification of the air describe the conjunction of an in-existent entity that always appears to remain interdicted between the impossibility of beginning and its perpetual repetition. This interdict situation, indeterminate, explains the nuisance of echo. The echo is always hostility, an interruption awakened by an external injunction. That enacts its weirdness, impropriety, and being a double without a master.

Echo draws a strange return that never returns behind itself. It never goes back to the original touch. It repeats without coincidence, wandering around, searching for something else, something more than just a presence. Echo knows that a shadow cannot shelter a moment of existence, a place to repeat itself. 'Why do you avoid me? (*Quid me fugis*):' Narciso asks. It escapes. It vanishes. It dwells as a sound in the absence of a body. A scream in the air, the resonance of a whisper. This vacancy body condition permits that echo can inhabit alien bodies. In what way is the other body, the one that remains, occupied by the delay, the distance, the fragmentation, the vanishing, the interruption, the external injunction that defines the

echo? The *desistance* of the echo in the de-constitution of the subject configures a ‘transcendental curve’ that remits to the echo of the disappeared. This occupation, this overcrowding of the echo, never rests. The echo never finds rest. Its rest would mean its silence. That is why the echo remains as a return.

In her article ‘Echo’,<sup>2</sup> Gayatri Spivak proposed a *Derridean* reading of the *permanence of the echo*. ‘Echo’ the myth would describe the inaugural writing (*scripta*), the initial carved in stone (*lapidis*), as an economy of the air. It was a reading of the echo as the possibility of absence. The echo is, as we know, the absence itself.<sup>3</sup> This possibility of absence, of the absolute absence, sustains the necessity of the iterability of every mark. Every writing must be able to work in the radical absence. ‘This structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of every mark, even if oral, a grapheme in general [...] the nonpresent *remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged ‘production’ or origin.’ The *scripta* works as a machine that captures the ephemeral. Derrida said that the ephemeral is not the negativity of a lacuna but the rise of a mark.

Any mark is a trace. A mark happens between the uncanny encounter of at least two bodies or two surfaces in a frictional disparity. There, in that mark made, a trace is born; therefore, a memory can be told.

The echo does not describe any reasonable dimension of the sense. The ‘transcendental resonance’ is not limited to the ‘subject’

2 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Echo.’ *New Literary History* 24, no. 1 (1993): 17–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/469267>.

3 ‘L’écho est en effet le lieu même de l’absence.’ Véronique Gély, *La nostalgie du moi. Écho dans la littérature européenne*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000, 48.

nor its manner of 'being at the listening.' The 'resonance' does not limit itself to the 'human' experience. I am not interested in the formal dimension of the 'it-self' as the place of referral of something articulated as a relation with itself. We must radicalize the analysis of this figure, the echo, not as a perceived original impression of consciousness, nor as a presence that can be retained, but as a permanence in vanishing. It is a transcendental curve that does not remit to the echo of the subject, which is still adhered to rhythm, but to a curve that remits to the echo of a disappeared that exists in the echoicity of the subject. This curving can be understood as the 'heteronymic curvature' of the body. This curvature folds itself because of the fall without a place of disappearance. The curvature formed by the weight of the photographic image of the disappeared love hangs from the relative's necks in every march.

ii.

This is a symptomatic book. It is a book written in symptomatic times. It is a book written under the influence of Covid-19 social and political behaviorism and severe restrictions on mobility and social distancing. We lived together in a different world when I thought about this book. What has been happening since then has impacted this book brutally. At least, it has had a brutal impact on the person writing it. Therefore, this is a different book from the one that was previously thought of. Some of the circumstances have impacted the necessity of the book itself. Because of the global pandemic, it has been challenging to balance the conditions of life, both for me as the writer and for those considered as examples of the theoretical framework. Therefore, the book has considered the theoretical aspects more relevant than those of specific and material arguments, searching to respect the particular situations we were all dealing with.

*On Gestural Apparatuses*, as a book, works as a mechanism of delay that indicates an operative movement within thinking art practices. Today, I see it as a node within a more extensive tissue, a spiderweb in progress. It is a book reflecting on art practices written by an artist-researcher. It presents a way of thinking, reflecting, and analyzing that is rooted and grasped in the practice of art and not in theory solely. It is a text written from a situated knowledge that can be recognized in the trace of my own trajectory. Many of the references come from the place that formed me as an individual and artist, Chile, and they belong to specific moments that do not necessarily portray or reflect all the recent social and political changes.

Walter Benjamin wrote in *Theses of History*: 'The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the moment of its recognizability and is never seen again.' That is the image of a flash. We are blinded by it and can burn ourselves if we are too close. This short book, made in a hurry, full of contradictions, made under strange global circumstances, within an uncanny effort to maintain certitude and stability, searches to explore that condition of the past, passing through a passage of our un-mediated present. An ungraspable present.

How do we grasp that which is passing? Are there ways to capture that passing through ourselves? What is the form of that which can hold, size, and measure what is happening? Are there some gestures that can, in some sense, in absolute fragility, size what is indeed happening?

As humans, we trace forms that, suddenly, sometimes, can grasp in a present what cannot be grasped by any other means. As an artist-researcher, I understand art forms as mechanisms that can sustain and give shelter, for a while, to an echo of that multiple and unending past.

# **CHAPTER 1 - TRACE**



# Where Poetry?

## THESIS V

The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the moment of its recognizability and is never seen again. ‘The truth will not run away from us’; this statement by Gottfried Keller indicates exactly that point in historicism’s image of history where the image is pierced by historical materialism. For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.

Walter Benjamin<sup>4</sup>

NI PENA NI MIEDO reads the poem written as a scarred wound in the Atacama Desert by the Chilean poet Raúl Zurita. Chilean philosopher Patricio Marchant wrote, in his self-published book *Sobre Árboles y Madres* (About Trees and Mothers)<sup>5</sup>, in 1984 and later re-edited in 2009, about the relationship between poetry and Latin American philosophical thinking:

To think what is primarily real for us: Spanish, our language, and Latin America; and as Chileans, to think Chilean poetry, conceptual poetry like few others, a gift for thinking, which contains the

4 Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm, Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the concept of History'*, trans. Chris Turner. New York: Verso Books, 2005, 40.

5 Patricio Marchant (1939-1990) was a professor of philosophy at the Center for Humanistic Studies of the Faculty of Physical and Mathematical Sciences of the University of Chile.

ideas that will be sought in vain in the writings of Latin American professors of philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

Marchant addresses in this text, through his particular philosophical writing, which is, as he describes it, a ‘pathological writing,’ a critical reflection on the work of the poet Gabriela Mistral.<sup>7</sup> But Marchant’s approach overflows a merely literary or normative aesthetic apprehension of her poetry, circumscribing it in his essential thesis: Where has philosophy been in Latin America if not in the thought expressed through the poetry that its poets have written in the very body of that writing?

Without its own speech, because its own speech has been destroyed in its past, the American continent speaks officially of itself only through foreign languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English, exposing itself among them, between the erased languages and those substitute bodies of meaning.<sup>8</sup> Poetry, a lack that nests unfolding in the periphery, appears as a wound, a scar that traces the history of untold violence. In that substitution that the Spanish language is, for most Latin American countries, and in the evidence of that lack that substitution itself is, the speech of the

6 Patricio Marchant, *Sobre Árboles y Madres*. Buenos Aires: La Cebra, 2009, 108. Unless otherwise stated, translations are those of the author.

7 Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) is the name of a Chilean poet. Her official name was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga. She is internationally known for her poetry and was the first Latin American author and the fifth woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945.

8 Of course, there are more languages in Latin America—languages that have been suppressed for centuries now. But these languages have resisted, and some have even been recognized as full participants in the State languages lately. Nevertheless, the general population in Latin America uses colonial languages in their State educational programs, and most texts are published in those idioms. It is in that context that Marchant was exploring the connection between poetry written in Chile in Spanish and the European philosophical tradition.



disappeared common language, irreducible to any translation, is exposed as a fissure imprinted with its landscapes. Through the poetic artifact, what has been expressed is not only the resonance of a cultural takeover but also the entire phantasmagoric sphere of the past. The poetic artifact is an echoic device through which listening to the untold and the unsayable.

A dialogue hangs by and from the writings of both sides of the Atlantic, not by their physical interlocutors. Marchant interrogates the possible exchanges that would have remained unfinished between this Latin American philosophy, which would occur only in poetic speech, and that philosophical speech of the European tradition. It is clear to Marchant that the circumstances did not favor this necessary exchange between philosophers from Europe and Latin America, as would be the case of dialoguing the poetry of Gabriela Mistral, poet-philosopher, and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger: ‘-and what about those who claim to deal with Mistral -or who teach ‘philosophy’- and their ignorance of the poet’s dialogue with Freud and Heidegger?’<sup>9</sup>

On August 21, 2019, French philosopher Catherine Malabou, in a conference given at the European Graduate School,<sup>10</sup> cites Marchant’s text ‘¿En qué lengua se habla Hispanoamérica?’<sup>11</sup> to speak precisely of this irreducibility of speech lost by the substitute:

Thus, if he asks: in what language is Spanish America spoken, a question that, reduced in two of its moments to Chile -the prob-

9 Patricio Marchant, *Sobre Árboles y Madres*. Buenos Aires: La Cebra, 2009, 130.

10 Catherine Malabou’s lecture *Philosophy and the Outside* - 2019-08.21. YouTube video, 49:21, posted on August 22, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMXFuS5fnAI>

11 Patricio Marchant, ‘¿En qué lengua se habla Hispanoamérica?’ in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, Sexta Serie, N°3, Sept. 1996, 103-112.

lem of space and others-, implies asking: a) if Philosophy currently exists in Chile; b) if Philosophy has ever existed in Chile, and c) if it can exist -and in what way, according to what form- Philosophy in the Spanish American language. And it asks to work, to let itself work, on the relationship between a particular language, the Spanish-American language, and that other 'language,' Philosophy. That is, delimitation, the assumptions with which I work: of Philosophy, its margins.<sup>12</sup>

Malabou's interest in Marchant's proposal relates to the French philosophy line inaugurated by Maurice Blanchot. This thinking of the outside and its relation to a materially peripheral thought such as philosophy from Latin America. If the speech that says philosophically is poetic writing, following Marchant's thesis, which occurs as a fissure in which the erasure that this speech carries as a property, as an echo that reverberates what has disappeared, and the language of a tradition that replaces it to make itself understood, the writing and thought of the Chilean poet Raúl Zurita allow us to rebuild bridges of this suspended dialogue between artistic philosophies.

Raúl Zurita is a Chilean poet, a body marked by the antecedents of the place where his life happens: Chile, as a country, and South America, as a regional extended cultural territory. A body marked by a cultural anteriority and the events that surround and inform his appearance as a poet.

Zurita is a poet whose poetry happens beyond the printed page. Zurita's writing occurs on different supports, although he has explained that this was not an explicit reflection of his literary doing. Zurita's poetry has happened on his body, the skies, the desert,

12 Ibid. 103.

and the cliffs.<sup>13</sup> In Raúl Zurita's poetry, it is possible to recognize the sense of poetic delirium as reasoning that Spanish philosopher María Zambrano describes in *El Hombre y lo Divino*: 'For to convert delirium into reason, without abolishing it, is the achievement of poetry.'<sup>14</sup> Raúl Zurita and the philosopher Patricio Marchant have faced delirium due to the circumstances of the time. Both have testified of the craze summoned by the political terror. And how this was rationalized in their aesthetic modes and apparatuses in both

- 13 Raúl Zurita was born in Santiago de Chile, 1951. He was part of the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte, CADA. CADA was formed by Lotty Rosenfeld, Diamela Eltit, Fernando Balcells, Juan Castillo and Raúl Zurita. CADA's art actions were collectively composed and appealed to a socially committed art. CADA developed a series of strategies that allowed it to avoid repression. Among its best-known actions is *Para no morir de hambre* (1979), which consisted of distributing milk in the outlying towns of the city of Santiago. A column of trucks of the national dairy company, Soprole (Sociedad de Productores de Leche, [Society of Milk Producers]), made a road during which milk was distributed in a period marked by basic shortages in the most vulnerable population. The act also considered the recent memory of the actions of the popular government of Salvador Allende, deposed by the dictatorship, which had advanced a policy known as "1 liter of milk" for every Chilean child. Another remarkable action was *Ay Sudamérica* (1981) which consisted of six small airplanes that flew over the capital of Chile, Santiago, on July 12. From them, 400,000 flyers were launched, discussing the relationship between art and society. The action itself referred to the bombing of the government palace on September 11, 1973. The flyers that were dropped contained a message that upheld the right to a standard life for every citizen and proposed that the citizenry could establish an entirely new concept of art, an art that would overcome the traditional boundaries between art and life. In 1982 Zurita wrote his poem *La Vida Nueva* in the skies of New York. In 1993 he wrote over the Atacama Desert the poem-phrase, 3 kilometers long and 300 meters wide *Ni Pena Ni Miedo* (*Neither Sorrow nor Fear*). He was awarded the National Literature Prize 2000 and the Pablo Neruda Iberoamerican Poetry Prize 2016.
- 14 'For all delirium is, from its depths, persecution. And he who is stung by it, goes to seek, even without making it present, refuge to the place from where the arrow has departed, always luminous, because it unleashes the hidden depths beneath the surface of the soul, occupied by the conscience.' María Zambrano, *El hombre y lo divino*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993, 353.

inscribed marks. Patricio Marchant will comment on the loss of speech after the coup d'état in Chile (1973-1989) with these words:

The coup d'état had at least the virtue of leaving me seven years without being able to write absolutely anything. The fact that I spent two years in France, in contact with Jacques Derrida, helped me a lot, so in 1979 I resumed the possibility of writing in a Spanish that was a bit... unusual, let's say, a bit pathological...<sup>15</sup>

## The mark

Raúl Zurita is a poet who marks/writes on himself. In 1975, Raúl Zurita burned his cheek. Then, in 1980, he threw ammonia in his eyes. He was blinded. He blinded himself. He sees again. His face is furrowed by a scar that makes presence to a marked body that subtracts him from his inexistence. These are his words on the subject:

In 1975, I was absolutely desperate. The act was the burning of my face, of my cheek. From the moment I do that, I place myself on this side of communication, and that is where my work begins. (...) the act of laceration as the first utterance, as the first scream of the baby that is born.<sup>16</sup>

15 Text from a speech by Patricio Marchant at the Chilean French Colloquium of Philosophy, Santiago de Chile, 1987, quoted in *De Madres y Árboles*. Buenos Aires: La Cebra, 2009, back cover.

16 Elvio E. Gandolfo, 'Raúl Zurita: El libro de poemas ha muerto', *Diario de poesía*, n.º. 6, Buenos Aires, Spring 1984, pp. 83-101. <https://ahira.com.ar/ejemplares/diario-de-poesia-n-6/>

In another interview, he commented mainly on the matter:

It was in 1975, in May or June. Hours before, a patrol of soldiers stopped me, I imagine, because of my appearance, and they spent an indefinable time subjecting me to those humiliations in which they are skilled. Still, it did not go too far, and finally, they let me go. Then I remembered that phrase from the Gospel about if they hit you on one cheek, turn the other, and I went and burned mine. Then I knew something had started there, and I imagined the sequence: Purgatorio, Anteparaíso, La Nueva Vida. In 1980, I tried to blind myself; it was two years before the writings in heaven. I did it because I wanted the only one who could not see the poem I imagined being traced in the sky, that is, in the most visible part of the world, to be me. It was insanity, and fortunately, it did not work out. (...) I thought that to be blinded was to touch again that immemorial instant, anchored in the deepest part of oneself, in which something becomes someone because he understands that the sky he is looking at will remain there when he is no longer there and that what he is looking at then is the image of his death.<sup>17</sup>

A black and white photograph, state ID size, is printed inside his book *Purgatorio* (1977), under whose image it says EGO SUM.<sup>18</sup> The image of Zurita's scar on his cheek appears on the cover.

Chilean art critic Adriana Valdés comments on the period in this book by saying:

17 Edgardo Dobry and Raúl Zurita, 'Conversación con Raúl Zurita' in *Guaragua* 18, no. 45, 2014, 175-86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/440138359>.

18 '*Purgatorio* generates a cultural space from which a subject (individual or collective) is able to abolish the coercion exercised over him.' R. Canovas, *Lihn, Zurita, Ictus, Radrikan: Chilean Literature and authoritarian experience*. Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, 1986, 81.

I would say it is a book that starts from what has been razed, from what has withered, from what is minimal: its words seek to exempt themselves from any poetic, reminiscent connotation. It resorts to graphics: all words are replaced in a poem by little drawings; it includes reality without mediatization, the passport photograph, the clinical diagnosis, and the electroencephalogram. (...) Among a subject threatened with non-existence, poems are the voluntary and obsessive traces that he indeed exists, the only sign of life. Even the possibility of being a person has been endangered, and self-consciousness is replaced by a text: the concrete trace that this consciousness has existed in a world without guaranteeing that it can continue to exist.<sup>19</sup>

Zurita marks himself so that in this self-inflicted imprint on his flesh, the flesh itself testifies to the very delirium in which an entire country, Chile, in this case, was inexistent. To mark oneself in the lack, in its double condition of error and absence, supposes writing inscribed in the very fabric of the world. The mark imprints the lack. It creates a wound, a space, and a specific time for a memory that will arrive through it. It is in the cheek as a place of proximity, where one is someone else, where Zurita inaugurates his writing of closeness, where the word not only yields place but becomes a trace that assumes the incompleteness of its function.

They (the words) are loaded with different meanings, the explicitness of which depends on when they have been used, how, and even by whom. Hence, certain words become useless after the immoderate use that has been made of them or discredited when they are

19 Adriana Valdés, 'Escritura y silenciamiento', *Revista Mensaje*, n° 276, January-February 1979, 43-44.

used to mask unmentionable ends, or empty, hollow, or worn out and worthless as a currency out of course and without beauty. And it must be recognized that the word people, like that of the individual, democracy, and even that of freedom - not to mention others -are threatened with the same thing happening to them. But with what to replace them if we do not renounce or deny what they mean?<sup>20</sup>

Words, speech, and their use were forbidden by violence. Forbidden by helplessness, words were stripped of their meaning. The cheek then, with all the onto-theological charge it carries, the correlation between the materiality of the flesh and the substitute word, places where the marginality of testimony is marked. A place for a kiss, for a blow, for a scar. A surface through which a testimony passes.

María Luisa Fischer, in her review of Zurita's prose book *El día más blanco*, exposes this condition of the cheek *of-in* Zurita:

A man is seen face-down on a bed in a dream or nightmare. He is being hit again and again on the cheek by someone who is squeezing his back with his knees. The gaze of the man - or the narrator in the present of the writing, it is difficult to decide- is directed towards an illuminated exterior where a tree and flower petals covering a recognizable and familiar sidewalk can be seen or imagined. The image harkens back to a childhood fight, the first example of violence that teaches the terrible lesson of 'the irruption of a fixed and immutable cruelty, nestled in the depths of things'(144). The narrator sees a childhood friend fighting, biting his opponent's cheek, and thinks of the scar that will be stamped on that cheek like a scab or crack in the skin and the earth (145).<sup>21</sup>

20 María Zambrano. *Persona y democracia*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1988, 133.

21 María L. Fischer, "El día más blanco" o el país de la memoria de Raúl Zurita' in

Zurita himself will comment that before writing his poem in the desert, a painter commented on the similarities that can be observed between that trace on the earth and the scar on his face.

Zurita brings together his writing, here understood beyond the letter printed on the book page, as the very act of all testimonial inscription, that is, as the place where the experience of memory can appear in the present. The scar signals something that was there. It presents the lack. It does not represent it. The site of substitute writing is crossed out not in order to erase it but so that then, from the scar, the testimony itself may appear that can now narrate what is covered, what is silenced or erased, and what remains disappeared. Zurita returns insistently to the day of his arrest and his confinement in the cargo ship Lebu:

We were distributed in two Compañía Sudamericana de Vapores ships, El Maipo and El Lebu (...) They put us in some warehouses (...), which were pretty large places where two hundred people fit. Still, we were eight hundred, all crammed together, in an overcrowding that prevented us from even moving (...) After three weeks, they released us at night, with one hour left before the curfew.<sup>22</sup>

The experience of the coup d'état changed everything; it was a negative event that split the reality in which his subjectivity had been sheltered until that moment.

María Zambrano writes in *Claros del Bosque*: 'As a mediating condition, the flesh is the most threatened by terror, and therefore its last resistance. Because it is the seat of the living organism and

*Iberoamericana, América latina, España, Portugal. Ensayos sobre letras, historia y sociedad. Notas. Reseñas iberoamericanas*, year V, n° 17, 2005, 61.

22 Juan Andrés Piña, *Conversaciones con la Poesía Chilena*. Santiago de Chile: Pehuén, 1990, 195-233.



because it is given to engender. And because it always waits. It asks only when it can wait no longer.’<sup>23</sup> Zambrano’s own flesh mediates the terror of the events to which she becomes a witness. Without succumbing to the facts of her personal and historical history, she establishes herself as the place of the last resistance, her body, where one can still say about what can no longer be known because it has disappeared. This condition of the persona who becomes Zambrano seems to pulsate and resonate in Zurita’s work and poetic persona. Terror, pain, human brutality, and the madness of power are resisted through the forms of inscription that art, as a dispossessed apparatus, inexisterently lays out: gestures, traces, words, sounds: Zurita’s poetry is a Zambranian philosophy, inscribed in and from an intensity that subjects all stability to decomposition. From his body, Zurita writes the echo of a rupture, a split, a fissure.<sup>24</sup>

The writing of the echo should be understood here as the resonance that, waiting for a surface, seeks to extend the involuntary memory already unraveling in its trajectory. We can also recall the following words of Maurice Blanchot when he writes:

Poetry is memory; this is the classical assertion. Memory is the muse. The singer sings from memory, and grants the power to remember. The song itself is *mé-moire*, the space where the justice of memory holds sway: Moira, that portion of obscurity according to which right and regard are laid out.

23 María Zambrano, *Claros del Bosque*, M. Gómez Blesa, ed. Madrid: Cátedra, 2019, 265.

24 ‘Et voilà qu’entre cette goutte d’existence qui s’était trouvée sur le champ de foire, entre le canal et la citadelle, la fêlure (SIC) s’était produite, rupture. Voilà qu’ON fait : cinq petits singes transis dans une cage à perroquet accrochée de guingois au fronton d’une baraque de planches grises exhibés.’ Fernand Deligny, *Lointain Prochain ‘Lettres à un travailleur social,’* original document, Spring, 1985, Fernand Deligny Archive, IMEC, Saint-Germain la Blanche-Herbe.

The most ancient of the ancients already protested against the exorbitant power of the singers who, establishing themselves as masters of the memorable, had the power of death over the dead and could reward with a false renown those who ought to have disappeared without recall. Thus was Homer often blamed for the glory bestowed upon Ulysses, a man of ruse, not deeds.

Nonetheless, this protest, aimed at the caste of singers and serving the sacred shrines and their rivalries, thus the gods, is not a protest against the arbitrary flights of fancy of the poets, guilty of exalting or debasing the great silent events at their pleasure. In the first place, no one dreams that works and songs could be created out of nothing. They are always given in advance, in memory's immobile present. Who would be interested in a new and non-transmitted speech? What is important is not to tell, but to tell once again and, in this retelling, to tell again each time a first time. In the august sense, to hear is always already to have heard: to take one's place in the assembly of prior listeners and thus permit them once again to be present in this enduring hearing.

Song is memory. Poetry makes remembrance of what men, peoples, and gods do not yet have by way of their own memory, but in whose keeping they abide even as it is entrusted to their keeping. This great impersonal memory, the memory without memory of the origin that is approached by the poems of genealogy, with their terrifying legends in which the first gods are born (both within the account itself, and from out of its narrative force), constitutes the reserve to which no individual in particular, either poet or listener, has access. This is the remote. Memory as abyss. In certain Greek poems where the gods are engendered and where, still divine, they engender one another as names that are already powerful and in some sense metaphysical, Forgetting is the primordial divinity, the venerable ancestor and first presence of what, in a later generation,

will give rise to Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses. The essence of memory is therefore forgetting; the forgetfulness of which one must drink in order to die.

This does not simply mean that everything begins and ends with forgetting, in the weak sense we give to this expression. Here forgetting is not nothing. Forgetting is the very vigilance of memory, the guardian force thanks to which the hidden of things is preserved, and thanks to which mortal men—like the immortal gods, preserved from what they are—rest in what of themselves is hidden.

With the modesty that is his—a modesty that in no way implies a lesser dimension of thought—Supervielle tells us, at least tells me, something of this sort. The muse is not Memory, it is Forgetful Memory. Forgetting is the sun: memory gleams through reflection, reflecting forgetting and drawing from this reflection the light—amazement and clarity—of forgetting.<sup>25</sup>

Although Raúl Zurita was already writing before the coup d'état, it was not until that moment, in the personal and social experience of the coup itself, his imprisonment and overcrowding, that the echoic field that shaped all of his poetry intensified.<sup>26</sup> Zurita's poetry is thus

25 Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 2003), 314-315. Also quoted by French philosopher Jean Louis Déotte in the chapter 'Scheerbart, La Cultura de Vidrio' in *Catástrofe y Olvido, La Ruínas, Europa, el Museo*, trans. J. Mellado (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1998), 179-180.

26 'I name this unexpected inexistent phenomenon, rising like an invisible chain of mountains, an echoicity, a frictional map produced by the forces of diverse echoic bodies colliding. It is impossible to preconceive its happening. The bodies are touched by a litany of memories that re-member a new appearing. Another multiple body of bodies is thus set in motion. A relational performative perception takes place, carrying, wandering.' Luis Guerra, 'Passion in a field of echoes' in Cecilia Vicuña and Camila Marambio, *Slow Down Fast, A toda Raja*. Berlin: Errant Bodies, 2019, 11.

poetry that sings of that intensity lived by a body made up of the individual, society, landscape, and language itself:

The distrust and loss of value of orality means, in the literary field, the gradual abandonment of purely colloquial forms that fail to account for the ‘spiritual’ break that occurred after the military coup. (...) the new writers are searching for new language parameters that can better address the situation, thus starting from what was seen as another repressive instance: language itself.<sup>27</sup>

On June 2, 1982, in New York City, Raúl Zurita wrote his poem LA VIDA NUEVA in the heavens:

MY GOD IS HUNGER

MY GOD IS SNOW

MY GOD IS NO

MY GOD IS DISAPPOINTMENT

MY GOD IS CARRION

MY GOD IS PARADISE

MY GOD IS PAMPA

MY GOD IS CHICANO

MY GOD IS CANCER

MY GOD IS EMPTY

MY GOD IS WOUNDED

MY GOD IS GHETTO

MY GOD IS PAIN

MY GOD IS

MY GOD’S LOVE<sup>28</sup>

27 Raúl Zurita, *Literatura, lenguaje y sociedad: 1973-1983*. Santiago de Chile: CENECAS, 1988, 16-17. <https://doi.org/10.34720/ez36-a376>.

28 Raúl Zurita, *Tu vida rompiéndose (personal anthology)*. Barcelona: Lumen, 2017, 60.

The photographs of this poetic act are included in his book *Anteparaiso*. It is essential to highlight that the imaginal and historical inscription of the coup d'état in Chile became composed of a few images that present the Chilean Air Force planes flying over the city of Santiago before and after bombing the Government Palace on September 11, 1973. These images have marked the social and psychological Chilean imaginary and became the prelude of the horrors to come.

It is worth mentioning that the first scenes in the monumental documentary film *The Battle of Chile* (1975-1979) by filmmaker Patricio Guzmán are those of the sound of planes in the skies. The first images of that film are of a black screen on which we can just hear an acoustic image, an echo, generated by the noise of Hawker-hunters over Santiago of Chile before bombing La Moneda. In this government palace, the democratically elected president Salvador Allende was staying. This background of sounds obscures any possibility of memory because the machinic apparatus fissures that country's recent history. *The Battle of Chile* is an inscription of a loss for which there is no possible substitute, except for the echoic field that makes up Guzmán's film and, I would dare say, the site that forms his entire work.

The letters were traced with white smoke using five airplanes, composing a series of texts 7 to 9 kilometers long. Interestingly, because of his encounter, it is the Chilean artist based in the United States, Juan Downey, who made the videographic documentation.<sup>29</sup>

29 Benoit Santini, 'El cielo y el desierto como soportes textuales de los actos poéticos de Raúl Zurita,' *Revista Laboratorio*, nº 1, Spring 2009, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago de Chile: [http://revistalaboratorio.udp.cl/num1\\_2009\\_art6\\_santini/](http://revistalaboratorio.udp.cl/num1_2009_art6_santini/).

Therefore, through his act of writing in the sky, Zurita retakes it, and now the planes write in that scarred sky. The poetic act, delirium-like writing in the sky, forces the reality of the State and summons an event, effectively inexistent, writing in Spanish over the territory of the United States: 'I wrote in the skies, and I wrote in the desert because I deeply needed to do so.'<sup>30</sup> The writing in the skies has as its object the indication of a new life, *nova vita*. Despite uncertainty and horror, disaster and oblivion, poetry, as an act, resists bearing witness to existence and composing its possibilities. The God to which Zurita appeals in this writing is the God as a naked word, an absolute surplus that, in Latin America, has not only remained vacant but has been appropriated in every violated multiplicity. Mestizo the God of tradition, a substitute apparatus, poetry now inscribes him in the heavens, fleetingly, before the very matter of that abyss erases him in turn. In a premeditated act of mechanical delirium, as was the writing in the sky, that space given by poetry becomes writing on the desert body.

When space is happily given to the living being, according to his condition, it allows him, as well as breathing, vision. And when it unhappily leaves him lost, in abandonment, incapable of vision, it leaves him in the desert. The fact that breath and vision are given together, and not as a simple possibility but in the act, is already high, pure heaven.<sup>31</sup>

30 Raúl Zurita, 'La Belleza de Pensar - Raúl Zurita 1995 full interview,' YouTube video, 1:05:04, published August 4, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDqRpKiveDk>

31 María Zambrano, *Claros del Bosque*, 258.

Poetry makes appear that which cannot but be traced after its disappearance. Even in the case of the work written on the Desert, Zurita establishes this spacing disconnected from language as mere normativity. In 1993, Zurita wrote in Atacama's desert a poem phrase: Ni Pena Ni Miedo (Neither sorrow nor fear). The poem is 3 kilometers long and was produced thanks to the support of the Ministry of Public Works of the Chilean Government. The poem can only be seen from the skies. Today, by entering the coordinates, we can see it thanks to Google Earth: 24°2'49"S, 70°26'43"W.<sup>32</sup> Zurita writes:

When I traced the phrase 'Ni Pena Ni Miedo' over the Atacama Desert, I was thinking about finishing with a promise, and indeed, the photograph of that writing of more than three kilometers closes what I had started twenty years before locked in a bathroom.<sup>33</sup>

Here, in that phrase, a poetic rationality is erected that appeals to us against the irrationality of State and capitalist violence. In this sense, this poem condemns, through its meaning and its materiality, the irrational logos of power. Poetry does not correspond to the Platonic cell because the operative community would be dislocated to that ordering of the world. This poetry does not occur at the margins of a community, as is the question asked by Zambrano's philosophical tradition.<sup>34</sup> Here, it would be the taking of the baton between the poetry to which the European tradition refers and that

32 <https://www.google.com/maps/place/24%C2%B002'49.0%22S+70%C2%B026'43.0%22W/@-24.0469413,-70.4864769,12463m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m4!3m3!8m2!3d-24.0469444!4d-70.4452778?entry=ttu>

33 Edgardo Dobry and Raúl Zurita, 'Conversación Con Raúl Zurita,' 182.

34 María Zambrano, *Filosofía y poesía*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006, 118.

which emerges from the margins that America is. The question that is inscribed in Zambrano does not cease to have a greater political validity:

The philosophy that has raised objectivity over the mutability of human life, community over the diversity of each creature, can it renounce to continue to do so until the end of its days? And if it renounces, will it not mean that the age of philosophy is over?<sup>35</sup>

Is this not the same question that hovers over French philosopher Alain Badiou's text concerning the 'age of the poets'<sup>36</sup>: are we before the testimony of a mode of doing contested by the conditions in which it blindly insists on defining? Poetry would then i-localize the conditions in which its appearing occurs. This i-locality is a dispersion of the topographical modes of apprehending the appearing of what has disappeared. This mode of i-localizable re-appearing would undoubtedly challenge a way of search still anchored in a tradition rejecting any evidence of its transformation.

Zambrano digs even more profound when she says: 'Poetry is an encounter, a gift, a finding by grace. Philosophy is a search, a requirement guided by a method.'<sup>37</sup> This dimension of apparent distance between poetry, finding by grace, and philosophy as a guided search seems to come together in the poetic act. For Zurita, poetry happens because of human existence. Existence is the life of the flesh. Poetry is the history of precariousness, defenselessness, and human misery. This is the inscription of the artifact. An insistent trace of the flesh, of the tissue, of the organs. An attempt never

35 Ibid. 119.

36 Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets, and Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry*, trans. Bruno Bosteels. Nueva York: Verso Books, 2014.

37 María Zambrano, *Filosofía y poesía*, 13.



fulfilled of life as art, or the disappearance of art to dissolve in the creation of the living:

I believe that the function of art, its dream, is that one day, it will disappear so that life itself is a creative act. From the simplest thing, drinking a glass of water, to solving equations and fifth-grade differentials to the most complex. Let everything be a creative act! The work of art is what is possible, what we can do, and what we can hardly do, and art has been the great testimony of violence and compassion. We can only hope, put hope to the horror of this world. Art is the great compassion, compassion for our fragility, for our mistakes, for our weakness. It has to be able to look at the darkest thing we have so that from there, something new emerges, something so powerful, that it is stronger, that bends reality a little and takes it towards the dream, the hope, the light.<sup>38</sup>

That is why poetry that philosophizes life betrays it by turning it into its thing, its object at a distance from life itself, moralizing the behavior of that life. The philosophizing poetry of politics, of ideology, in short, seeks to control, subdue, and erase life. Poetry, on the other hand, is what remains of that lack that one is, a resistant remainder, which, as a finding, makes it possible to mark the point where the systematic search of poetry itself, an eventual pointing out, inaugurates a remembrance. Toward the end of *Filosofía y Poesía*, María Zambrano writes: "Things are in poetry for their absence, that is, for what is truest, since when something is gone, what is truest is what it leaves us, for that is what is indelible: its pure essence."<sup>39</sup>

38 Raúl Zurita, 'La Belleza de Pensar', YouTube video, 56:43, published on March 4, 2016. At: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfkLrLsngY8>.

39 María Zambrano, *Filosofía y poesía*, 120.

What is in Zurita's poetry, in these two fragile figures that exceed in their materiality the inscription on the page? *La Vida Nueva* written in the heavens, and *Ni Pena Ni Miedo* inscribed in the desert, but which at the same time are constantly afflicted by their own disappearance, leaving us with only the image as the secondary stubble of their existence, is memory itself, the song of a memory that insists despite the conditions of its becoming. Places where, sedimentarily, the re-appearing of a loss is allowed. Things are in poetry through that intensity of what is no longer there.

## The event

The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek makes explicit the tendency to confusion that generates the very naming of the event as such. Immediately in the introduction of his book *Event, Philosophy in Transit*, Žižek installs a series of phrases that would exemplify this confusion:

'A tsunami has killed more than 200,000 people in Indonesia!'

'A paparazzi has photographed Britney Spears' vagina!'

'I finally realized I had to drop everything and help him!'

'The brutal military coup shattered the whole country!'

'The people have won! The dictator has fled!'

'How is it that something so beautiful as Beethoven's last piano sonata is possible?''<sup>40</sup>

Žižek sums up all these 'given events,' exposing the different conditions and orders of events we may encounter when we assume the existence of an event. It is interesting that in each sentence, Žižek

40 Slavoj Žižek, *Event, Philosophy in Transit*. London: Pinguin Books, 2014, 1.

uses exclamation marks, as if he immediately wants us to determine the astonishing condition of the event, whatever its nature. From the beginning, what qualifies the event as such is its own being said as a surprise, an unusual reality that surprises us.

So, mundanely, the word event can refer to different orders: natural disasters, celebrity scandals, political triumphs or defeats, and intense aesthetic experiences. Having these distant natures as the bodies of their meaning, it will be necessary to compose a plot that allows the appearing of its essentiality, that which makes or would make all these things recognizable as events. To make this even more explicit, Žižek, as is common in his exposition methodology, uses a cultural reference, an event described in Agatha Christie's 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express*. What is essential about this reference is the 'intensity.' A murder, Žižek tells us about Christie's text, is seen as unusual, and, given its speed, there is no sufficient basis for its existence. Before an event that has occurred, of which one is a witness before which one is disposed, given its unusual immediacy, its out-of-place with respect to the given order of things, one cannot necessarily maintain a certainty of its occurrence. The event happens then before us with the speed of lightning that we can see, that appeals to our senses directly, but that blinds us simultaneously, producing in us a sensation of conceptual instability, even of implausibility: Did that take place? Did that exist, of which I am a witness in some way, or has it been only a confusion of the senses? With no other tools than one's own experience of its occurrence, the event is embedded in a negative space of apprehension. She who is confronted with an event will be overwhelmed and destabilized by the certainty of her commitments. The event is thus an occurrence that happens unexpectedly and interrupts the 'usual way of becoming of things.' In the flow of normality with which 'everything' happens, something breaks this 'naturalness.' The event arises appar-

ently from nowhere, whose causes are indiscernible, at least at the moment of its encounter with us, that they cannot be known given the lack of data that the event itself has. Where the event arises, there is no formula for understanding what the event is. The event is an effect that exceeds the causes of its happening. The event is thus of the order of appearance. At that point, the event is an existence that is there furtively but which seems to have no solid being in its foundation. The event is thus an appearance, which happens to our experience numbed by the obsessive naturalization of our normalizing consciousness as if it were a miracle. What does it mean here to say, or to bring, that the event has a miraculous nature? A dictionary usually defines a miracle as: 'A fact that cannot be explained by natural laws and that is attributed to supernatural intervention of divine origin.' The event that has happened unexpectedly and without explanation appears as a miracle because, without apparent cause, only divine intervention could be attributed to its coming to be. Only a god could be behind that which is a mist. But this alone is the only possible relation to be made in the definitional intention of the event. The events are not miracles because there are no more gods for them. The event is then the surprising emergence of something new, which before its appearance did not exist, something that, by its existence, undermines any possible existent stable schema.

I will now turn to the notion of event exposed by French philosopher Alain Badiou:

Events are nothing if not radical breaks or ruptures with the worldly, regardless of how the latter is experienced (in the liberal-democratic consensus of opinion, identity politics, the phenomenological inquiry into human experience, the exchanges of global capital, etc.).<sup>41</sup>

41 Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty: Badiou's Minimalist Metaphysics*, 14.

The event is a pure chance ‘and cannot be inferred from the situation.’ Given a world, that which is an event is that which does not belong to that situation. The event has no precedent. It is absolutely unexpected. Nothing in the given situation allows us to think about its possibility. What the event is for Badiou is that which breaks with the continuum of the forms of becoming. In fact, this break considers the anomaly that this self-appearance of an object in a given world is supposed for the established order of recognition and intelligibility: ‘What formally does not exist becomes intensive existence.’<sup>42</sup> The event permits the existence of something new; an otherness that did not exist comes into existence, altering the given situation.

In the evental place of the event, another temporality is inaugurated, proper to the event that, only retroactively, and by means of the faithful procedure of the subject instituted by the happening that occurred, generates the visibility of that event. It is retroactively that the event can be concretely known. In the post-event space provoked after its disappearance, the faithful subject, in its action, testifies to the event’s existence. The event generates a time of its own. The present of that event that already has occurred is re-composed in a post-event language of the faithful subject’s body. The event is in-existent in the existent and closed world where it emerges. For the event to become effective through finite inquiries, it must become possible to be counted as one; its consistency is thus operated. However, this consistency now composed around its name keeps the operative intensity of the event itself intact. That being

42 Alain Badiou, ‘The Event in Deleuze,’ trad. Jon Roffé, *Parrhesia Journal Number 2*, (2007): 37-44. Consulted July 28, 2014. [http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02\\_badiou02.pdf](http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02_badiou02.pdf)

said, its name is stipulated in the very movements of that subject's body that emerge in fidelity to that now disappeared event.

The event inexists. Having taken place, its condition is that of desolation. I use the word desolation with a clear, compelling objective of echoicity. What I call to sound here, in echoicity with the text, is desolation in the writings of the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral. Desolation is an entire collection of poems by the poet who delivers her own experience of the death of her beloved, who has committed suicide.

Thus, Gabriela Mistral took the word 'desolation' to understand it, all the enormity of conceptual relations that it implies, as discovery or imposition, after the death of a previous God and the silence of writing that follows that death, of another God, that is to say, of another writing; thus Neruda and the name, hence Vallejo and Borges and all the great Chilean poetry.<sup>43</sup>

Desolation is that absolute solitude amid the place where the event arises. Having appeared and disappeared immediately, its only glow is that of a memory that persistently carries its shadow.

43 Patricio Marchant, '¿En qué lengua se habla Hispanoamérica? (1987)' in *Escritura y Temblor* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2000), 317. It is in this same sense that I understand the desolation of the event. It is not an anguish that seeks nostalgia for an anteriority that should be recovered in its property, as original or origin, but as an effective rupture that is produced without claiming its 'history'.

# Unplaced

L'art est une pensée dont les œuvres sont le réel (et non l'effet). Et cette pensée, ou les vérités qu'elle active, sont irréductibles aux autres vérités, qu'elles soient scientifiques, politiques ou amoureuses. Ce qui veut dire aussi que l'art, comme pensée singulière, est irréductible à la philosophie.<sup>44</sup>

Art is a form of thinking. It is a form of thinking that does not use just the concepts involved in its process of becoming, but it uses acts. A form of thinking that acts. 'As a singular thinking, art is irreducible to philosophy.' Badiou is here admitting a certain impossibility of the European philosophical tradition towards the condition of that thinking art is.

It is worth mentioning here what the Chilean artist Eugenio Dittborn writes about installation:

The traditional notion of compact work, illusorily detached from the architectural materiality that invariably contains or surrounds it, is disarmed by the installations when they include the spatial and social particularity of the places they conquer to be seriously coupled there. Places without which they have no place. This will of coupling, which every installation plays as its difference, has a temporal correlate: the installations are dismantled once their duration is over. The space-time of installations, then, irreversibly dismantles the works of the fine arts tradition that insist on inhabiting any space, in and during any time, by their pretended autonomy. Due to the way it is arranged in the multidimensionality of space, what is installed in the installations allows us to discover and dismantle that

44 Alain Badiou, *Petit Manuel d'Inesthétique*, 21.

space-time, crossed by a rigid hierarchy (...) The installations refloat there a shipwrecked multiplicity: abandoned erogenous zones.<sup>45</sup>

Dittborn wrote this reflection for the catalog of the exhibition *Rúbrica* by Chilean artist Gonzalo Díaz. *Rúbrica* consisted of an installation composed of the complete illumination in red of the exhibition space of the Matucana 100 Cultural Center in Santiago, Chile, 2003. *Rúbrica* remained open to the public for 240 hours, day and night, from October 3 to 13, without interruption. An aluminum and red acrylic screen was installed at the main entrance to this space, through which the visitor entered the installation. Upon entering, the visitor was crushed by the redness of the space. Fourteen neon texts were placed on a wooden walkway that serves as the second floor. The windows of the Cultural Center were reddened with red acrylic plates. Finally, a sound element was added to the installation: a love song interpreted by María Martha Serra Lima.

*Rúbrica*, as the Chilean philosopher Pablo Oyarzún mentioned in his text, was bounded by the 'semantic referential field of the work: the thirtieth anniversary of the military coup in Chile and the experience of torture.'<sup>46</sup> The place of occurrence of *Rúbrica* is, therefore, that of a temporality subject to a negative event such as the coup d'état perpetrated by the Chilean Armed Forces against the legitimate government of Salvador Allende in 1973. However, as on other occasions in Díaz's work, this reference is not made explicit to the visitor or viewer.

45 Eugenio Dittborn, 'Jack Ruby' in Gonzalo Díaz, *Rúbrica*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones de la Cortina de Humo and Centro Cultural Matucana 100, 2003, 1-17.

46 Pablo Oyarzún, 'La materia está hecha de recuerdos' in *Rúbrica*, 34.



For Badiou, art is this displacement produced by the creation of a place, a mismatch, along the lines established by Arthur Rimbaud's disorganization of the senses. Let us recall the axiom of Arthur Rimbaud's *Lettre du Voyant*, written in a letter to Paul Demeny, dated May 15, 1871: 'Le Poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens.'<sup>47</sup>

Art would be any formation that appears without place. How does something appear without place? The deactivation of place affects the appearance of art. But also an impact on the appearance of the event. That which appears force-forms in the context of a situation on which it operates as an anomaly in inexistence. In the same way as the subject of History, the proletariat operates in the irruption of the state place, following Badiou's *Théorie du Sujet*:

Quant au clivage, il est manifeste, au regard de la double nature de l'écume. Certes, elle est trace, doc prise au réseau des différences mondaines, contrairement à l'illimité de la nue. Mais d'autre côté, elle ne se tient que d'un apparentement à l'abîme, dont elle indique la puissance négative et l'effet sous-jacent d'abolition. Ce qui existe hors-lieu, dit le poème, s'y trouve placé sous la loi du lieu (de l'esplace).<sup>48</sup>

47 Arthur Rimbaud, 'À Paul Demeny, Charleville, 15 May 1871,' in Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works, Selected Letters*, bilingual edition, trans. Wallace Fowlie, revised Seth Whidden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, 372-376.

48 Alain Badiou, 'Le sujet sous les signifiants de l'exception,' in *Théorie du sujet*, 97. Bruno Bosteels delivers a definition of *Esplace* in his introduction to the translation of *Theory of the Subject*. There Bosteels states: 'Esplace ('splace'): it is a neologism or portemanteau word based on a contraction of *espace de placement*, 'space of placement.' It can be understood as a near-synonym for 'structure' or even 'symbolic order', even though there is no strict parallelism with either Althusser or Lacan. That which Badiou calls 'state of a situation' in *Being and Event* and 'world' in *Logics of Worlds* also roughly correspond to 'splace' in *Theory of the Subject*. The dialectical counterpart to 'splace' is 'outplace', just as 'place' in general functions in a dialectical opposition with 'force' starting as early as in

For now, I would like to stay in this displaced space, like the holes or the performative anarchitectures, in the descriptive a-space of the condition of art. Every act of art appears when it is produced, already displaced, out of frame. In this dislocation, a locality without a place describes the site where it originates. Hence, it's non-place, or what I will call *undomiciled*, without a fixed abode, a movement of constant trajectoriality.

If 'every work of art' is a description without place, it is because, insofar as it appears, it is the point of indiscernibility between being and appearing. Every work, a fact of art, is a moment, a finite localization of infinite truth. The localization that the work is belongs to a larger spectrum, to a set of procedures that participate in the truth that is actualized by the work of art. In this sense, a work of art is actualizing and advancing that potential truth inaugurated in the occurrence of an event. The works are the fixed points where both appearing and being are indiscernible, but they do not claim the determination nor the finitude of what they refer to being part of. Why is it important to adjust this situation concerning the fact of art? For Badiou here, the important thing is to disarticulate any reading of the work that subsumes itself to an 'otherness' external to, or superior to, the effective existence of the work. The objective here is to disassociate a reading of the work that predisposes it to the romantic suspension, which composes the 'body' of the work as a mere 'incarnation' of an Idea, consistently superior and universal.

There is no revelation here; on the contrary, Badiou explores a definition of the work in its poverty, marked by its inexistence. Immanent and singular, the fact of art exposes this condition of being a fixed point of a truth, which is immanent to, I will say, its

mode of action, to its performativity. The work, what appears, is a description without place. There is nothing beyond it.

On which the dove alights. Description is  
Composed of a sight indifferent to the eye.  
It is an expectation, a desire,  
A palm that rises up beyond the sea,  
(...)  
The future is description without place,  
The categorical predicate, the arc.<sup>49</sup>

The future, that other time of which there is no certainty of its own, already exists in the description without place because even though it has not yet taken place visibly, it now participates invisibly. And if its appearance, as a possibility, has been opened up, it is because the force-form of its becoming exists already in its property. Thus, it is then this description without place that, as axiom climbs, rises, despite its witness's conditions, beyond the situation in which it appears. Thus, if this condition, that of art, the arts in their multiplicity, effective forms of this indiscernible point of being and appearing, are descriptions without place, it is because, in their condition of existing, they point towards an extended tension. They inaugurate, thus, a displacement towards what surrounds them. I will later refer to this as the inaugurated inexistence of artistic practices. The eventuality of what will happen is the promise of inevitability in the consequences. Thus, the description of what has not yet taken place constitutes the gesture of setting in motion the actualization of a beginning, of an opening, which is a cut to what is currently happen-

49 Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. Nueva York: Vintage Books, 1990, 404-411.

ing. The description without place that every artwork is ultimately marks a double temporality. A temporality of appearing without place because its position is marked and suspended to the property of its appearance as its own force-form, and the temporality of what it inaugurates from its instant for the pursuit of other inquiries, of the journey, of the trajectory. We know that all appearing is ultimately a fading out of the moment of appearing. But what has occurred initiates an unusual trajectory that is immediately verified in an after instant in which there is no certainty except by looking at what now lies behind. The work of art is understood not as the object but as the procedure, and, therefore, as a complex instantaneity that argues in the concomitance and alterations of others, indistinctly its historical singularity, accumulates, in itself, the temporality of its being happening, which is proper to that state of its appearing, and an inaugural temporality of a future, of which, being part, it is the testimony of its opening: 'A thing exists more or less, and the intensity has no relation to being, but only to the concrete world in which the thing appears.'<sup>50</sup>

In a fact of art, what exists is its appearing as a multiple in relation to a situation. The artwork brings with it its own measurement of intensity. There is no representation of something or imitation here. Its own appearing, what I call force-form, composes its intensity, despite even that being confined by the situation in which it is given. Thus, Badiou speaks of a strong-fragile intensity. It is in this intensity that Badiou recognizes this 'fusion of being and existence.' Even every representational or symbolic work, which gives meaning to a revelation in its existence and mode of appearing, is only that which it is, without relation or resolution by the exterior. There does not exist, outside of its condition of being appearing, anything that

50 Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets*, 80.

can define it essentially from the outside. That being-appearing of the work is already its, if you will, *exposed essence*. And that is why the artwork creates a world as a description without place. Therefore, in this sense of world-creation, Badiou uses the opportunity to relate these definitions of art to the political.<sup>51</sup> The closing of the text on Wallace Stevens is directed to this conclusion where the political, which for Badiou is only the revolutionary, is that which is produced by events and the invariants that can be traced between them, invariants appearing through the subjective singularities of each localization that operates the effectiveness inquired of a truth for the place, the political is also this description without places. A politics of displacement of place, a politics as action without place, without known domicile, that is to say, a wandering politics, which flees from the uniqueness of a centrality, of a party, of thought, of a god: 'International and nomadic creation with - as in a work of art - a mixture of violence, abstraction, and final peace.'<sup>52</sup>

What we are dealing with then is the formalization of an existence without a difference between being and appearing, indiscernible, that traces, draws fragile, weak intensities, that are not distracted in the fixation of its form, but that compose in its pure intensity the evanescent marks and lines of the map of a constellation in movement. To institute new worlds, to transform existence as we know it, not to work again to perpetuate what there is, that would be the mark of the work that is part of an artistic configuration.

51 Ibid. 81.

52 Ibid. 82.

# Poem and mark

The ancient dispute between Philosophy and Poetry is the difference in their thinking. Philosophy is the thought that deduces, derives, unites, and associates. Poetry is thought that affirms from itself, without law.<sup>53</sup> Poetry forbids discursive thinking. Philosophy is the actual well-founded politics that ‘guarantees the grasp (rooting) of thought on collective existence.’ Plato will forbid Poetry’s existence insofar as opposed to this political thinking. For Plato, the genuine recourse against the poem is to be found in the work of calculating the logos:

595 a ‘There are many reasons,’ I said, ‘why I feel sure we have gone about founding our city in the right way, but I am thinking particularly of poetry.’

‘What in particular about poetry?’

‘Our refusal to accept any of the imitative part of it. Now that we have

**b** distinguished the elements of the soul from one another, it is dearer than ever, in my view, that imitative poetry is the last thing we should allow.’

‘Why do you say that?’

‘Between ourselves- I’m sure you won’t denounce me to the writers of tragedy and all the other imitative poets - everything of that sort seems to me to be a destructive influence on the minds of those who hear it.

53 ‘Le poème, dit Platon, est ‘ruine de la discursivité de deux qui l’écotent’. La dianoia, c’est la pensée qui va à travers, la pensée qui enchaîne et déduit. Le poème, lui, est affirmation et délectation, il ne va pas à travers, il se tient sur le seuil. Le poème n’est pas franchissement réglé, mais offrande, proposition sans loi.’ Alain Badiou, *Petit Manuel d’Inesthétique*, 33.

Unless of course they have the antidote, the knowledge of what it really is.<sup>54</sup>

What does it mean here to say lawless? To what law does this absence that the poem would boast over philosophy, in this case, politics, refer first? And in this sense, to what law is philosophy subject, as its chain from which it cannot flee? Unlike philosophy, which is thinking about something, the poem, an object that appears, generates its condition of being, being its site of giving itself, its body, and its infinity. The illegality of the poem, of poetry, would be its capacity to provide itself with the instituting statute of its condition of being and existence.

The poem does not conclude but is itself an affirmation. The poem establishes itself as an absolute totality of itself, being that it exceeds in and to the world. This is the threshold where the poem dwells: the evental appearing of an abyss.

Badiou quotes Plato: 'He who gives his ear to poetry must be on his guard, fearing for the politics of his soul.' The constantly argued Platonic diatribe against the poem and poets is worth noting. In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato expels the poets and poetry from the organization of the city. This restraint measure is of political order, by means of which the imitative dimension of the poetic is kept at a distance.<sup>55</sup> It is the enchantment of the poem that protects the city and, in it, humanity. This enchantment is the power of mimesis

54 Plato, *The Republic*, 595a-595b, edited by G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. By Tom Griffith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 313.

55 It is impossible to analyze in its entirety the artistic-philosophical appropriationist act that Badiou does with Plato's *Republic*, where Badiou actualizes the elements of the 'original.' I must mention that probably the other artistic example of a faithful act like this is Nicanor Parra's translation-creation of Shakespeare's King Lear. I do not have the space here to comment on it, but I will quote Badiou's Socrates saying:

‘Imagine someone who can do both: the real and its imitation. Do you think he’d devote all his energy to becoming exclusively a manufacturer of images? That such craftsmanship would constitute the entire glorious meaning of his life, as if he’d never had anything better to do?

-Well, why not? *muttered Amantha rather ironically.*

-Oh, come on! If he really knew the truth of what he’s imitating, or representing, he’d devote himself to producing that truth rather than imitating something that’s merely its support. He’d leave behind him, as monuments to his memory, as many sublime works as he could. He’d want to be someone who’s praised himself rather than someone who sings the praises of others.

-Assuming, *said Amantha who still had reservations,* that personal prestige and social utility are in actual fact something that the former can lay claim to. That’s debatable...

-Let’s not split hairs! *said Socrates, annoyed.* Let’s simplify things. We won’t hold Homer or any other poet accountable for everything they write about. Take the art of medicine. We could ask: Was that famous poet who writes poetry about diseases and their cures ever a real doctor, or did he just settle for a pastiche of medical talk? And what about that other poet, whether ancient or modern, with his verses on the Great Health? Would we say he really cured real patients, the way Fleming or even Claude Bernard did? Or what about that other one, who uses charming cadences to teach the merits of a healthy life? Did he, like Pasteur, establish a whole school dedicated to the study of severe infections and the defenses that vaccination combats them with? We could go on like this, but I suggest we drop this line of questioning. We’ll spare the poets and won’t torture them anymore about anything having to do with technique. We’ll concentrate instead on the most important and difficult subjects about which Homer chose to express himself: war, strategy, government, education, and so on. As far as those are concerned, we do perhaps have the right to say to him: ‘Dear Homer, if, as regards the truth of a virtue, you’re not idling at three degrees of separation from it; if you’re not what we call a mimetician, that is to say, a manufacturer of images; if you’ve managed to be at only two degrees of separation from the True; and if, finally, you’re able to distinguish between the Forms that constitute a model for bettering men’s lives, both public and private, and all the ones that make it worse, then tell us, dear poet, what political community owes its radical transformation to you, the way Russia owed its to Lenin, and the way many others, big or small, owed theirs to many others, both in the past and today, from Robespierre to Mandela, by way of Toussaint Louverture and Mao Zedong? What country regards you as an outstanding legislator? Sparta had Lycurgus and Athens had Solon. But what about you? Where is that country?’ Alain Badiou, *Plato’s Republic A dialogue in sixteen chapters, with a Prologue and an Epilogue.* Trans. by Susan Spitzer. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, 353-354. In the original *La République de Platon.* Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard/Pluriel, 2014, 539-541.



existing in the poem. An enchantment is simultaneously a persuasion, a conversion, a spell that falls on the subject through the poetic word. This power held by poetry through the poem ultimately would prohibit access to the sublime principle; that is to say, this power of poetry would not allow the reach to the truth. The poem, machine of imitation, mimetic machine, denies or veils access to the truth. Not only does it deny it, but it presents its appearance as the false idol of that truth. Poetry usurps the place of truth through its affirmative nature. Now, it is also necessary to understand to which poetry Plato refers—the poetry of his time, which he considers to be his actuality and that of his antiquity. We must ask here for the context of his thought: what is the poetry to which the Platonic prohibition refers in his time? What were the principal poetic forms in his period? Poetry, the use of the poetic, dramatic word, had one of its most significant expressions in funerary poetry, namely, that poetry that was exposed to the people during the funerals of an important person. Here, I will present the argument made by Rupert C. Lodge in his book *Plato's Theory of Art*:

But *the art*, the democratic art *par excellence*, in which native sons like Pericles, and visiting professors like Protagoras and Gorgias are past masters, is the art of speech-making: the political or forensic oratory which enchants the soul and induces a kind of pleasure which sweeps all hearers off their feet. A good funeral oration leaves a democratic audience spellbound for days afterwards; with its heads in the clouds, worshipping itself and lost in wonder before the vision of the Greater Athens conjured up by the master-wizard.<sup>56</sup>

56 Rupert C. Lodge, "The Origin of Art," *Plato's Theory of Art*. London: Routledge London, 2011, 38.

In this fundamental text of interpretation and explanation of Plato's theory of art, we find the sense that oratory, the saying as a definition of the world, had in Greece. However, it was to this art, the art of public rhetoric, that the Platonic prohibition perhaps referred. This speech could quickly become demagoguery, control of the masses. This poetry of speech, which transforms reality, which inspires but at the same time veils that same reality, is contrary to the sense of order, which, as the destiny of the Greek people, was aimed at imposing 'on a world of almost barbaric social chaos, the orderly modeling characteristic of a satisfactorily social cosmos.'<sup>57</sup>

Lodge comments finally on Plato's view of art:

From the hylozoist or realist account of the early philosopher-scientists, he (Plato) derives not merely the view of a universal motility, but the faith that, in nature itself, however originating, there is a powerful tendency toward unity, order, and intelligible system. He is entirely convinced, for instance, that if human artists will only seek for objective guidance for their efforts as imposers of patterns, they will find that there is, at least partly expressed in the physical cosmos, a sort of objectivity upon which they can rely.

The 'enharmonic scale' of the 'classical' Greek music is mathematically identical in principle with the grand scale constructed in accordance with the intervals discovered between the heavenly bodies studied by Greek astronomy. A little careful investigation will undoubtedly discover the proper mathematical formula for a number of other Hellenic scales: of the Dorian scale corresponding precisely to the characteristics range of the young man's voice when in martial mood; and of the marching rhythms suited precisely to the young man's marching as to war; and the type of war-

like sentiment corresponding, point for point, with the tones and rhythms of the Dorian scale. Similarly, research will doubtless discover objective correspondences between tones, intervals, and sentiments appropriate to a revised Phrygian scale, and the tones, gait, and sentiments appropriate to men of maturer years, marching in peaceful and ceremonial mood. War-dances and peace-dances, imposed upon human motility, are in the order of nature. So are, no doubt, a few other types: the ceremonial dances in honor of this or that deity, the mating-dances approved for hymeneal occasions, the somewhat violent dances advised by physicians for acquiring emotional self-control. Dances which are not in the order of nature, are, of course, to be eliminated.<sup>58</sup>

The platonic fear is that poetry can transform what can be accessible and knowable. Poetry, the poetic saying, reduces deductive reasoning and operates as a veil to what happens. If access to the possible truth surpasses the realm of the senses through reasoned thought, the poem cuts off that capacity and orients thought to a state of inefficiency. This inefficiency can ultimately produce the absolute decadence of a society, of a city. Slavoj Žižek, in the lavish text *Less than Nothing, Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, takes Badiou's thought to indicate the need for a return to Plato, elemental in Badiou's mathematical-political tractatus. From it, one can finally infer that the expulsion mentioned above would be directed not so much to the poet, of the Mallarmé or Celan type, who in the end would be effectively 'making appear' that which exceeds a truth, but to the other 'poets,' the mimetics, those who promise a transformation of reality in their words but hide the unperturbed sentence of an eternal status quo. The poet who proclaims the peo-

58 Ibid. 40.

ple's destiny by way of blood origins is a poet who should be expelled from the city. In the chapter 'Vacillating the Semblances,' Žizek connotes Plato's possible inability to recognize the consequences of his proposal regarding the Ideas:

The conclusion Plato avoids is implied in his own line of thought: the supersensible Idea does not dwell beyond appearances, in a separate ontological sphere of fully constituted Being; it is appearance as appearance (...) The implicit lesson of Plato is not that everything is appearance, that it is not possible to draw a clear line of separation between appearance and reality (that would have meant the victory of sophism), but that essence is 'appearance as appearance,' that essence appears in contrast to appearance within appearance; that the distinction between appearance and essence has to be inscribed into appearance itself. Insofar as the gap between essence and appearance is inherent to appearance, in other words, insofar as essence is nothing but appearance reflected into itself, appearance is appearance against the background of nothing—everything that appears ultimately appears out of nothing (or, to put it in terms of quantum physics, all entities arise out of the quantum vacillations of the void).<sup>59</sup>

What is, therefore, poetry in Badiou's philosophy? 'Poetry is an immediate action, like every figure of a truth, it is also a program of thought, a powerful anticipation, a forcing of language enacted by the advent of 'other' language that is at once immanent and created.'<sup>60</sup> Poetry would be immediate action, a program, anticipa-

59 Slavoj Žizek, *Less than Nothing, Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. London-New York: Verso, 2014, 37-38.

60 Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 23.

tion, and a forcing. The act of truth *par excellence* is the operative subtraction that is poetry. It is through the act of subtraction that the only thing cognizable in the element of the real, that is, the emptiness of being as such, is cognizable. The poem is a breakthrough that appears as a radical novelty. A novelty that does not exist in its instantaneous time and only later, retrospectively, may perhaps be recognized as the instant of truth.

Following the Mallarmé of *The Restricted Action*, Badiou states that the poem is ‘this unique fragment of speech that all by itself subtracts itself from the universal report,’<sup>61</sup> from that communicational language that only serves to give an account for one, to calculate, to determine and to obey what exists with respect to its entelechy. In and from Mallarmé, the poem flees, constituent hollowness, dissemination of an ‘insurrection of an outside without interiority.’<sup>62</sup>

In the poem, the speech is subtracted from the mundane of the evident constituted and subtracted from the exegesis of the delimited every day, alien to the pre-establishment of the productive machinery. ‘Against the obscenity of ‘everything to be seen’ and ‘everything to be said,’ the showing, polling, and commenting of everything, the poem is the guardian of the decency of the saying. Or of what Jacques Lacan called the ethics of well-saying.’<sup>63</sup>

In this sense, the poem is the place where language, that composition of meaning, splits from itself, producing an eventuality that, despite its formal kinship, is alien to it, like an otherness that exceeds it in all its parts. What the poem opposes is the jurisdiction over the very thought of the mathematical rupture, the power of intelligibility that the matema has. The poem remains enslaved

61 Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets*, 25.

62 Ibid. 9.

63 Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets*, 25.

by the image, by the singularity of the experience. The poem hosts an impure link with the sensible experience. A link that exposes language to the limits of sensation. That is why the existence of the poem's thought is always doubtful. Interrupting the power of the poem (sophist) is the work of the mathematician (philosophy). That power is the accumulation of a non-thought (non-logos) that presents itself through the linguistic ability of possible thought. In Badiou's terms, the poem does not evoke or suggest any vanished or veiled presence. For Badiou, the poem 'produces the absence of the world in the space of language that is its site.'<sup>64</sup> The poem is neither at the service of meaning nor representation. The poem exceeds the world: 'le poem surpasse en puissance ce dont le sensible ce capable.'<sup>65</sup> And, poetic action, 'embodied in the production of poems,' presents ideas in a pure state. There is no meaning to be discovered or liberated, but objects effectively unchained from the prison of interpretation. In short, what we find in Badiou is an affirmation. I will even say an invitation and a welcome. In the face of that closure that marks European thought and its substitutes, that something had effectively already been lost and could never happen, Badiou turns the other way and greets instead the opportunity of a future to be built here and now through new and radical forms of names. Contrary to the conservative complaint about the lack of new temples, Badiou operates with a disturbing coolness, defusing the long siren song of finitude and death, saluting the living bodies that create other worlds, possible worlds: 'This is the heart of the poetic experience conceived as an experience of thought: to gain

64 'The absence of the world in the space of language that is its site.' Pierre Macherey, 'The Mallarmé of Alain Badiou' in Gabriel Riera, *Alain Badiou, Philosophy and its Conditions*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, 110.

65 Alain Badiou, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un poème, et qu'en pense la philosophie ?', *Petit Manuel d'Inesthétique*, 38-39.

access to an ontological affirmation that does not set itself out as the apprehension of an object.’<sup>66</sup>

## The heaviness of the poem

What, then, is the substantial difference that resolves the quarrel of their proximities that settles the measurable distance between Heidegger’s aesthetic theory and Badiou’s inaesthetics? First, we will have to comment, and here, it only remains to comment on the abysmal scope of Heidegger’s aesthetic theory. What Heidegger has spoken and written about art illuminates, here, all his thought retroactively. Heidegger’s thinking is marked by the potential of art and, indeed, even more, by the power of the greatest of the arts, Poetry. Above all, it will be in poetry where Heidegger finds the philosophical refuge of the wandering of being and the inappropriate flight of being. It will be poetry, definitively, the only way to allow glimpsing, although it is in the veiled eyebrow and lock of the eyes, between the eyelids, the vanishing light of the gods. In the epilogue of his text *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger raises the impossibility of describing the work of art’s enigma. In Heidegger, the work of art is a vehicle of that perception of the world that remains hidden behind the verbiage,<sup>67</sup> or rather, concerning that

66 Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 236.

67 Paul Celan, in his prose poem, translated as *Dialogue on the Mountain*, as John Felstiner comments in his book, ‘points up the problem of human speech: Die Geschwätzigen! ‘The babblers!’ Felstiner notes that the German word ‘Geschwätz’ means chatter, chattering. In the text, Felstiner says: ‘a common enough word. Kafka liked it, and for Heidegger it meant everyday talk cut off from the true being. To translate the word as ‘babble’ (rather than ‘prattle,’ ‘chatter,’ or ‘gossip’) hints at Babel and the loss of original language. For in Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘On Language in General and on the Language of Man,’ *Geschwätz* designates

which is reduced to its concealment. The work of art operates as an unveiling of that which is hidden. In this unveiling, the work of art opens to anotherness as a supplement. An excess that 'makes' the truth of the world.

What happens here? What is at work in the work? Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant boots, *is* in truth. This being emerges into the unconcealment of its Being. The Greeks called the unconcealment of beings *aletheia*. We say 'truth' and think little enough in using this word. If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work.<sup>68</sup>

Then, Van Gogh's painting works as that which makes patent the actual being of the object to which it indicates. To come out to the state of non-concealment, which is the state of truth, the actual being, of what is really that useful, the pair of farmer's shoes comes out, appears, jumps out, and is made patent by its representation.

The work of art is thus a transparency that elevates, a scaffolding that exhibits re-exhibiting what essentially of the thing it represents remains hidden. The work, therefore, establishes the truth of the entity. We have an object whose capacity would be to unveil the being of the entities it refers to through its own conditions. Art,

empty speech after the Fall, speech without Adam's power of naming (which emerges only when the Jew Klein names certain flowers and trees). The 'babbling' of Celan's Jews is a comedown -via the cataclysm that ruined Benjamin -from God-given speech.' John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 144-145.

68 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings, Revised & Expanded Edition*, editor David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993, 162.



then, its disciplinary practice, would have this unique capacity of, from its mode, which is the form of its own happening, establishing a stage of stability of the entity's being. Its essence, therefore, would be that of opening 'in its own way the Being of beings.'<sup>69</sup>

If art is, for Heidegger, the 'putting oneself to the work of truth,' what is the truth itself that sometimes takes place as art? Heidegger continues to wonder about this discovery concerning the work of art: 'Rising-up-within-itself the work opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force.' and maintains, 'To be a work means to set up a world.'<sup>70</sup> For Heidegger, the work is this opening through which what happens there, in the mediation constituted by the form of the work itself, is the worlding of the world. The making of the earth, which opposes the world of the account-for-one, that which only intoxicates true being to the pusillanimous setting of its decipherable parts, and frees it:

Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction.<sup>71</sup>

Heidegger understands that the elements that make the artwork: matter, form, density, weight, etc., are effectively present. They become a surface that stops hiding, with respect to which we do not have ways of apprehension determined by the technical-scientific codification. The work raises a world. The lifting operated

69 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 165.

70 Ibid. 170.

71 Ibid. 172.

by the work is one of its features. In Heidegger's words, this lifting is a glorification, a consecration, a making-emerging in withdrawal.

Works are things and perform art, but the character of the thing cannot capture them. Heidegger wonders about the possibility of access to the work by itself. That is to say, how do we know of it? To access it, we would have to isolate it from 'all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone.'<sup>72</sup> The artwork, created by the artist, seems to be left entirely to its own devices, in its self-subsistence, and the artist is only the 'passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge.'<sup>73</sup> I cannot but agree to a certain extent with the question Heidegger operates in relation to the being of works. If works are indeed always to be found in places, be they collections or exhibitions, but even open spaces such as squares, cities, and streets, are they there 'as the works of art that they are in themselves or rather as objects of the artistic enterprise?' In the answer, there is an indication of an inexistence. For if the world of the artwork has collapsed, if the works ultimately can no longer be what they were, even though they remain themselves as well, being what they are before us and no longer being what they were, if there is something that has fled out of them, the works are in an inexistent condition. Proper to themselves if they are without relation, and the only realm that concerns them: 'The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work occurs essentially and only in such opening up.'<sup>74</sup> However, Heidegger, instead of remaining himself in this described situation, the stripped condition of the work of art, returns to a composition of

72 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 167.

73 *Ibid.* 166.

74 *Ibid.* 167.

the artwork as that through which the truth of the world is apperceived. That is to say, in short, the artwork opens a world and, even more, now places it on earth. Here, the consecration begins its destiny. The work 'is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it.'<sup>75</sup> What is God here? God is the sacred that lives in the artwork. It is what makes the permanence of the artwork. The artwork opens a world; it pours it into that world through itself on the earth, only to make it remain in its consecrated act of being-work. In its act of elevating and consecrating, the work withdraws, and the earth emerges in that act of withdrawal. There is this form that rejects us in its happening. Our technical ways of knowing the world only access the space to that established knowledge but do not grant us actual knowledge. The dance or combat between concealment and un-concealment governs Heidegger's philosophy: 'Truth, in its essence, is un-truth.'<sup>76</sup>

History, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe points out in his analysis of Heidegger's philosophy, is History as destiny, and poetry, the art of language, is the only means of founding it. It is in the art of language, the house of being, where truth emerges. This emergence is the event of art as origin:

Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of beings in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of its essential source in a founding leap—this is what the word 'origin' [Ursprung, literally, primal leap] means.<sup>77</sup>

75 Ibid. 168.

76 Ibid. 179.

77 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 202.

Poetry is the original speech by means of which it is possible to return to an origin that has been lost. An origin that supposes the compelling truth of what one is. Therefore, it is in poetry that we find the original speech that speaks of the being of the people entity and substantially marks its destiny. A destiny that has as its object the effective creation of a new origin that redeems and resurfaces the previous one in its now. Therein lies the condition of a historical mission that in Heidegger assimilates a Christological teleology. Poetry is the holder of this mythology.<sup>78</sup> If what is driven away is the mimesis granted by the poem, it is clear that the configuration of a people in destiny to the figure that is myth-destined to it, the fate of the German people for its word, its art, its origin, and leap, Heidegger's philosophy regarding art, and especially, regarding the poem, does not cease to happen as a tool of political composition. What differentiates Heidegger's philosophy from Badiou's is the poem's disposition and what Badiou designates as the poem's function. For Badiou, the poem does not indicate any destination nor directs us toward the reverberation of a lost or veiled origin. The poem's truth is not the truth of being but is its own, exposed in its existence.<sup>79</sup>

78 'Ce malentendu, j'y ai déjà fait allusion, on peut le designer d'un mot: le mythe. La saturation, en réalité, ne se ferait pas ou ne se serait pas faite au Poème mais au Mythe.' Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger: La politique du poème*. (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002), 54.

79 The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his book *Idea of Prose*, comments: 'This vain promise of a meaning in language is its destiny, which is to say, its grammar and its tradition. The poet is the infant who piously receives this promise and who, though avowing its emptiness, decides for truth, and decides to remember that emptiness and fill it. But at this point, language stands before him, so alone, so abandoned to itself that it can no longer in any way impose: *'la poésie ne s'impose plus, elle s'expose,*' so Celan writes, in French this time, in a posthumous text. The emptiness of words here truly fills the heart.' Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 49.

# **CHAPTER 2 - GESTURES**



# Subtractions

Inventer une fidélité contemporaine à ce qui ne s'est jamais plié à la contrainte historique de l'onto-théologie, à la puissance arraison-nante de l'un, tel fut et demeure mon motif.<sup>80</sup>

In a lecture held at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, USA, entitled 'Destruction, Negation, Subtraction: On Pier Paolo Pasolini,' Badiou defines what he names subtraction: 'I name the affirmative part of negation 'subtraction.''<sup>81</sup> What does he mean by this apparent contradiction? What does affirmation refer to within an inaugural negation? We will state that Badiou is (still) a Maoist in his political thinking. The first stage of his study, which culminates with the writing of *Théorie du Sujet*, is marked by a revision of Marxist thought under the shadow of Maoism and against the Stalinism of the

80 Alain Badiou, *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998, 28.

81 'For example, the new musical axioms that structure for Schönberg the admissible succession of notes in a musical work, outside the tonal system, are in no way deducible from the destruction of this system. They are the affirmative laws of a new framework of musical activity. They present the possibility of a new coherence for musical discourse. The point we must understand is that this new coherence is not new because of the process of disintegration of the system. The new coherence is new to the extent that, in the framework that Schönberg's axioms impose, musical discourse avoids the laws of tonality or, more precisely, becomes indifferent to those laws. This is why we can say that musical discourse is subtracted from tonal legislation. Clearly, this subtraction is on the horizon of negation; but it exists apart from the purely negative part of negation. It exists apart from destruction.' Alain Badiou, 'The Contemporary figure of the soldier in Politics and Poetry.' Presented at the conference 'Destruction, Negation, Subtraction: on Pier Paolo Pasolini,' Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, February 6, 2007, accessed February 23, 2022, <http://www.lacan.com/badpas.htm>. The exact text is published in a retouched version in Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets* (London-New York: Verso, 2014), 84.

communist party, be it French or Russian. It includes in this thought the Maoist reception of Hegel's thought and, therefore, of dialectics.<sup>82</sup>

In this first period, Badiou's philosophy is still sutured to a specific political objective, which has as its tool the necessary destruction of the system. There would be no possibility of constructing the Marxist objective without a process of destruction of the bourgeois situation. Thus understood, the revolution still owed its figuration to recent uprisings and the production of the subject of history, the proletariat. It was only later that this process of understanding subtraction would change its perspective. While recognizing the capacity of an organized movement of political violence, he has come to specify further the infrapolitical spheres of creative politics of a militant affirmationism that, as he has remarked on several occasions, aims to disavow the discourses of death and finitude. Indeed, for Badiou, philosophy is a political tool, a weapon against the status quo. Still, it is clearly a weapon that crosses the threshold of capitalist pessimism and advocates a celebration of the possibility of creating new fictions and utopias to which to devote oneself. That is why, while not denying the need for political organization to resist the reigning domination and to allow the existence of other forms of life and meaning, Badiou, I will say, consecrates organization to an opportunity that does not have as its only object, and even more,

82 Alain Badiou, *Les Années Rouges* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2012). Badiou confirms that 'when I reread the three essays here republished, I have a double feeling. On the one hand, of course, I recognize the tone of the time, its somewhat stiff vigor, its polemics that have now become esoteric in part, that sort of brutal 'gay knowledge' that does not shrink from the swelling and promise of new mornings, because it is convinced that it is on the side of real life, the one that devotes itself to something other than its own indifferent perpetuation. But on the other hand, I see nothing essentially lost, or even useless, in the effort to which these writings testify: to invent the philosophical resources capable of accompanying, reinforcing, the political novelty of the times.'



that dispenses with the need for the destruction of the system as logical precedence to the existence of a possible world. I will say that ‘in spite’ of the conditions and reinforcing the need to constantly demonstrate, indicate, and undermine the system through actions and organizations voluntarily contrary to the prevailing system and, unconsciously, destroy that same system, the appeal here is to the construction of that world in a subtractive manner, and thus, from its origin misaligned from the existing world. That is why the negation is affirmative, because it simply, in substantial part, dissociates itself from the operation of direct contradiction with the already imposed structure. However, there is also the negation of a subtraction.

What is a disaster, or what does Badiou name the Evil? This disaster is the imperial forcing, which has as its object the forcing of a name for the unnamable.<sup>83</sup> This disastrous Evil attempts to name all things by means of the one, so Badiou has also called it religious. Just as from the event, we can observe different subject modes: the faithful, the obscure, and the conservative; in the same way, the forcing, which is the fictionalization of the total effects of an event in its truth, can want to impose its nominality. One can only wonder here whether Badiou is referring to the misnamed real socialisms, not only to the disastrous attempts to imperialize the meaning of the name communism as truth, in the case of Stalin and Mao and their subsequent copies, but also to the partisan practice of the Communist and Socialist parties themselves against which Badiou has always fought. For Badiou, this bombastic over-fictionalization, forcing possible local singularities into local inquiries under the illumination of communist totalitarian truth, became rootless and ultimately disastrous for the Communist idea. The communist subject,

83 Alain Badiou, *Of an obscure disaster. Sur la fin de la vérité d'État*. Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, La Tour-D'Aigues, 1998).

orbited and subordinated to that now false inquiry, has remained vacant, waiting to recover its namelessness.<sup>84</sup> In the referred conference ‘Sur la Soustraction,’ Alain Badiou reads an excerpt from Mallarmé’s poem *Igitur*:

I alone – I alone – am going to know the void. You, you return to your amalgam.

I proffer speech, the better to re-immense it in its own inanity . . .

This, no doubt, constitutes an act – it is my duty to proclaim it: this madness exists.

You were right to manifest it: do not think I am going to re-immense you in the void.<sup>85</sup>

There is the madness of the act of truth. It is the act of a proclamation. To understand, therefore, the potency, the force of subtraction as an act, it is necessary to understand that for the context in which this act takes place, the act itself is madness, a proof of insanity that is ‘a wager on the supplement.’<sup>86</sup>

Subtraction is pure counter-rule. It is time to review what Badiou says about subtraction when he operates on his philosophical-poetic parallel example: Mallarmé.

84 ‘The danger is that a truth, errant and incomplete as it may be, takes itself, in the words of the poet, as an ‘age of authority’. It thus desires for everything to be triumphantly named, in the Summer of revelation. But the core of what is, the ‘southland’ of our unconsciousness of being, does not and must not have a name. The site of the true, subtractively edified, or again, as the poet says, ‘the flower that a contour of absence has separated from every garden,’ itself remains in its intimate depth, subtracted from the proper name. The sky and the map reveal that this country did not exist.’ Alain Badiou, *Conditions*. Trans. Steven Corcoran. New York: Continuum, 2008, 128. In the original, *Conditions*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1992, 195.

85 *Ibid.*, 113.

86 *Ibid.*, 123.

# The passageway

Mallarmé is everywhere in Alain Badiou's work, so much so that one can consider this preoccupation and interest one of its most distinctive features. Especially since Badiou's work establishes a singular link between philosophy and poetry through the intervention of Mallarmé and the reflection -we are almost tempted to say rumination -which he obsessively and obstinately devotes to him. This is a reflection reserved not only to the study of a monographic nature of one or another aspect of Mallarmé's poetic production, but is present as well in both *Théorie du sujet* and *L'être et l'événement*. Here it is associated, mixed, and implied (in forms that nevertheless remain to be elucidated) with a philosophical argument developed on its own ground, where it meets Mallarmé as a protagonist, a 'thinker' who must be reckoned with.<sup>87</sup>

Mallarmé's subtractive method transforms the poem into 'a negative device that utters the being or the idea at the very point where the object disappears.'<sup>88</sup> What is this disappearance alluded to? What is subtraction in Mallarmé? In *Théorie du Sujet*, Badiou writes: 'Un poème de Mallarmé est un tout dont l'objet manquant est la dialectique structurelle elle-même.'<sup>89</sup> In this text, Badiou indicates syntax as the law of the space of writing. Badiou references specifically Mallarmé's text *Le Mystère dans les Lettres*. This text first appeared in *La Revue Blanche* on September 1, 1896. The primary

87 Pierre Macherey, 'The Mallarmé of Alain Badiou' in Gabriel Riera, *Alain Badiou, Philosophy and its Conditions*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, 109.

88 Ibid. 111.

89 Alain Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982, 92.

purpose of that text was to counteract the criticisms against his poetic proposal. The general criticism of the period reproached Mallarmé's absence of the language of communication and his verbiage, leaving us with a coded, cryptic, absent language, which does not correspond to anything 'real.' Marcel Proust's text titled 'Contre l'obscurité' appeared in *La Revue blanche*, July 15, 1896. Proust's criticism of the symbolists is quoted as follows: 'The poet renounces that irresistible power to awaken so many Sleeping Beauties asleep in us, if he speaks a language we do not know.' Mallarmé replies with *Le Mystère dans les Lettres*: 'My preferred response to aggression is to retort that some contemporaries do not know how to read, except newspapers.'<sup>90</sup>

Mallarmé is, therefore, the thinker-poet of the event. The space of the present text is not the place to investigate all the edges of this relationship between Badiou and Mallarmé, of this suture that, in part, presents and testifies to the presence of a shared aesthetic in Badiou's text between Mallarmé and Plato, or rather, between poetry and theater. But if in this eagerness exposed above concerning the struggle maintained between philosophy and art for the education of the people, it is impossible not to distinguish that, in both media, Badiou finds a way to make pedagogy, being philosophy also a tool of artistic presentation. In the particular case of this section, I will concentrate on Badiou's diagnosis of Mallarmé's poetic praxis as subtraction.

The poem no longer depends on having to say something external to itself, except for itself, which thus operates subtractively: 'which forces the object to undergo the ordeal of its lack.'<sup>91</sup> The poem is the

90 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, trans. E. H. and A. M. Blackmore. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, x. Also, in: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, ii. Paris: Gallimard, 2003, 234.

91 Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed., and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto

act of subtraction itself. And the act is a measurement, but of what? The measurement of immeasurability is described by what flees, precisely vanishing in its own absolute act of appearing, the event. And what was necessary for an event to appear? A place. In Mallarmé's poetry, Badiou finds these sites where the event occurs. The poem used by Badiou in his text, which has its place in the *Conditions*<sup>92</sup>

Toscato. London and New York: Continuum, 2005, 236.

- 92 The text 'Mallarmé's Method: Subtraction and Isolation' starts with a footnote which, I believe, given its importance, deserves to be transcribed in full here: 'The third section of this essay, which focuses on the speculative function of 'purity' in Mallarmé's poems, was originally a fragment of a book project entitled *La Déliaison* that I ultimately decided not to publish. The reason for abandoning the project was that I was convinced by Francois Wahl that the book's full development presupposed more wide-ranging investigations, in particular into the category theory of mathematics. I am currently pursuing this work and will one day integrate it into a book that I regard as the second volume of *Being and Event*, a work that will have to the first volume the same relation, relatively speaking, that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to *The Science of Logic*. In 1989, I turned this fragment into a paper entitled Mallarmé: Thinker and/or Poet, which was given at Granada University in Spain at the invitation of the French Department. In the present collection, I wanted to give a larger glimpse of my studies on Mallarmé, because for twenty years now I have taken Mallarmé to be emblematic of the relationship between philosophy and poetry. And I was determined to give this glimpse by engaging in the materiality of singular poems, and not by means of some over-arching hermeneutical view. It also seemed to me somewhat one-sided to do this only using the poem entitled *Prose*, which, being an exemplary case of the operator of isolation, is not such a good example of the prodigious operators that Mallarmé invented. In the end, I resolved to provide a new version, which sometimes bears little change, of my analysis of his poems in *Théorie du Sujet* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1982). Ten years have gone by since the publication of this transitional book, which is at once too complex and too open to attack. The concepts developed in *Being and Event* have enabled me to clarify what was awkwardly clothed in the hope of regenerating dialectical thinking. The resultant *discrepancy* has reorganized my reading of the poems, although the basis on which they were deciphered remains the same. Let this be an occasion for me to say once again all that I owe to Gardner Davies, who, alas, has since passed away, but without receiving the praise that his work – which has become that memorable absent of which his books are, in Mallarmé's sense, the real tomb –

compendium, is the poem that names the chapter of the book *Théorie du sujet* 'A la nue accablante':

A la nue accablante tu  
 Basse de basalte et de laves  
 A même les échos esclaves  
 Par une trompe sans vertu  
 Quel sépulcral naufrage (tu  
 Le sais, écume, mais y baves)  
 Suprême une entre les épaves  
 Abolit le mât dévêtu  
 Ou cela que furibond faute  
 De quelque perdition haute  
 Tout l'abîme vain éployé  
 Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne  
 Avarement aura noyé  
 Le flanc enfant d'une sirène.<sup>93</sup>

Here, we find the example of the poem's condition and, in part, the reason for the poem as that mathematics of art. The poem presents a place where something has happened, and of which the poem exposes the trace. This trace, the presentation of the trace itself, is the poem's fidelity to what has occurred. Only the presentation of the poem makes it retroactively evental. Every name, which is a cipher then of that incommensurable unnameability of the poem, subtracts, is sustained in the precise sustenance of that evanescent happening. Subtraction is the poem's sonority, and its structure's disposition is

has deserved.' Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, 292-293.

93 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems and other verse*, trans. by E. H. and A. M. Blackmore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78-80.

the same measure that exonerates the concupiscence of meaning to be speculated. All measurement dents in its definition of the inconsistency of emptiness, which is 'being insofar as being.'

Suppose one returns to the notion of subtraction as an affirmative negation, which does not depend on the destruction of the place where it operates in this text. In that case, Badiou advances in Mallarmé three types of negation: 'l'évanouissement, l'annulation et la forclusion.'<sup>94</sup> Badiou calls the vanishing, the primary subtraction of the event itself, an 'echo of the event' because it is what happens in the immediacy of the disappearance proper to the event itself, its mark. The annulment, 'echo of the undecidability,' is the suspension of the previous subtraction, 'subtraction from subtraction itself.' I will say that this second subtraction is a supplementation of the first. The mark now reveals and sustains that revelation. This sustaining mark of the vanishing is subtractive in its mode of naming the event's undecidability.<sup>95</sup> It maintains that discretionally of measurement in the 'Ou cela que....' Finally, the third subtraction is the foreclosure: 'pointing out the unnamable.' Suppose the truth, which is inaugurated in the process of fidelity of the poem to the event that has taken place, is sustained by a mark that sustains its undecidability. In that case, there is no way from the situation and its knowledge to give an express account of the eventuality of the event; this truth, its power, as Badiou calls it, cannot surpass its own limit. It cannot 'forcer au dire.' These subtractive operations are in Mallarmé's body of work. For Badiou, Mallarmé is thinking of the event itself as such. And he thinks it through the poem, which operates the 'disobjectification of presence.'<sup>96</sup>

94 'Mallarmé's work contains *three* types of negation: vanishing, canceling and foreclosure.' Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, 49.

95 *Ibid.*, 53.

96 Elie During, Alain Badiou: *Key Concepts*, 91. This text highlights a note from

# Subtractive procedure

In close proximity to the militant though ultimately destructive legacy of the avant-garde, Badiou groups the great art events of our time, as you would expect, as formal variants on the general project of generic subtraction.<sup>97</sup>

the book V of *Logiques des Mondes*, which refers to an epigraph that opens the book: 'Qu'est-ce qui passe? Clov: Something is going on.' During emphasizes this subjection, a suturing, which coexists in Badiou's philosophy. In the note, Badiou explains: 'The epigraph is taken from the play *Endgame* (New York: Grove Press, 1958). Of all twentieth-century writers, Samuel Beckett is the one who has been my closest philosophical companion. What I mean by this is that thinking 'under condition of Beckett' has been, in the register of prose, the counterpart of what, for a long while, thinking 'under condition of Mallarmé' has been for poetry. To Mallarmé I owe a sharper understanding of what a subtractive ontology is, namely an ontology in which eventual excess summons lack, so as to bring forth the Idea. I owe Beckett a comparable sharpening in my thinking of generic truth, that is the divestment, in the becoming of the True, of all the predicates and agencies of knowledge. Mallarmé recounts how a vessel's shipwreck summons, for the swallowed captain who inscribes lack at the surface of the waves, the imminence of the abyss. Then, the Sky receives the Constellation. Beckett tells of how a larval creature, crawling in the dark with its sack, wrests from another, encountered by chance, the anonymous tale of what it is to live. Then comes the sharing of what Beckett calls 'the blessed days of blue'. Perhaps the only goal of my philosophy is to fully understand these two stories. In 1995, I published a small book, *Beckett, l'incroyable désir* (Paris: Hachette), where I soberly declared my debt. But the best account of my relation to his prose is in an English-language book edited by Nina Power and Alberto Toscano, *On Beckett* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2003). All of my texts on Beckett, translated by the editors, are contained within it, along with some very fine studies, notably that of Andrew Gibson, a subtle delimitation of the resonances between literature and philosophy and of the ethical effect of these resonances.' Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds. Being and Event II*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. New York: Continuum, 2009, 548.

97 Peter Hallward, *Badiou a Subject to Truth*, 196.



In his text 'Art and Poetry,' philosopher Peter Hallward uses the expression: modes of artistic subtraction. Hallward uses this expression to comment on the conflicting relationship between art and poetry in the work of Alain Badiou. Being a procedure of truth, art is one of the conditions that allow the existence of philosophy. As such, the latter can only attend to those intra-philosophical effects 'produced by the independent existence of some works of art.'<sup>98</sup> Art, as a procedure of truth, occurs in the unfolding after the existence of an event. If I understand it this way, insofar as art is born from an event, art is not a regular occurrence. Rather, being the event already an anomaly, art only occurs occasionally. It can be said that art happens only occasionally: sometimes art happens. This statement breaks with tradition.

Art is not a particular way of making, legitimized by an institutional system that makes it art. Perhaps that which is constantly done within a discipline is art because there is no other name for its general designation in the mundanity of verbiage. But what art does is something that, as in politics, science, and love, does not happen as a regularity that constructs the world as it is. Instead, something else occurs as a supplementation, excess, or differentiation. If art sometimes happens, not always, and if it occasionally occurs as an anomaly, what is then art? Art will be that Mallarmean flash, the Benjaminian lightning, brilliance, break, rupture that blurs our drowsy becoming for death. In any case, art would be an affirmation of life, hence why it would be an axiomatic constellation to achieve

98 'By 'inaesthetics' I understand a relation of philosophy to art that, maintaining that art is itself a producer of truths, makes no claim to turn art into an object for philosophy. Against aesthetic speculation, in aesthetics describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art. A. B., April 1998.' Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, s/n.

its event's consequences. Following this logic, art would sometimes occur in temporal intervals subtracted from the enthroned discursivity of a history that names everything. Or even more, there would only be art when there is subtraction. Thus, art occurs without the necessity of its inscription in what exists to construct the world as it is. Art happens *without*.<sup>99</sup>

As such, as a procedure, art is already a subtraction. Art is something else that cannot be expected. For this reason, the most challenging thing to accept is that its occurrence does not imply a whole existence. If art is a procedure, that is to say, it is an appearing that exists in conditions of inexistence, then its existence operates in a displaced temporality, a temporality subordinated to its own forced occurrence. Here is an affirmation that makes the difference visible, and the cut I will add of the theorization towards art from Badiou's thought, 'the only objective of an exclusively affirmative art is the effort to make visible everything that, from the perspective of what is established, is invisible or inexistent.'<sup>100</sup>

99 '9. Aeropostal paintings are a pictorial subtraction. Subtraction. They are subtracted from the easel painting. From there they are subtracted to enter pictorially maneuvering and with a minimum of paint to the post. Almost nothing. What is strictly necessary to go through it, come out on the other side and be exhibited there as a display of scarce resources: Monotype. Photoserigraphy. Underdrawing. Stitching. Spill. Stitching. Drawing. Mold and stamp writing. Handwritten calligraphy. Painting. Almost nothing. Extract all the pictorial consequences of the use of registered mail or else certify the consequences of all the uses of painting. Multiculture, then. Polytechnic. Mestizaje.' Eugenio Dittborn, 'Roadrunner,' in Justo Pastor Mellado, *El fantasma de la sequía*. Santiago de Chile: Francisco Zegers Editor, 1998, s/n. The publication was made on the occasion of Eugenio Dittborn's exhibition at the Cultural Center of the Municipality of Miraflores, Lima, Peru, in October 1988.

100 Alain Badiou, 'Esquisse pour un premier manifeste de l'affirmationisme.' Typescript (2001): 13-19, quoted in Peter Hallward, *Badiou a Subject to Truth*, 195.

A subtractive procedure is that through which an in-existent to the situation declares its existence. Indifferent to the State's norms in question and independent of the destruction of that same system, the in-existent declares its presence. A subtractive procedure maintains the new coherence apart from destruction or mere negation. A subtractive procedure is, therefore, following Badiou, an affirmation. An affirmation of what? It is the affirmation of its own difference with and within the situation where it occurs. Which is its affirmative negation of the rules that legislate the situation in which it appears. The affirmation is, therefore, a negation but in a subtractive form. The subtractive opens the situation by affirming a possibility 'without' what has been confirmed as repetitive knowledge.

Subtraction is, therefore, the affirmation of an existence without the dialectical negation of the place where it appears, without the necessity of being by means of such a negative relation or of recognition of being under the rules in operation. This affirmative declaration of existence subtracts the existent from its reference to the existing defined by the situation. This subtractive procedure operates its instant of renunciation from the moment of its appearing. As a political example of this subtractive procedure, Badiou reminds us of the notion of communism as a new state, which would replace the bourgeois State, but not necessarily as a result of its destruction, but as:

We can say that, in the original thought of Marx, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was a name for a state that is subtracted from all classical laws of a 'normal' state. For a classical state is a form of power; but the state named 'dictatorship of proletariat' is the power of un-power, the power of the disappearance of the question of power. In any case, we name subtraction this part of negation that is

oriented by the possibility of something that exists absolutely apart from what exists under the laws of what negation negates.<sup>101</sup>

A statement of an existence that does not need the inscribed recognized knowledge to define its own condition of appearing. Its existence depends entirely on its own declaration, even if it also proclaims an existence in absence, an existence as inexistence, which is an existence in a disseminatory form, in the form of absolute escape from any limit of definition. Subtraction is the proclamation of existence without, which is, in essence, a declaration of autonomy. A subtractive procedure is one through which an inexistent names itself.

## A radical novelty in the situation

Really, in the end, I have only one question: what is the new in a situation? My unique philosophical question, I would say, is the following: can we think that there is something new in the situation, not outside the situation nor the new somewhere else, but can we really think through novelty and treat it in the situation? The system of philosophical answers that I elaborate, whatever its complexity may be, is subordinated to that question and to no other. Even when there is event, structure, formalism, mathematics, multiplicity, and so on, this is exclusively destined, in my eyes, to think through the new in terms of the situation. But, of course, to think the new in situation, we also have to think the situation, and thus we have to think what is repetition, what is the old, what is not new, and after that we have to think the new. At least in this regard I remain

101 Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets*, 85.

more profoundly Hegelian. That is, I am convinced that the new can only be thought as process. There certainly is novelty in the event's upsurge, but this novelty is always evanescent. That is not where we can pinpoint the new in its materiality. But that is precisely the point that interests me: the materiality of the new.<sup>102</sup>

The radical novelty is without precedence in the context of the place where it appears. Unheard of and inaudible, that is to say, there is no possible legislation that correlates it or composes it for its reading. Radical novelty happens in its absolute property, turned towards its language. Although in it, the opportunity of relations could be glimpsed, even so, the radical novelty is a break in that same field of links; that is to say, it immediately transforms also that of which it could be part or be read as such:

Alors seulement nous savons pourquoi, quand une nouveauté se montre, quand l'être sous nos yeux semble déplacer sa configuration, c'est toujours au défaut de l'apparaître, dans un effondrement local de sa consistance, et donc dans une résiliation provisoire de toute logique. Car ce qui vient alors à la surface, déplaçant ou révoquant la logique du lieu, c'est l'être même, dans sa redoutable et créatrice inconsistance, ou dans son vide, qui est le sans-lieu de tout lieu.<sup>103</sup>

The radical novelty is pure exceptionality, incision, and excision. The radical novelty would be that which is on the edge of the void, the foundation of this placelessness. What finds novelty is emptiness. Australian philosopher Sam Gillespie (1970-2003), says 'for Badiou,

102 Alain Badiou, 'Can Change be Thought,' in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and its Conditions*, ed. Gabriel Riera. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005, 252-253.

103 Alain Badiou, *Court Traité d'Ontologie Transitoire*, 200.

a novelty is contingent upon a truth. In fact, unless I am mistaken, a novelty for Badiou *is* truth, and is furthermore always produced anterior to anything that can be known or discerned in a situation.<sup>104</sup>

Badiou confirms this in the same lecture on *Subtraction*:

Une vérité devient dans sa nouveauté - et toute vérité est une nouveauté - par ceci qu'un supplément hasardeux interrompt la répétition. Une vérité commence, indistincte, par surgir.<sup>105</sup>

An event would be the radical novelty *par excellence*. Evanescent, it appears to disappear, but a change of world inexists in the form established by its appearing. The event exists inexistently. In its appearing, nothing effective can declare or testify to its existence. The event happens in its absolute desolation. And that is why it inaugurates from the void:

It is only then that we know why, when a truth shows itself, when being seems to displace its configuration under our very eyes, it is always despite appearance, in a local collapse of the consistency of appearance, and therefore in a temporary cancellation of all logic. For what comes to the surface at that point, displacing or revoking the logic of the place, is being itself, in its redoubtable and creative inconsistency, that is, in its void, which is the placelessness of every place.

This is what I call an event. For thought, the event is to be located at the internal joint that binds mathematics and mathematical logic. The event arises when the logic of appearance is no longer capable of localizing the multiple-being it harbours within itself. We

104 Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty*, 19.

105 Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, 189.

are then, as Mallarmé would say, in the environs of the vagueness wherein all reality comes to be dissolved. But we also find ourselves where there's a chance that – as far as possible from the fusion of a place with the beyond, that is, from the advent of another logical place – a constellation, cold and brilliant, will arise.<sup>106</sup>

But in that instant, it establishes a possibility. How? How does the event then stabilize a gap? What is there in the beat of the happening? What is an appearing, that despite the conditions in which it occurs, even alien to them, can give rise to a continuity, intermittent perhaps, in a series, set, of procedures? How else, I propose, by and from the dent? All eventual appearing occurs as a 'slit,' I will say, not only in the sense of the formation, formulation, of a trace, a trace that would speak of the existence of something that was there, like foam on the surface, and therefore the measurement of the trace would be the work of philosophy to formalize the truth erected by means of what has already occurred. But the slit does not operate in this sense as the foam, as a vestige. But as the effective entity that not only says but is part of that event.

What I mean is that the slit not only communicates about what is no longer there to indicate that what it signifies is the surplus from which it depends but also articulates a part that remains in the absence of what is not there reciprocally. The emptiness inaugurated by the disappeared is now part of that disappeared too, and it is what remains as a subtractive stay. In the reading of a verse of Mallarmé or Rimbaud, Mistral or Neruda, Parra or Zurita, there is an operative loss in that fleeting form that is the verse. The poem dents reality in an in-existent way. A force form is formed in the subsequent instance of the evanescence of the unrepeatable and

106 Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 175.

unrecognizable event. This force is not cumulative in form but subtractive-sedimental, disseminatory in its subtraction. The inaugurated emptiness to which the dent gains access, which is not only an indicative trace but a bearer, in its precariousness, in its minimum intensity, maximum to itself, of what is no longer, makes the inexistence of the event re-appear, perhaps almost-never.

The radical novelty changes the conditions of legislation in a world. The capacity of this change is circumscribed to the ability now of the body that sustains it as appearing. Therein lies fidelity as a procedure. The event is followed by this process, which is the event's truth. Suppose the being of the event is its disappearing. In that case, the resistance of the praxis of the faithful subject is the being-there of the truth inaugurated. This occupied resistance is the allocation of the indentation imprinted on the procedure through the trajectories of research, actualization, and appearing processes.

To what do we owe this double filiation of the radical novelty? To that which is on the edge of the void, and to that which is placeless? I must return to two sources that find their composure in this rank of pure exceptionality that Badiou grants to the event. The event is an exception to what already exists. This figure at the edge of the void points towards the inconsistency of being before its 'count-as-one.' Before it comes to being within the consistency of measurement, Being is pure multiple inconsistency, the presentation of which is possible through mathematical formalization, which gives the thought of being the name of the void. That radical novelty that appears and cuts the becoming of what there is as such, that is to say, inside an oscillating legislature, drawing a diagonal split that fulminates and indicates the infinite, presents in its flashing that inhuman inconsistency. Of that radical existence, of which the situation cannot say, it inaugurates its own way of naming, which is of a retroactive character. This condition of the event as a radical



novelty is not fundamental to the event itself.

What, then, is change? If the logic of appearing is a codification of relational intensities, of variations, composed in a given space, mere legislation of the differences, what generates a transformation in that given state of things? For Badiou, change is:

Soit la bascule de l'intensité nulle d'une existence vers une intensité maximale, caractérise le changement réel. Une telle relève est en effet, parmi les nombreuses conséquences d'une secousse affectant un objet du monde, la signature de ce que nous appellerons un événement.<sup>107</sup>

Given a world where we have objects and relations between objects, transcendental legislation establishes the intensity of their appearances, and there is a point of transformation of these conditions of existence. This point of existential transformation of what defines the world in its instant is the change. Change is an effective discontinuity—an effective discontinuity of what has been presented as the continuity of the world. For Badiou, the thought of change is that of singularity. By this, he means that singularity designates ‘an entity whose thought cannot be reduced to that of its worldly context.’ He abruptly states that the thought of change is not ontological or transcendental.<sup>108</sup> It is a matter of re-exposing that to the change he refers to as a disruptive singularity. There is no reference from and in the worldly transformation. Starting again from the absolute immobility of being, Badiou argues that in the context of appearing, there is no true change either, since modifications can occur ‘sans qu’aucune discontinuité, et donc aucune singularité,

107 Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, 362.

108 *Ibid.*, 398.

soit requise pour le déploiement de ces modifications.<sup>109</sup> There are constant modifications in the worlds that are coherent and proper to the logic of each of these worlds in their unfolding. They are part of those relations occurring within transcendental indexicality: 'Le monde est tout ce qui a lieu.' The objects absorb the modifications that make them part and do not 'change them' since those changes belong to their 'apparaître-dans-le-monde.'<sup>110</sup> Therefore, we find ourselves before a modification when we refer to a change authorized in a world, and because it is an authorized fact, it is not a true change. For Badiou, the knot is in the exceptionality. Only in the break with the laws of ontology and logical regulations can we find true change: a radical novelty.

The radical novelty *is* a truth, as Gillespie suggests. A truth that tells of what has taken place. And in this saying, that radical truth presents its way of saying itself, which is axiomatic. Thus, this radical novelty says without a clear basis, and in saying without grounds, without plausible or discernible foundations, what it says is expressed in a point of absolute vacillation, in total indisposition, at the abyss of language, whichever language that radical novelty will choose for axiomatize the existence of the disappeared event. This axiomatic way of saying that the radical novelty uses is what I call oscillatory because it inaugurates a trajectory, a fragile ab-errancy without a proper name, undomiciled to any place. It creates a network of resonances, allowing an echoic landscape to rise:

109 Ibid., 378.

110 'Objets et relations ont leurs intensités mesurées selon un transcendantal temporel singulier, qui objective dans leur apparaître des multiplicités comme 'la ferme tenue d'un bout à l'autre du groupe des anarchistes' ou 'le rôle organisateur du syndicat des cheminots' ou 'l'isolement croissant des communistes kurdes', etc.' Ibid., 379.

The leap of a truth, then, involves a wager on the supplement. It involves upholding the statement ‘an event has taken place,’ which comes to deciding the undecidable. But, of course, since the undecidable is subtracted from the norm of evaluation, this decision is an axiom. Nothing founds it, bar the assumed evanescence of the event. Every truth thereby passes through the pure wager placed on what has being only in its disappearing. The axiom of truth, which always takes the form ‘this has taken place, this which I can neither calculate nor exhibit’ is the simple, affirmative obverse of the subtraction of the undecidable.<sup>111</sup>

Once the radical novelty has happened, which tells of the happening of an event, the verification process of that new truth begins by means of procedural inquiries, which will become the bodies on which the consequences of the axiom will be sustained. But there are no laws regulating these inquiries. Errant, the inquiry happens without knowing beforehand the clauses that every act of its wandering could inaugurate: ‘The trajectory involved is a hazardous one, lacking in concept.’<sup>112</sup> Badiou goes so far as to say elsewhere: ‘Truth is nothing but an arrow of the topos, the truth-arrow. And logic is nothing but a particular power of localization immanent to such and such a possible universe.’<sup>113</sup> But as it has been exposed before,

111 Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, 123.

112 *Ibid.*, 123.

113 ‘3. The theory of *topoi* provides a foundation for the plurality of possible logics. This point is of crucial importance. If, in effect, the local appearance of being is intransitive to its being, there is no reason why logic -which is the thinking of appearance- should be one. The relational form of appearance, which is the manifestation of the ‘there’ of being-there, is itself multiple. The theory of *topoi* permits us to fully comprehend, on the basis of the mathematicity of possible universes, where and how logical variability -which is also the contingent variability of appearance- is marked with respect to the strict and necessary

this arrow shares with the lightning its weakness in the degree of appearance. In this appearance occurs the site of an event. This arrow and the inaugurated place can, and in most cases, exist almost inexistent in a minimal degree of existence. This condition of inexistence depends on the picture of relations in a given world. The example Badiou uses is that of The Paris Commune, named for the moment in which the insurrection of the city disobeys the prevailing governmental power and decides to become by its own naming axiom of its destiny.<sup>114</sup> The subversion of the rules by the bodies that objectify this subversion summons the very appearance of an event site, a space where a being happens to be-there by itself. It is fundamental to differentiate the ontology of this being-there. As a being, it is a manifold that comes to be an element of itself. Its appearing is participating in the conditions of indexicality existing up to now. However, it subtracts itself from them by means of its own. Being ceases to belong to the other worlds becomes a radical exception to the existent. But it is there where its absolute precariousness lies. For Badiou, this event-site ‘est une figure de l’instant, qu’il n’apparaît que pour disparaître’. Its true duration can only correspond to the order of its consequences. What is the consequence? It is that which brings in its maximum state that does not appear to be. In this sense, it is that which subsists despite the conditions in which it must unfold. It is not difficult here, therefore, to understand the conception of fidelity to the idea that permeates the figure of a mili-

univocity of multiple-being. For example, there can be classical topoi which intrinsically validate the law of the excluded middle, or the equivalence between double negation and affirmation; but there can also be non-classical ones, which do not validate these two principles.’ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 174-175.

114 ‘Du point de l’apparaître réglé, en effet, la possibilité d’un pouvoir gouvernemental ouvrier et populaire n’existe purement et simplement pas. Pas même pour les militants ouvriers, qui parlent le lexique de la ‘République’ de façon indistincte.’ Alain Badiou, *Logiques des Mondes*, 386.

tant. This singularization of the event-site depends on the strength of the event to ‘faire exister maximalement ses conséquences, et non pas seulement elle-même.’<sup>115</sup>

The defeat suffered by the Paris Commune in its own making is undeniable. The annihilation of the bodies that subjectivized this subversion, perpetrated by the State, has not made the truth inaugurated by its appearance disappear:

Le Paris ouvrier, avec sa Commune, sera célébré à jamais comme le glorieux fourrier d’une société nouvelle. Le souvenir de ses martyrs est conservé pieusement dans le grand cœur de la classe ouvrière. Ses exterminateurs, l’histoire les déjà cloués à un pilori éternel, et toutes les prières de leurs prêtres n’arriveront pas à les en libérer.<sup>116</sup>

It is in this sense that radical novelty must be understood. It is not only a question of the emergence and immediate disappearance of the event as such but of the disposition that opens and operates in the ‘glorieuses et incertaines conséquences.’ Here is where it is possible to find the most proper justification of the four procedures. Badiou argues that the true intensities of the event can reside, extend, and recommence in science, politics, art, and love. It

115 Ibid. 394.

116 ‘Das Paris der Arbeiter, mit seiner Kommune, wird ewig gefeiert werden als der ruhmvolle Vorbote einer neuen Gesellschaft. Seine Märtyrer sind eingeschreint in dem großen Herzen der Arbeiterklasse. Seine Vertilger hat die Geschichte schon jetzt an jenen Schandpfahl genagelt, von dem sie zu erlösen alle Gebete ihrer Pfaffen ohnmächtig sind.’ Karl Marx, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich* (1871), in Karl Marx Friedrich Engels *Werke*, Vol. 17 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1968), 362. Quoted by Badiou in *Logiques des Mondes*, 396. Karl Marx’ text was presented at the General Council of the International Workingmen’s Association, printed, and published in 1871. The German version was published in Berlin in 1891. The version I have reviewed is Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22. New York: International Publishers, 1986, 355.

is worth noting that this hopeful resolution indeed exceeds the field of philosophy as verification. Here, the force of the event, which is ontological and logical exceptionality, transcends the conditionality of its own appearing. What is inaugurated at the furtiveness of the amorous encounter transgresses all regulation. And it is not extinguished but rather fulminates a becoming in its denting of reality. The consequences are, therefore, sustained beyond mere modifications, transgressing from their place in carrying and oscillating singularity. Badiou ends by suspending a sentence that seems to dislocate his own philosophy: 'Pas de conséquence transcendantale plus forte que de faire apparaître dans un monde ce qui n'y existait pas.'<sup>117</sup>

The strong singularity of the event is then only claimed in and through the consequences, in the inquiries, procedures of fidelity, which, in the end, in that world where they maintain their carrying dependence, they bring into existence the inexistent proper of the object-site. It is the inexistent that exists as the mark of the event. The radical novelty changes reality not only through its singular appearance, strong at the self-sustaining level but also through that irreparable tracing composed of the consequences of the inexistent itself.<sup>118</sup> The formalization of this arising poses the opportunity to change the world and the order of things.

117 Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, 397.

118 'L'existence 'éternelle' de l'inexistant est le tracé, ou l'énoncé, dans le monde, de l'événement disparu.' *Ibid.*, 399.

# When the movement proposes a force-form

Only truth can effectively *force* a transformation to occur in the situation.<sup>119</sup>

Force breaks the state of things, and with respect to that, all waiting is only a methodology of conservation and counterrevolution. Badiou brings together the force, the place, and the form that immediately becomes composable in this decision-making. Even against all the already instituted apparatus of knowledge. A withdrawal that is rupture for a new subjectivity engaged in the construction of a new destiny radicalized in the first subtraction faithful to the world for the truth that has become of the revolutionary event ‘where accumulation is invested in loss, in the dilapidation of force, it is the temporal Sphinx of the subject.’

It is in the ‘there’ of a decision, in the very place of the self-instituting act, that the subject appears. Hence, its unusual condition: unbelievable. In this act of cutting, of interruption, there is a loss—that of the relation that composed the belonging to the established world. In the act of independence and autonomy, in the loss of place, therefore, as the domicile referred to, the subject becomes purely out-of-place, and a drift is inaugurated that, uncertain with respect to the effective ends of its own making, generates a procedure, a trajectory, errantly faithful to the truth that is realized. The action advances undetermined, leaves its recognizable place, becomes

119 Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty*, 80.

invisible to the previous summoning certainty, and inaugurates and creates a path of which it is not known where it will end.<sup>120</sup>

It is worth quoting here the same way in which another subject, George Cantor, alludes to his work in relation to the *Foundations of a General Theory of Sets*:

The previous accounts of my investigations in the theory of sets has reached a point where its continuation depends on extending the notion of actual integers beyond the previous limits, and this extension lies in a direction that, as far as I know, no-one has previously sought to tread. Without this expansion of the concept of number, I would be so constrained that it would hardly be possible for me to take the smallest step further forward in set theory. It might be considered that this dependency on such an expansion is a justification, or perhaps an excuse, for the fact that I introduce seemingly alien ideas into my work, because it involves an extension, a continuation of the sequence of numbers beyond the infinite. And however daring this may seem, I nevertheless express not only the hope, but the firm conviction that this extension will over time be regarded as completely simple, correct and natural. In doing so, I am under no illusion that with this enterprise I am placing myself in opposition to widespread intuitions regarding the mathematical infinite and commonly held opinions regarding the quantity of numbers.<sup>121</sup>

120 'Là se croisent, dans une vacillation fulminante, la droiture morte de ce qui fait défaut et le risque vivant de l'interruption.' Here, there is a place without a state because what is initiated in this fulminant hesitation that becomes a rupture without return, built in the interruption, is the subject itself. The body as an instantiated place of decision, a mark of force, is the very form of disunity that determines a series whose possible completeness is unknown: 'Là le sujet naît à la décision, qui n'est que son existence.' Alain Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 188.

121 Cantor's *Grundlagen*, 'Grundlagen einer allgemeinen Mannigfaltigkeitslehre' (Foundations of a general theory of sets). Trans. James R. Meyer, 2021.



At the end of chapter III of *Théorie du Sujet*, Badiou asks: ‘Qu’attendre d’une théorie du sujet, sinon qu’elle éclaire un peu le mystère de la décision?’<sup>122</sup> This mystery of the decision surrounds the first time of force. The force is the very enigma of its appearing. Thus, force does not imply a mere asymmetrical correlation between two opposing components. His question regarding this force that produces an uprising, a rupture, an insurrection cannot, or should not only, be ratified in the physical inversion of the pressure exerted by the superior figure of the state machinery. It is not only to think of revolution as the political decision to compose and make possible a radical transformation of the conditions in a given world, what the ‘out-of-place’ social body, excluded from the summary enjoyment of the pre-established laws as necessary absolutes and of reason by those who dominate, manifests. It is not a mere response to an unbearable and materially fatigued situation. Instead, in the apparent revolt against the conditions operated by the excluded set, there is anti-repression, including the repression of that repression. This is the autonomous sense that force has. That which revolts against oppression must, even in its own excess, revolt against the representation of the repressive other as its only sustenance. To repress repression supposes deactivating the correlation invested in the representation of the repressive other as the locus of my force. Therefore, this force that revolts against oppression is double: in direct opposition to the oppressive force, but at the same time internal to the disarticulation of the sense of its own being as force as part of that oppressive power. Thus, a split, an affirmative cut, which is always out of place, is composed.<sup>123</sup>

<https://www.jamesmeyer.com/infinite/cantor-grundlagen#Section1>.

122 Alain Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 192.

123 ‘Tout est là : c’est quand la force pose l’extériorité comme son moment propre’ qu’elle accède à une corrélation qualitative centrée sur soi, où le face à face des

The force is the absent cause, of which, having taken place, we can only transmit what remains in reverberation. Its form is produced through an echoic web, a phenomenon that I call echoicity. This form is not that of a closed definition but that which is inaugurated in the aberrant, undisciplined rupture of what has been lost. In a very classical way, I would say, we can find a presentation of this form in Gordon Matta-Clark's architectural practice, infinitely detached from what is anxiously attached to the 'sacredness of finitude.'<sup>124</sup>

This idea of echoicity, given its repeated use in relation to the performativity of form, had been initially used in a previous, unpublished text presented at the International Congress Film and Philosophy held at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Lisbon.<sup>125</sup>

Echoicity is a collective remnant. That which remains of what can hardly be said to have been. In this case, we used the film work made for television, *Ecos del Desierto*, by the Chilean filmmaker Andrés Wood, as the main reference to the concept.<sup>126</sup>

forces ne peut réduire leur hétérogénéité. C'est quand le peuple dresse sa propre vision de l'adversaire comme figure interne de sa propre politique qu'il 'sursume' la dépendance antirépressive, s'exclut de toute inclusion, et procède à une scission affirmative.' Alain Badiou, *Théorie du Sujet*, 50-51.

124 Luis Guerra, 'Window Blow Out (1976)', *Journal of Global Studies and Contemporary Art*, Vol. 1, (2013): 121-139, accessed May 1st, 2021, <http://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/REGAC/article/view/5510>.

125 Iván Flores and Luis Guerra, *Echoes of the Deserts*, presented at the International Lisbon Conference on Film and Philosophy, held at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, University of Lisbon, Portugal, May 6-10, 2014. <https://sites.google.com/site/philosophyandfilmlisbon2014/>.

126 *Ecos del Desierto* was a television miniseries directed by filmmaker Andrés Wood (Santiago, Chile, September 14, 1965). The series chronicles the life of human rights lawyer Carmen Hertz around the events during the coup d'état in Chile and the subsequent years of dictatorship. Carmen Hertz is one of the political figures who maintained a constant struggle in court against military repression and, in

That text indicated that ‘the being in resonance is not only limited by the delay, or retardation, produced by the acceleration of History.’ In the Chilean case, the thesis of an acceleration of history is driven by the recomposition of the socio-political and cultural space of the region by the hand of a political power kidnapped by a military state. At the same time, it drives a series of structural modifications in the productive economic scaffolding. The emergence of the counterrevolution, an eruption that burst in the coup d’état, seems, on the one hand, to stun the sense of history in the making that had been developing. Thus, the coup leaves deaf and interrupts, marking an ‘immeasurable interregnum.’<sup>127</sup> Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher, wrote a phrase used countless times to describe a specific time in our contemporaneity: the interregnum. The interregnum is the time that is lived between what does not decide to die in our societies and what does not finish being born: ‘The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.’

particular, against the regime’s secret police and its policy of disappearance and torture. The central binding fact of the series is the perpetration of a series of political assassinations carried out by what came to be known as The Caravan of Death, a squadron led by the sinister General Arellano Stark. The series was broadcast in Chile in September 2013 by the television channel Chilevisión. <http://www.observatoriofucatel.cl/ecos-del-desierto-la-historia-de-la-caravana-de-la-muerte-en-chilevision-desde-el-9-de-septiembre/>.

127 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971, 276. The Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman applied this concept to what he has termed ‘times of uncertainty.’ In that text, Bauman names three pressing contemporary issues: migration, the continuity of the planet, and what he calls ‘institutional disparity.’ Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Times of Interregnum,’ *Ethics & Global Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2012): 49-56, accessed October 10, 2021, <http://www.ethicsandglobalpolitics.net/index.php/egp/article/view/17200>.

Morbid symptoms are the reflection or what certifies the body's death. They are, de facto, what survives after a body's death. In naming here the morbid symptoms, I am referring specifically to the conditions in which not only the production of art has been restricted to a sequence of revalidations of the new, be it through the use of new technologies, but to how art or that which defines itself as such through the very giving of its established framework, operates, being a piece of floating machinery that in its display hides the servile matter of its ideological destiny. Just as politics is certainly not that which occurs between its media exposure and the deterioration of its own representation, art, which indeed inexist, does not happen in the confines of the culture of finitude but occurs eventually and sometimes coincides later in the presentation of its occurrence.

If what is established then, from the annulment of the rule of law, is an erasure of the created anteriority, and by means of a shock doctrine, a social body is electrocuted at such a level that it is desubjectivized and suspended in a time of impossibility of meaning, then where to locate what resists the stun? We find it at the echo's trajectorial place, conceived as a resonance machine in the composability of a historical body-subject, materialized in the crossing of membranes, where the accumulation and loss appear in that organic reproducibility.

*Ecos del Desierto* portrays the events surrounding this period as experienced by the political figure of Carmen Hertz. A human rights lawyer, having lost her husband, Carlos Berger Guralnik, executed by Operation The Caravan of Death, the series presents the long judicial and political battle of Hertz, along with thousands of others, in the historical-political presentation of the facts, of the truth, happened: the indication, the proclamation of the loss and of the existence of those who have disappeared. In analyzing the series and the content on which it depends, in the text, we were inter-

ested in indicating the importance of resonance, a resonant political subject formed in the echoing trajectory of that sound, despite the overwhelming dissonance composed by the noise of the military apparatus. It is worth mentioning again that the machinery and its noise bring about this acceleration. The bombing of La Moneda, the government palace, on September 11, 1973, was a noise from which recent history seems unable to detach itself. It is worth mentioning as a reference here the titanic film *The Battle of Chile*, by Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzmán, which begins with the noise of military airplanes flying over Santiago City. Then we heard the deafening noise of the bombs exploding, all before any image came up. Only the apparatus of meaning that fixes the impossibility of the gaze to apprehend the facts, in this case, the recorded image and sound, allows the return, in delay, of what has really been.<sup>128</sup> A certain echoicity that, in its fragility, inexistently recomposes a body invisible to and hidden by the State apparatus.

What is left after the deafening noise, if not an overwhelming silence, that extinguishes everything, every possible dissonance? What returns is what has been made disappeared, in delay, by the continuous re-coming of an actualization of what no longer exists. How, then, to think about the permanence of a vanishing? What remains here, what makes permanence, is the very corporeality of an echoicity. Echoicity brings a trace between the curvature of bodies and images. But that trace supplements what exists for the empire of martial law. That surplus is a truth that cannot exist from what is defined as possible by the suppression culture. Illegal, inexistent, what truth brings is an opening that does not have as its destiny the cordoning off and closure towards a past that presents

128 Patricio Guzmán, *The Battle of Chile* (1975). <https://www.patricioguzman.com/es/peliculas/la-batalla-de-chile-i-ii-iii>. Accessed March 18, 2021.

itself as the image of purity, nor the mere expression of a need for the destruction of the inverted order in which it is supplementarily found. What it brings, forces, and forms in the echoing trajectory is a promise, an invitation, its cleft of a time to come.

At the end of the series *Ecos del Desierto*, the television apparatus that has dramatized the real facts to massify them to a dehistoricized audience, gives way to an element of that hidden and prohibited reality. The series ends with the image of the desert overflowed, metaphorically, from the helicopter's perspective, showing the desert's furrows as human skin, as the body of a tortured nation. The last sentence projected over this background reads, 'On December 3, 2006, Pinochet died without facing Justice.' The screen goes black, and then Carmen Hertz's voice says: 'I am Carmen Hertz.' She begins a short but profound speech appealing to the citizenry. Hertz emphasizes two elements that appear central to us here: 'Thanks to the perseverance and effort of many, we have managed to know the truth of what happened.' In the end, she declares:

Justice is imperative and necessary to shape our present and our future as a society since justice, we can say, is the primary source of memory. It is the source that fixes the memory of the people. Without collective memory, it is not possible the ethical and political reconstruction of a society that experienced in its bosom State terrorism.

Here, both the fictional body, as is the space constituted by the series, and the actual body of Carmen Hertz unite this space of affirmation of the truth that insists on continuing to echo in the shared space of the political. The echo is a dispersing return; it exceeds and loses itself in each trajectory point of its wandering. Its appearance is not constrained to any place. It is neither object nor reflection.

The echo seems to reverberate in the mere evocation that does not end in any specific return but is immediately relaunched to an anteriority ahead, without destination. Unlike the shadow as a trace, the echo produces a close distance, a deferred return. Echoicity, the very effect that is the echo, constitutes a resonant subjection; it implies the lack and the traceable knotting of different faults to be intertwined. Here, we would find a figure of the force-form, spacing, and desistence, the difference introduced of an inexistence.

The proper exercise of the force itself condenses the appearance of a form. A form that does not necessarily appeal to the notion of a cut or figure but instead as a dent. What is a dent? It is a break or indentation in the edge of a weapon or tool, in the border, or any protruding object's angle by a blow or other cause. It is a hollow that remains in a thing because of the absence of what used to occupy or fill it, as in the gum when a tooth is missing. It refers to causing an effect on someone by repression, advice, or supplication. Form here resides only in a state of permanent impermanence. If the event is flashing, appearing, and disappearing instantly, the formation of what happens as procedure occurs in a temporality that nomadizes throughout the notion of time as linearity. It happens in constellative times, happening in different localities randomly in relation. How else do inexistences relate, if not through the very trajectory of their procedures? The forcing of any procedure conforms to something not subject to the power of the evident, which is perceptible by established knowledge but instead extends, throws itself, and leaps to the appearance of an unnamable figure.

The force form is a configuration in which the exercise of the force itself condenses the immediate build of a form as a dent. The force-form here indicates this constitutive condition of the happening now of the procedure, understood as the appearing of a radical cut. An appearing that changes the existing legislation of what is

knowable. As appearing, which is the bursting forth of the dent, the force form operationally inexists. It operates a quasi-inconsistency. Trajectorial only, the force-form draws an existence from itself without.

Anabasis is another figure that Badiou has used as a reference. In *Le Siècle*, Badiou begins by asking himself:

Comment le siècle a-t-il conçu son propre mouvement, sa trajectoire ? ¿Comme une remontée vers la provenance, une dure construction de la nouveauté, une expérience exilée du commencement. Un mot grec rassemble ces significations, et quelques autres : le mot ‘anabase’. *L’Anabase* est en particulier le titre d’un récit de Xénophon qui raconte l’histoire d’une troupe d’environ 10 000 mercenaires grecs embauchés par un des camps dans une querelle dynastique en Perse.<sup>129</sup>

129 Alain Badiou, *Le Siècle*, 119. ‘The concept of Anabasis comes from the Greek verb ἀνάβασις meaning at the same time ‘to embark’ and ‘to return,’ at once a search for home and the invention of a destiny in the new.’ Eric Baudelaire, *L’anabase de May et Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi et 27 années sans images*. Paris: Édition Centre National des Arts Plastiques, 2013. The text accompanies the artist’s documentary and installation of his work. In Badiou’s text he states, ‘Toute anabase exige ainsi que la pensée accepte une discipline. Sans cette discipline, on ne peut ‘remonter la pente’, ce qui est un sens possible du mot ‘anabase’.’ For Badiou the Greek word indicates, in its double semantic condition, for our contemporaneity, that which leaves undecidable, in the trajectory that names it, to ‘les parts respectives de l’invention disciplinée et de l’errance hasardeuse, qu’il fait synthèse disjonctive de la volonté et de l’égarement.’ For Badiou, this word, what resonates in it, what it brings in its echo, ‘d’extraire la conscience du siècle quant à son mouvement.’ To this end, and with particular interest, Badiou refers to the poem of the same name written by Paul Celan, part of *Niemandrose*, (Nobody’s Rose) of 1963. For Badiou, the particular importance of Celan’s poetry is the renunciation of meaningless or empty wandering. Celan’s poem sets out in search of a promise, not of a return to the sufficiency of what had been established, but of the invention of the ‘future of the clear heart’ (in die herzhelle Zukunft.). Badiou’s Celanian anabasis inaugurates a ‘we,’ a fraternal ensemble



# What is inexistence?

Ich bin, Sie sehen es, an diesem Wort Camilles hängengeblieben. Man kann, ich bin mir dessen durchaus bewußt, dieses Wort so oder so lesen, man kann verschiedene Akzente setzen: den Akut des Heutigen, den Gravis des Historischen-auch Literarhistorischen-, den Zirkumflex-ein Dehnungszeichen-des Ewigen. Ich setze-mir bleibt keine andere Wahl-, ich setze den Akut.<sup>130</sup>

The name of the event, the name that names what has happened, is always poetic. Why? Why is it said to be poetic? Because the name of that which is undecidable, of that which in its 'essence' which is its mere appearing, is effectively unnamable, subtracted from itself in a situation, demands a leap. A leap is a leap beyond the language that names by knowledge. That language has suspended us in the enclave of indecision for so long. A name that names the unnamable is one on the edge of the abyss, after the tongue. Edge because we cannot give an account of its form by means of names. How does one name that which has no name, which cannot be named, except through an approximation that is already a 'roll of the dice'? The occasion to name the event is poetic because it is a name in waiting.

'errant et victorieux.' This 'we' is the same we that appears echoing, through various bodies, in Carmen Castillo's recent documentary, *On est vivant!* (2015). A 'we' which 'véhicule librement sa propre disparité immanente sans per autant se dissoudre.' Ibid., 140.

130 "Oh, art!" You see I am stuck on this word of Camille's. I know we can read it in different ways, we can give it a variety of accents: the acute of the present, the grave accent of history (literary history included), the circumflex (marking length) of eternity. I give it- I have no other choice - I give it an acute accent.' Paul Celan, 'The Meridian' in Pierre Joris, *Paul Celan Selections*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 157.

In saying it, a name inaugurates a waiting that goes to the encounter provisionally. Therefore, this name's character is provisional; it does not cancel what it names. It only indicates it. I will even say it only shows the route. So how does one name an artistic event if not employing provisions, errancies, and ab-errancies, which do not even exist in its name?<sup>131</sup>

Art happens only rarely. Art is an anomaly. Art inexists. There is an art that is what existing knowledge has established as such. This authorized existence, which names a complex and infinite set of practices under the name of art, exists. There are multiple worlds that belong to this set. These multiple practices are convened in their ordering by precise distinctions that allow them to exist within these determined worlds for their existence. The arts name this complex set of forms and procedures that generally concern a relation to the senses. Thus, music, theatre, visual arts, poetry, architecture, and other forms, which define their names with regard to the possibilities of transforming their appearances through the technologies that construct them, exist under the authority of the word art. There are ways of historicizing this constant happening of what art names. There is art, then. There is art in the world. There are worlds that, created through art, exist. My approach does not deny them. It would not dare to deny the existence of all these apparatuses of meaning that give effectively known existence to what is traditionally named art globally. A name that homogenizes different worlds, from the cave paintings passing through the now-disappeared Buddhas of Bāmiyān<sup>132</sup>, the small painting by Monet that

131 "The poem is lonely. It is lonely and *en route*. Its author stays with it. Does this very fact not place the poem already here, at its inception, in the encounter, *in the mystery of the encounter*?" Ibid. 164.

132 The Buddhas of Bāmiyān are two monumental Buddha statues carved in stone in Afghanistan, in the valley that gives them their name, in the central part of the

accidentally inaugurates the name of an entire artistic movement, the Afro-American sphinx of Kara Walker<sup>133</sup> or the boat trip of an artist who disappears and, it is presumed, dies in an attempt to find a miracle.<sup>134</sup>

country. The Buddhas, already a major tourist and religious attraction, became world-famous through the act of their 'erasure.' In 2001, the Taliban government, seeing these images as contrary to their interpretation of the Koran, ordered their destruction. The two Buddha statues were demolished by dynamite and tank fire. After the fall of the Taliban and the partial reconstruction of the country, the Afghan government, together with UNESCO and other international organizations, began a reconstruction process. Badiou himself comments on them in Book 1 of *Logiques des mondes* when he describes the dark subject, the one who not only rejects the truth and the event but destroys it: 'Des statues païennes martelées par les chrétiens aux Bouddhas géants canonnés par les Talibans, en passant par les autodafés nazis (contre l'art 'dégénéré') et -plus discrètement - la disparition dans les caves de ce qui n'est plus à la mode. Le sujet obscur est essentiellement iconoclaste.' Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, 82.

133 Kara Walker is an American artist whose work has explored race, gender, and historical issues. She is internationally recognized for her silhouette murals in which the figure of blackness is composed in reference to the image created by American history. A history marked by slavery and racial violence. One of his significant works, given the public and controversial reach it achieved, is *A Subtlety* (2014). Unlike Walker's silhouettes, this work was a large sugar sculpture erected in a former sugar factory in New York City. The piece was commissioned by Creative Time. Walker presented a giant black sphinx, which, like the Egyptian sphinx, features a female bust, in this case, with evident characterizations of African American imagery. In addition to her breasts, the sphinx has an enormous backside where her vagina is explicitly presented. This fact attracted a lateral phenomenon to Walker's work, which was the series of "selfies" taken by people in which they portrayed themselves touching the breasts and sex of the sculpture, generating a second reading that, in effect, updated what the very form of the work was already trying to portray. Walker was awarded a genius grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 1997. For more information on her work and, in particular, *A Subtlety*: <http://creativetime.org/projects/karawalker/>; Hilton Als, 'The Sugar Sphinx', *The New Yorker*, May 8, 2014, accessed August 12, 2021, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-sugar-sphinx>.

134 I refer to the work *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975) by the Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975). In this work, Bas Jan Ader "embarked on what he called 'a long

I affirm that a set of operations, artistic procedures, exist inex-istently, established in that threshold place of an abysmality. There is an art as the context of our worlds likes to define it. But there is also an art that, despite its belonging, demands itself at the edge of the void. This inexistent art eludes in its wandering the belonging to a meaning for the equal in the world and operates a fissure with no pre-determined destiny. That this condition of inexistence would imply a property of recognition superior to other modes of art and that these should, therefore, be identified as the true works of art is not the aim of my approach. The nomination, as inexistences, does not have the sense of granting any merit of qualification or gradation.

On the contrary, as inexistences, their emancipation effectively dislocates that sphere of qualification and valuation proper to the sense of the world we inhabit. If art apparently ceased to represent the sense of the world of those who govern it and survives despite the circumstances in which it exists, these works, these procedures to which I refer, have a common condition; if I could homogenize here to elucidate the objective, of fleeing, of wandering, in the double sense of their erring. They nomadize. A nomadism that is a categorical exile without return. An anabasis is an aberrant appearing-occurring.

boat trip (...), a daring attempt to cross the Atlantic in a 12½-foot sailboat. Bas Jan Ader claimed it would take him 60 days for the journey or 90 if he decided not to use the sail. Six months after his departure, his boat was found, semi-submerged off the coast of Ireland, but Bas Jan had disappeared.' <http://www.basjanader.com/>. In the documentary *Here is Always Somewhere Else: The Disappearance of Bas Jan Ader* (2007), Rene Daalder seeks to understand the work of his compatriot artist. <http://www.hereisalwayssomewhereelse.com/>. It is also possible to find the interview conducted with Mary Sue Andersen, Bas Jan Ader's widow, by director Soo Jin Jung for Patrick Painter Inc. 2010, <https://vimeo.com/11764389>.

What, then, is the paradigm concerning which we find ourselves? The conditions of this relation of contemporary art and those of history before its occurrence concerning the world have been dramatically altered by the conditions in which the world itself gives itself to itself. The Holocaust, in the heart of Europe, and the Atomic Bombs, in the peripheral distance of the new order of the world, profoundly hatch the sense and feel of the Westernized world. Each locality is cumulatively confronted in reference to the sequence of artifacts of worldliness, which then bestow a new scheme of ownership of that same world, its locality, and the abysmal spatiality that becomes it. The space and moonwalks ended up dynamiting the sense of distance. Technological proximity was so exponentially expanded by the productive economization of distributed control mechanisms that corporeality hardly felt the sensation of abnormality and disappearance first suffered through the subtle visual tools of photography and cinema. The fear of losing one's soul in front of the mirror first, then the camera, becomes the disarticulation of the subject in a repetitive identity that participates in the magma of individual fictionalization. The masses, that amorphous, undaunted fiction that visited the dreams of the productive and banking oligarchy of the early 20th century, on a par with the messianic feverishness of a non-decolonized left, has given way to the inoperative mass of apparent individualities that argue their sense of being in dispute and difference through the flagrant imitation of ready-made prototypes. The reigning hollowness amid existential mediatization operates as a negativity that settles the finitude of the species in its equalization. In her book *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop, commenting on the beginnings of avant-garde art that took place in political activity, reminds us of Walter Benjamin's indication that 'is precisely the political formation that allows people to participate in,

and enjoy, the spectacle of their own destruction.<sup>135</sup> In the text, there is a note to Benjamin's original sentence, '[Mankind's] alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.'<sup>136</sup>

Indeed, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, their instantaneous televised image provoked a global shock. The image of reality looked like a simulated image from a Hollywood game movie. Gradually, the violence in the image has come closer and closer to matching a possible accurate perception of that reality. It is not possible here to analyze this entire argument, but there indeed remains the opportunity to refer to, at least, three films in which there seems to be an inversion of the document's meaning as an instrument for measuring and maintaining the real. Each of them is different and their naming does not suppose a strict balance of them as a set. The first reference is to *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) by the English artist Jeremy Deller, in which the artist re-enacted, as a performance, and filmed, the last battle of the coal miners against the new policies of the Thatcher government. The film works as a place where it re-appears a loss. It is not a documentary film in the regular sense, because Deller also uses coal miners and police personal that participated in the actual 'battle.' The film appears then as a place where re-enaction is an embodiment technique of a memory traced in an antagonist collective; Joshua Oppenheimer's documentary *The Art of Killing* (2012) portrays people who participated in the torture and assassination squads perpetrated in Indonesia between 1965-66. The strangeness of the documentary is that it uncovers, in the account of

135 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells, Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. New York: Verso Books, 2012, 49.

136 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of the Mechanical Reproduction,' in *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969, 235.

the Indonesian government's hired killers, a profound relationship with fictionalization. The death squads, here represented by two of their participants, the 'gangsters' Anwar Congo and Adi Zulkadry, comment on how they constantly fantasized during the tortures and killings, going so far in the film as to perform re-enactments as if they were straight out of film noir. And finally, the American movie *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) by director Kathryn Bigelow. This 'fictional' film portrays the 'drama' of the US Marine SEAL group that killed Osama Bin Laden. The film featured, for the first time, at least for the American public, a scene of torture and waterboarding, which is a form of torture with water spread over a cloth or towel that completely covers the person's face, causing the experience of drowning. The US military systematically used such a technique in its prisons during the second Iraq war. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek has written about this film to underline the danger of this presentation of torture. For the philosopher, it is not about torture criticism, as the film director had argued in a letter to the American newspaper Los Angeles Times.<sup>137</sup> In this letter, Bigelow argues that the appearance of the torture scene was not intended to support such 'inhumane practices' but rather to expose them to the vast American public. What is at issue, and this is where Žižek sees the problem, is the film's potential normalization of torture. Without attacking the director, for Žižek, the problem is the apparent need today, particularly in and through cinema, to present us directly with the scene of torture, knowing in advance that it is not a real scene, and therefore mimesis that we can reach in the tranquility of our seat in the cinema. What is stipulated here is a psycho-economic transaction

137 Kathryn Bigelow, 'Kathryn Bigelow addresses 'Zero Dark Thirty' torture criticism.' Los Angeles Times, January 15, 2013, accessed March 12, 2021, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jan/15/entertainment/la-et-mn-0116-bigelow-zero-dark-thirty-20130116>.

that ends up thinning our 'natural' rejection of torture, and even more so, by its standard of reproduction, when it is exercised as state terrorism. In a television interview, Žižek argues again about this fact by comparing it to rape. Cinema's problem, in its intention to generate a healing 'shock,' is the normalization of the existence of such actions in their imaginary translation.<sup>138</sup> If the horrors of the Holocaust seemed to exemplify Hegel's visionary reading of the end of art, the end of that possibility of evidencing the occurrence of the world, an idea that is otherwise short of the effectiveness of what inexistent occurs in the local alternation of infinite worlds, the egalitarian experiential multiplicity of the system of capital, its own included expansion, its unusual derivation, its rhizomatic condition, has come to found in the heart of the art of images a rupture from which our proximity to temporality is abducted and blinds us.

It is not the question of what art is that can be summoned here. If it ever had any meaning, that question has been canceled by the poverty that destines it, the mere search for an occlusive meaning. This is not the prerogative, which would be absurd to assume.

So, what is being measured here? I am attempting to measure an artistic event. In an era inaugurated by the *end* of a war, an apparent end that only operated as the imaginary veil that has covered the sequence of subsequent wars, a period marked by the categorization of its form of meaning, the financial dictatorship, it is only possible to operate in, with, and as, the possibilities granted by specific mechanisms or devices of thought that these artistic practices provide. So, it is not about their status, the what-they-are or if-they-belong, but from themselves. What is sought is the measurement of this

138 Slavoj Žižek Videos, 'Slavoj Žižek (2014) on "ZERO DARK THIRTY"'. YouTube video, 11:33. Published on January 30, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B57bdj1xfQ0>.



affirmation that they found. To do this, to make this measurement, I have found a tool. This tool is the philosophical thinking of Alain Badiou. It is necessary to point out here the words of Hegel regarding the use of the tool and that which is the object of its application, already quoted by Martin Heidegger in his text on *Hegel's Concept of Experience*: 'For, if knowledge is the instrument to take hold of the absolute essence, one is immediately reminded that the application of an instrument to a thing does not leave the thing as it is, but brings about a shaping and alteration of it.'<sup>139</sup>

But how do we measure philosophically that which is thought other than philosophy? What must be the most effective tool to condition such a possible measurement of an elusive phenomenon like the one we referred to above? Indeed, every use of an instrument transforms models and abstracts what it establishes as its locality to be measured. There is art in the worlds. There are arts and their procedural forms. There are histories of art. However, some facts and procedures inexist. These inexistences compose an artistic configuration, of which the works referred to in this book are outstanding examples.

An anarchistory is composed of a multiplicity of abnormalities. The event is of the order of appearing. Being something abnormal, an event singularizes the situation, even if the situation does not count it. Thus, an artistic event is a differentiating historicization. Badiou distinguishes the event as occurring only at the abyss's edge. What is possible now is to increase the extravagance of this abysmal point, the composition of historicity emancipated from the State count-as-one, which names only for closure.<sup>140</sup> These abnormali-

139 Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, trans. Kenley Royce Dove. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970, 8.

140 'Il est rationnel de penser l'anormal, l'antinature, donc l'histoire, comme omniprésence de la singularité -tout comme nous avons pensé la nature comme

ties are the force forms, those procedural multiples that compose a multiple, which, in this abnormal case, we will call an artistic event. This unnamed-yet-undomiciled artistic event, which I affirm inexists, comprises subtractive procedures that compose a constellative historicity that exposes a space of infinite otherness. This artistic event is organized of infinite multiples that do not correspond only to the enumeration of singular works but rather to creative operations and procedures, which, part of the vital concept of art names, remain in a state of resistance and emancipation. Their condition, as operations, already removes them from the linear repetition harboring in recognition of works.

In Elie During's interview with Alain Badiou, 'Un teatro de la operación,' During asks about the status of the event in performance, and Badiou answered:

Performance is the chimera (the 'good' chimera, experimental and interesting) of 'showing' the event. This is the reason why it is centered on the body, which, lying and concentrated on its gestural and suffering potential, can simultaneously express the active dimension of the event, its dimension of shock, of violent surprise, and its passive reception, the effect of subjective transfiguration, the pathos that the event can induce. (...) It is in the essence of the event to be at once that which bursts in and does not exist and only organizes the themes in the form of traces that are immediately misread. The performance is situated exactly between the active force of what

omniprésence de la normalité. La forme-multiple de l'historicité est ce qui est entièrement dans l'instable du singulier, ce sur quoi la métastructure étatique n'a pas de prise. C'est un point de soustraction à la réassurance du compte par l'état. J'appellerai *site événementiel* un tel multiple totalement a-normal, c'est-à-dire tel qu'aucun de ses éléments n'est présenté dans la situation.' Alain Badiou, *L'être et l'Événement*, 194-195.

emerges and its enigmatic dissemination. Hence, often, the inclusion in performance, as in contemporary dance, of abrupt changes of speed, or chaining together, so to speak, of rawness and vanished tenderness, as if they were one and the same thing. (...) In this sense, the difference between performance and dance is that dance is a mimetic exhibition of the event, an abstraction, and performance tries to be rather a pure reality, indiscernible, tendentially, from any becoming. There, we find Duchamp and his structural doubt between an obvious irony and something serious and exemplary, between the height of the ordinary and the height of sophistication, as if they were once again one and the same thing.<sup>141</sup>

What is Performance? What is action art? In her book *Czech Action Art, Happenings, actions, events, Land Art, Body Art and Performance Art Behind the Iron Curtain*, Czech art historian Pavlína Morganová states:

It is worth mentioning that the term 'action' has a slightly difference meaning from the commonly used term 'performance.' The primary meaning of 'action' is the process of doing, while 'performance' means a kind of presentation. An action can be carried out without witnesses but also before an audience. (...) Performance art is usually perceived as a specific stream of Western conceptual art as RoseLee Goldberg, in particular, has formulated in her books.<sup>142</sup>

141 Elie During and Alain Badiou, 'Un teatro de la operación. Entrevista de Elie During con Alain Badiou', in *Un teatro sin teatro*. Barcelona: Museo d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and Museu Colecção Berardo Arte Moderna e Contemporânea, 2007, 26. My translation from the Spanish publication.

142 Pavlína Morganová, *Czech Action Art, Happenings, actions, events, land art, body art and performance art behind the iron curtain*. Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2014, 17-18.

Being my first artistic and pedagogical context, the environment of the Art School of the University of Chile in Santiago, and the conceptual tradition developed in Latin America during the '70s and '80s, with particular emphasis on what in Chile was called *La Escena de Avanzada*, it was evident to me that the notion of 'art action' was used before the internationally accepted 'performance.' The Escena de Avanzada was the collective of artistic practices and forms that, immediately after the coup d'état in Chile, were produced not only as a discursive response to the political situation in the country but also as a materially effective instance of resistance to this repressive condition. The artists Carlos Leppe, Eugenio Dittborn, Carlos Altamirano, and the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA), made up of Raúl Zurita, Diamela Eltit, Fernando Balcells, Lotty Rosenfeld, and Juan Castillo, are generally considered to be part of this artistic scene. Later, art theoretician Nelly Richard would also include other artists such as Gonzalo Díaz, Francisco Brugnoli, Arturo Duclos, and Juan Domingo Dávila. Nelly Richard defined the *Escena de Avanzada* in her book *Márgenes e Instituciones* published originally in 1986 and republished in 2007. In the document created for the seminar *Arte en Chile Desde 1973. Escena de Avanzada y Sociedad*, Richard wrote: 'The movement of works on which this text reflects belongs to the unofficial field of Chilean artistic production under the military regime. That field is referred to here in one of its many dimensions: the shaping of a so-called 'avant-garde' scene, which has been characterized by its extreme questioning of the meaning of art and the conditions-limits of its practice within the framework of a strongly repressive society. For having dared to bet on creativity as a disruptive force of the order administered in language by the figures of authority and their grammars of power'. In the exact text, in note 1, Richard explains: '1/ This designation is primarily operational; it has allowed us, during all these years in Chile, to name

the work of creators committed to reformulating the mechanics of artistic production and creative language, within the framework of a counter-institutional practice. The contours of this scene are here very fragmentarily indicated: the partial textual or photographic mentions of the works chosen obviously do not pretend to exhaust either the meaning of these works or the completeness of the scene they share with many other works of interest. In the same way, the functioning of this scene includes many other considerations beyond those covered here. The text only includes some of the lines of force that best tighten its field of production: the intervention of the social body and its notion of temporality-occurrence, the interweaving of disciplinary frameworks and the blurring of genres, the practice of the body as a transcoding vehicle for marginal experiments, etc. It has been decided to keep the term 'Avanzada' in Spanish in order to avoid confusion or misunderstandings that would imply the nostalgic connotations of its translation as 'avant-garde'.<sup>143</sup>

Returning to the idea of 'action' allowed me not only to recompose a way of saying, of naming, what had been left unnamed in order to cancel it in a more significant and influential flow of meaning, but this naming as 'action' also allowed me to operate ostensibly emancipated from the particular closures presented by the use of the word performance.

The American performance theorist Peggy Phelan opens chapter 7 of her book *Unmarked, The Politics of Performance*, stating: 'Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes some-

143 Nelly Richard, 'Sección I, Introducción' in *Arte en Chile Desde 1973. Escena de Avanzada y Sociedad* in *Seminario Programa-Flacso* journal. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, no. 45 (January 1987): 1-13, accessed July 10, 2021, <http://flacsochile.org/biblioteca/pub/memoria/1987/000332.pdf>.

thing other than performance.<sup>144</sup> It is here, Phelan points out, that the ontological definition of performance is at stake. An ephemeral form does not resist and only inhabits a temporality instituted in its own moment of occurrence. It would be that happening of itself that only lasts in the very instantaneity in which it unfolds in its giving itself to existence. Following Phelan in this case, this constitutive conditionality of performance makes it politically radical. Faced with the increasing participation of artistic production in the context of an institutional and institutionalizing over-industrialization, which protects and legitimizes it both culturally and politically, but above all economically, the realization of performance, its way of being appearing, immediately pushes it to the outer margins of that which defines the obtaining of a mere commodity. In the first moment, performance appears as art that flees from its transactional reification. In her statement, Phelan radicalizes this point by saying that ‘when it does so,’ that is when performance participates in ‘the circulation of representations of representations,’ which is ‘being saved, recorded or documented,’ it ‘betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology.’ This axiomatic prescription that defines the being of performance composes it as a becoming to be through disappearance. That is to say, for Phelan, in all circumstances, when performance enters into that mediation and participation, it ceases to be performance and ceases to be what it is. It can even imitate itself, look like a performance, but not be. If the time of performance is that time of the present, and only that present which inaugurates the very existence of the being-in-itself of performance as such, the annulment of any means for its ‘persistence in time’ would only

144 Peggy Phelan, “The Ontology of performance: representation without reproduction” in *Unmarked, the politics of performance*. London: Routledge, 1993, 146.

produce the negation of that performance. The reproduction of performance would produce the loss of its exact condition, the loss of what makes it be.

Here, the echo of the notion of *aura* inaugurated by Benjamin's thought is deafening. If the reproductive capture of performance is realized, what happens in concrete terms is the negation of that performance. The mediation of performance negates it. The being of performance is insofar as and through disappearance. What is it then to disappear? It will not cease to exist, at least not in its most specific sense. That which disappears is something that is no longer there but has been. We can say something about that which has vanished because there has been complete, albeit instantaneous, existence, which has ceased to be present. There is a testimony of it which, unlike reproduction, indicates the disappearance of its existence. Therefore, to grant that disappearance to a reference that gives it meaning, there is an affirmation after that succeeding existence. A subsequent discourse provides a deferred account of the fact that the disappearance had indeed occurred. This condition is very close to what defines the event in Badiou's philosophy.

Disappearance is not a loss in the sense of death or closed finitude. On the contrary, the disappearance of what is known to have existed fissures every present still to come. It remains. How can the disappeared seal the destiny of what is to come by its inexistence? 'Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated,' says Phelan. By appearing in its own locality, inaugurated by its own form, this form of emerging, which is unprecedented and sudden, once consumed in its being there, disappears, ceases to be, ceases to be felt, seen, is no longer there for perception. In that place following its appearance, in the immediate now of its subsequent occurrence, at that moment of disappearance, that form inaugurates a temporality of disappearance, which would not be a temporality of

presence but of effective absence. What do I mean here by effective absence? What signals an effective absence is an insistence in the presentation of a lack. It is an indication of its disappearance. This indication of the disappearance makes this unheard temporality of the performance spacing towards a time to come.

For Phelan, ‘the disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance.’<sup>145</sup> Without the disappearance of whatever the performance has been, whatever its singular form of appearing if it does not disappear, it does not exist as a performance either. It is an operation of a-objectification. Performance flees from this possible reification in mediation. It will be something that if it remains a document, no doubt, but not something under the performance legislation. Of course, Phelan recognizes the existence of these modes of documentation. Historically, performance occurs in a context in which its own ontology depends on the technological context. I could advance here the idea that performance only exists as such, is defined as such, being for the disappearance and art of the pure present, only because there are new ways and means of sustaining this ephemeral conditionality in historicity: ‘The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present.’<sup>146</sup> Indeed, it is undoubtedly in this last sense, which relates the prescriptive ontology of performance to the document, modes of documentation, and memory, that performance here develops a programmatic alliance more directed to political action than to theatre:

Performance in a strict ontological sense is nonreproductive. It is this quality which makes performance the runt of the litter of con-

145 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked, the politics of performance*, 147.

146 *Ibid.* 147.



temporary art. Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital. Perhaps nowhere was the affinity between the ideology of capitalism and art made more manifest than in the debates about the funding policies for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).<sup>2</sup> Targeting both photography and performance art, conservative politicians sought to prevent endorsing the “real” bodies implicated and made visible by these art forms.<sup>147</sup>

Performance does not produce. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*<sup>148</sup>, written by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s, directly referenceso the problems posed to the work of art by the possibility of its infinite and massive reproduction through the new media. In Benjamin’s thesis, what the artwork loses in the face of this possibility of reproduction is its ‘aura’: ‘That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.’<sup>149</sup> Although Walter Benjamin does not appear in the bibliography of Phelan’s book, his presence can be sensed throughout the text. For Benjamin, explicitly, the reproduction technique detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. In Benjamin, the authenticity of the thing is the ‘essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to history, which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on authenticity, the latter is also threatened by reproduction when its substantive duration ceases to matter.’<sup>150</sup>

147 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked, the politics of performance*, 148.

148 Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ in *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2007, 217-251.

149 Ibid. 221.

150 ‘In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Manmade artifacts could

In Phelan, the non-reproducibility of performance as an axiom of its being allows it to condition the force of action itself as resistance to the 'machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital.' The essence of performance is its dislocation from the logic of capital and the derived forms of representation of capital itself. Performance is made by bodies. Bodies of those who decide to call for its realization in and through the device of their bodies. The presence of bodies is the first state in which performance appears. Before the action of the bodies, once the performance has been realized, nothing else exists. 'There are no remains,' Phelan states, and the spectator's gaze must try to contain all it has seen. Containing here means resisting oblivion, a disappearance defined as perpetual by the logic it seeks to avoid. It is clear here the political motivation that nestles in the ontological proposal of Phelan's performance. The performance inaugurates a performative political time that expands in a form whose force now resides in a repetition transited in the corporeality of others.

always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity. The Greeks knew only two procedures of technically reproducing works of art: founding and stamping. Bronzes, terra cottas, and coins were the only art works which they could produce in quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced. With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproducible for the first time, long before script became reproducible by print. The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. However, within the phenomenon which we are here examining from the perspective of world history, print is merely a special, though particularly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth century lithography made its appearance.' Ibid. 218-219.

# Anarkhistories

What is anarkhistory? Anarkhistory is a concept of forcing, a doubling that makes it possible, in its excess, to indispose an operational hinge. First, this concept derives from the idea of anarchitecture coined by the American artist Gordon Matta-Clark: 'Anarchitecture was about making space without building it.' The concept of anarchitecture became central to Matta-Clark's architectural-artistic practice. However, the idea appears to have been coined amid ongoing debates by a group of visual artists.

In 1973, Gordon Matta-Clark, George Trakas, Richard Nonas, Suzanne Harris, Richard Landry, Tina Girouard, Jeffrey Lew, Bernard Kirschenbaum, Laurie Anderson, Susan Weil, and Jean Dupuy formed in New York the collective called *Anarchitecture*, a group devoid of any formal commitment that unites the concepts of anarchy and architecture. They proposed a radical exploration of forgotten or neglected spaces in the urban environment, exploring dimension, location, and architectural metaphor. They created metaphorical avenues to highlight architecture's functional aspect, intervening residual spaces and undeveloped places that interrupted the movements of everyday life. They discussed the ambiguous character of space and reflected on the transitional or transpositional in anarchitectural practice. Matta-Clark noted that their reflections were not limited to architecture problems per se but were intended to investigate the idea of places outside architecture, without architecture, or extra-architectural. It was necessary to work against the building and the design because Anarchitecture did not try to solve any problem. This is meant to signify the paradoxical machinic function that Matta-Clark considered the practice of anarchitecture to be. The lack of construction of anarchitecture aims to unveil the spatial generation sphere not derived from production. Anarchi-

ecture is an operation of thought on spatiality and temporality. In spaciness lies its unstable construction. Anarchitecture is a mode of physical reflection on questioning and practicing this physical reasoning. Anarchitecture is gestural thinking, in movement, networking with the environment within which it appears.<sup>151</sup>

The second concept that nourishes the idea of anarkhistory is the notion of ‘anarchist history’ that the American anthropologist James C. Scott develops through his book *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Scott states:

The huge literature on state-making, contemporary and historic, pays virtually no attention to its obverse: the history of deliberate and reactive statelessness. This is the history of those who got away, and state-making cannot be understood apart from it. This is also what makes this an anarchist history.<sup>152</sup>

151 ‘Those listed as participants in the Anarchitecture Group in 112 Greene Street Workshop, the book that is the best record we have of what went on at Jeffrey Lew’s artist-run space, were Laurie Anderson, Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Bernard Kirschenbaum, Richard Landry, Gordon Matta-Clark and Richard Nonas. This loose grouping, that included artists, musicians, and dancers and even, in Bernard Kirschenbaum, an experienced architect, met over the period of around a year. Attendance, location, and timings varied; membership was informal. The origin of the word Anarchitecture itself equally evades pinning down. While those who attended the meetings have generally attributed it to Matta-Clark, surviving participants also sometimes remember it as having been arrived at collectively; a combination of ‘anarchy’ and ‘architecture’ stumbled across through group discussion. Whatever its origin, the term Anarchitecture, expressing as it does a creative tension between Apollonian and Dionysian opposites, has come to summarize many of the concerns explored by Matta-Clark during his brief career.’ James Attlee, “Towards Anarchitecture: Gordon Matta-Clark and Le Corbusier,” in *Tate Papers*, Tate’s Online Research Journal, Spring 2007, 3. Accessed June 12, 2021, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7297>.

152 James C. Scott, *The Art of not being governed, Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2009), x.

For Scott, an anarchist history considers the history of all those who abandon participation in the state's production and the history of the actions and strategies that create those who walk away to stay away from the state effectively.

James C. Scott has summarised these forms and strategies of repelling the state in four broad characteristics that would be repeated in anti-state societies:

1. Physically mobile societies are widely dispersed and can merge into new and smaller units.
2. Plastic subsistence routines, meaning the adoption of autonomous and versatile forms of subsistence that allow for self-sufficiency.
3. Societies with a highly egalitarian social structure that reject all types of hierarchical production.
4. Territorial distance from the centers of power, or what can be translated from Scott's work as 'terrain friction remoteness,' aims to locate territories that are difficult to access for state machinery (i.e., armies, tax collectors, and forms of passive agriculture).

Scott calls this accumulation of techniques and procedures of life through which an individual or a group can flee from the state's arms the art of not being governed. This flight, a way of existing away from the state, forms an anarchist history, divergent historicity from the state.

Along with Badiou, anarkhistory is the historicization of the in-existent.<sup>153</sup> The history of those who 'make space without constructing it.' Therefore, an anarkhistory of action is the historicity of the strategies and procedures that make up spaces, trajectories, infinite

153 Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul, La fondation de l'universalisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, 93.

sets, and emancipatory forms of happening, which through them is possible to establish an escape, a distancing from the administration of the state. An anarkhistory would then frame that which has no name because it gets outside of the counting and the legislation of the existent. It would form sets of procedures without a proper name, within unstable forms, invisible to the structures of intelligibility at work.

For Scott, this anarchist history occurs in and through practices and strategies happening at the everyday level in an infrapolitical way.<sup>154</sup> What is infrapolitical? A form of politics that does not refer to representational forms of the political. Scott gives an example of the activity known as ‘poaching,’ the illegal hunting within the state- or class-owned territories. Scott asks whether it is possible to think of all these small actions as a single set of forms of subversion to the ongoing system. Scott argues that this action, poaching, is an ordinary weapon, a weapon of the weak, as he refers, which is active and effective at the infra-political level. These are forms of struggle against private property at the everyday level. In a certain way, the operative invisibility that the actions compose each other randomly breaks into the space of state stability, crafting unconstructed areas of emancipation. A contemporary example of such activities, within the margins of state authority, is the action known as ‘cacerolazo.’ The cacerolazo is a form of protest through the rhythmic banging of some kitchen material. Its name comes directly from the objects used, generally kitchen utensils such as pots, pans, or frying pans. The aim is to make clear the existence of a disagreement or annoyance on the part of a social group, generally against the ruling class or regime. The appearance of this action can be spontaneous or

154 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1990, 183-201.

concerted. But this concertation has taken place through irregular and subterranean forms of communication. During the Chilean dictatorship, these acts were carried out in a concerted manner, usually by word of mouth-, sometimes reaching large parts of the city. The aim of that action was, and still is, to make discontent visible without directly exposing bodies to state violence.

If political action consists essentially in making existent that which seemed inexistent in any given order, if it consists in occupying space and transforming fixed laws by instituting others, what is the power of inexistent actions whose character appears to occur in the figure of the infrapolitical? The inexistent multiplies. As such, inexistent, subtractive, these actions emerge without exercising authority conditions. They suspend all power at the moment of their own occurrence. These actions are not utopian islands. On the contrary, they must be seen as effective spacings of anomie. Here, I will discuss another gestural case in the work of the Czech artist Jiří Kovanda.

In the case of Czech artist Jiří Kovanda (1953, Prague, Czech Republic), his actions were not directly confronting the regime. His actions were effective performative anarchitectures, undermining the visibility of the regime's symbolic capital and directly to its core. Unseen, Kovanda's actions avoided direct confrontation. His actions occurred inexistent to the state. Refusing to develop any spectacular declaration, which would only recompose and reaffirm the dialectical landscape between negation-destruction between power and powerlessness, Kovanda's actions remained placeless, nameless, at a point of evanescence, within a permanent disappearing. The subversive exercise here appears without presence, evading determination, in the act of absolute renunciation. By this, I do not mean that infrapolitical actions are, or have been, the only effective means of undermining the state. Any effective change in the political

arena needs an overt, defiant, norm-breaking act. But it is important to expose that political struggle does not happen only in the open space of public demonstration but also remains through thousands of micro-acts of resistance and emancipation, exercising the infinite capacity of infrapolitical actions, concerted or not. This has been the case with mass acts of desertion, the multitudinous invisible body of a cacerolazo, as mentioned above, or through the private exchange of political jokes. These infrapolitical actions work as a cumulative force that eventually exposes a critical space and allows the formation of an opportunity for a direct challenge to the skin of the state.

Kovanda produced most of his now widely recognized works during what has been called the 'Normalization period' in former Czechoslovakia. This period began after the Warsaw Pact armies' invasion and during Gustav Husák's regime. This period was characterized by political repression and the country's restoration towards the Soviet bloc. In the abovementioned book, art historian Pavlina Morganová writes, 'Kovanda's gestures are directly related to the situation of normalization.' In *Untitled, 1976*, Kovanda set himself up in the street in the center of Prague and stretched out his arms in a crucified position. Leaving, or precisely seeking to interrupt the passage of passers-by who bumped into him or avoided him, but who had, if only for an instant, to become aware of the existence of the man he set up there, a body that is interrupting the passing of everyday life, interrupting normality.

Morganová states:

His position 'of being crucified' expresses that which many of his generation (not only artists) were deprived of by the totalitarian regime, though there is also something in him determined to preserve his identity despite the warped conditions. This performance was not merely an affront on those simply walking past, an attempt



to bridge the anonymity of the city and break down the barrier that each carries.<sup>155</sup>

Kovanda performs a blurred, absolutely disseminated act in an even more critical action. Only the subsequent indication, suspended in the precarious form of three photographs, can we access its occurrence.

In November 1976, in Wenceslas Square in Prague, Jiri Kovanda performed a piece called *Theatre, following a previously written script to the letter*. Gestures and movements have been selected so the passer-by does not suspect he is watching a performance. Kovanda has commented that his actions consisted of ‘doing something invisible, something completely unnecessary. Something that can be done normally, which can happen all the time, in a normal way’. In an interview, Kovanda comments that his artistic activity could have a transformative role in society, but only indirectly.<sup>156</sup> His statement could be reinscribed as follows: his artwork produces change at a level of inexistence, invisible to the frameworks of intelligibility established by those in power.

Kovanda’s work has generally been divided into three periods: the first period explicitly dedicated to physical actions, with his body produced in public and private spaces (1976-1979). A second period where he concentrates on interventions and objects (1980-1989), and a third period, which has come to amalgamate a particular installation practice but maintains its center in a performative understanding of artistic production and reflection.

155 Pavlína Morganová, *Czech Action Art, Happenings, actions, events, land art, body art and performance art behind the iron curtain*. Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2014, 183-184.

156 Luis Guerra, ‘Jiri Kovanda Hacer Arte con nada’, *Script #10* (2010), <http://clubscript.blogspot.com.es/>

In the case of the work *Teatro....* (1976), it was a public action, the conformation of a performative device that, in its own definition, considers its own inadvertence as a form of its appearance. Disappearance and inadvertence are not granted by the lack of its becoming but by the effective proximity of the action to the everyday acts of anyone. Kovanda's founding indistinction act, the character of imperceptibility and sameness the actions have, apparent mimeries forcing a supplement, subtract them from the institutional space, as a dislocated anteriority inconsistent with that in which it is inscribed. In this sense, the name of the work, an explicit statement of its being as theatre, only reaffirms its own performative composition as a supplement, excess, mark, and trace of everyday life in and within the public space inaugurated by the regime. Everything that happens as normality is already the fiction of potential normality, with no possible recovery. All 'human' gestures do nothing but represent, theatricalizing the normal in a double that multiplies itself as an affirmation of its own destiny. Kovanda's work folds itself into loss on the surface of a simulation. What is it then that Kovanda's work undermines? Nobody really sees or perceives the work. In its instant of being there, without distinction, its appearing is like everything that disappears immediately.

So, what does this work do? This work does nothing for the intelligible as such from the State apparatus. The play does not undermine power in a direct confrontation, denouncing its excesses or the effective repression that bodies experience. It doubles the spectacle in which all familiar gestures of an individual within the given state of things are daily inoculated. What is uncanny here lies in this conditionality of the imperceptible summoned, the blatant staging of what has been constituted and considered ordinary reality. It is an abrupt and ugly constructed familiarity deflated by an equal gesture. In its sameness, it provokes irruption in proximity to the

ready-made apparatus. In this sense, Kovanda's work, the set of strategies it composes, occurs at the level of an infrapolitics of the in-existent. The subversive exercise here is one of absolute subtraction that does not mediate as a lack but as an imperceptible excess. Unsteadily, the anarchitecture of Kovanda's work deactivates repression by means of an empty signifier, an evanescent term that flees as soon as it happens.

What is the form, or where does Kovanda's work lie? I contend that the subsequent exhibition and the narrative that carries the artwork are not the artwork. The ontology of its posteriority operates only as an indication without afflicting the ontology of what has disappeared. The documentation works as a supplement, testimony to the existence of the work as a material fidelity of it. In this sense, form is the force of its own happening in the disappearance. The work flees from itself. And this spacing generates a contingent, abysmal derivation.

In the documentary, *Calle Santa Fe* (2007), Chilean filmmaker Carmen Castillo<sup>157</sup> narrates her process of returning to the Chile of today. Carmen Castillo is a historical figure from recent Chilean times. She was a militant of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR).<sup>158</sup> After the coup, the military repression against

157 Carmen Castillo (Santiago, Chile, 1945) is a Chilean-born and French citizen filmmaker and scriptwriter. She was expelled by the Military Junta after the assassination of her partner and General Secretary of the MIR, Miguel Henríquez. Since then, she has become an international figure supporting the political struggle in Chile. Castillo's work has been internationally recognized.

158 The Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) was a political movement founded in 1965. As stated in the Declaration of Principles of the MIR, a document of August 15, 1965: 'The MIR is organized to be the Marxist-Leninist vanguard of the working class and oppressed strata of Chile seeking national and social emancipation.' <http://www.mir-chile.cl/>. (Accessed October 14, 2016). A fundamental element of MIR was its *Insurreccional Thesis*, namely the practical need for the organization of defense and the direct struggle of the workers and

all left-wing political forces and supporters of Salvador Allende's government was violently executed. This repression left a trail of deaths through executions without trial, mass imprisonment in concentration camps, forced disappearances, and thousands being tortured. As an armed political force, the MIR developed an immediate policy of resistance to the military dictatorship. In 1973, Castillo was the companion of Miguel Enríquez, Secretary General of the MIR.

Miguel Enríquez died in a confrontation with the military forces on October 5, 1974. The street where this event occurred had a paradoxical name: *Santa Fe* (Holy Faith). Carmen Castillo was arrested that day while pregnant. Only through a series of acts that we can call infrapolitical and the sequence of bodies that protected her in conditions of total fragility and subtlety, as well as complex political negotiations with the military regime, was she able to go into exile. *Calle Santa Fe* is the documentary in which Carmen Castillo recounts this return, a return to where the events I have just described took place, and a return to the site that was Chile then. To a Chile of her

peasants against the ruling classes. After the 1967 Congress, where Miguel Enríquez, Luciano Cruz, and Bautista van Schouwen took over the party's leadership, there was an internal split in the MIR, with the Trotskyist and anarcho-syndicalist factions leaving the party in 1969. With the election of Salvador Allende by the Unidad Popular in 1970, the MIR ceased to be persecuted. It began a process of political organization, particularly on three social fronts: the urban workers in the industrial areas, the peasantry, and the university students. After the coup d'état, the MIR decided not to go into exile and to maintain armed resistance to the dictatorship in Chile. However, the military state apparatus annihilated the MIR. Since then, the MIR has experienced a diminished militant presence in the current democratic-parliamentary conditions. However, it has consistently initiated a new process of alliances that has allowed it to participate politically in various social strata, such as within the Federation of Students of the University of Chile.

memory, now 'occupied' by the Chile of today. In this documentary film, I find an actual example of what the concept of infrapolitics refers to as inexistent political action. The documentary shows a scene in which Carmen and her mother meet a group of women from Población La Victoria. La Población La Victoria is in itself a monument to popular creation.

The land seizure occurred on October 30, 1957, when 1200 families settled, forcing the government of the time to cede the land. The streets of the Población were named symbolically, constituting in itself a kind of philosophical-historical reservoir: 'Carlos Marx' street, or 'Cardenal Caro' (a member of the clergy who participated and interceded in the process of land cessions by the government of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo), 'Mártires de Chicago' street (named in honor of the executed American workers who gave rise to the celebration of International Workers' Day), etc. During the military dictatorship (1973-1989), La Victoria was a center of civil, social, and political resistance. The singer-songwriter Víctor Jara, assassinated by the dictatorship on September 16, 1973, released an album in 1972 called *La Población*. The inhabitants of La Victoria plotted the land themselves and built the fragile houses with their own means: 'We had to decide to go to the *toma*, to hell with legality and bureaucratic procedures,' said Guillermina Farías. But it was not easy to conquer that piece of land. To build what is now one of Chile's emblematic settlements, the settlers had to face police repression and several blockades during which they were not allowed to bring in building materials, shelter, food, medicine, or water. As a result of this and the deplorable conditions in which they were living, many older people and babies died. Rosa Lagos recalls in *Memorias de La Victoria*: 'When many little girls died, the whole *Toma* went to the funeral. We walked from here to the cemetery. I do not know why there are no photographs of all these things so

that people now understand the suffering and can appreciate the value of the place they are walking on because this land was won with effort, sweat, and tears.<sup>159</sup>

In the conversation with Carmen Castillo, the women explain their strategies during that dark period. In the mid-1980s, Pinochet's dictatorship was faced with internal chaos caused by political isolationism and the violent economic measures carried out under the Chicago School's free-market ideology. Given the insufficiency and lack of food and work, the civilian population, primarily marginalized in Chile's big cities, began to mobilize spontaneously. In the interview, the settlers commented that, during the days of protest, they developed unprecedented strategies to avoid the entry of the repressive police. Among those that they highlight in the interview is the account of an occasion in which, faced with the imminent entry of the police and the subsequent possible arrest or shooting of the population, the streets of La Victoria were occupied by women and children with soccer balls, simply playing, producing total confusion among the forces of repression. Once the police withdrew, the soccer balls disappeared, and 'the war was on again,' as they commented. This is a compelling example of a weapon of the weak, as anthropologist James C. Scott proposed. This is not only because it is a distraction tactic but also because this strategy is constituted from within the fabric of everyday life in the community where it is hosted. In this case, football is a means of resistance. The strategic 'weapon' here is a daily activity transformed into a tactic of dissuasion and confusion. But it could not have been thought of without having been part of the constitutive practice of that social group. Such experiences are infrapolitical because they form sur-

159 Alex Cortés Morales, 'El Nacimiento de la población La Victoria,' Accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=94867>.

faces that accumulate these experiences, which remain nameless, referable only through the emerging narrative in a conversation that recalls their existence. It is now well recognized that, without this enormous number of invisible actions imperceptible to the great historical discourse carried out by thousands of bodies directly in the streets, the changes that occurred would not have happened. The dictatorship was effectively challenged and disobeyed in each of these microscopic acts.

## The Undomiciled

Odradek is the character in Franz Kafka's short story, *Die Sorge des Hausvaters*.<sup>160</sup>

Who is, or rather, what is Odradek? The answer can be given by means of vague intratextual references, i.e., intramundane to the world of the text itself, or it can be delivered in a general and somewhat light-hearted way concerning imagination or fantasies as human tools. What is certain is that Odradek is a fictitious entity. It is fictitious because it exists in the world of a story, created entirely by a human animal that lived in a certain period and inhabited a specific space. To refer to the reality of the creative entity, in this case, Franz Kafka, in order to delve into the ontology of the Odradek entity, is an open possibility and could achieve specific results. It is not the subject of the present text to indulge in this orthopedic climate of meaning. In opposition to it, my aim is the innovative treatment produced from the very figuration of Odradek. Its actual

160 Franz Kafka, The Cares of a Family Man, in *The Complete Stories*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken Books, 1971, 427-429.

existence in its world. Let us suppose, for example, that, from a hallucination, Kafka thought he saw in his basement, or in the basement of a friend, a shadow, a figure, a monster that spoke to him. Alternatively, one possibility among many is that he heard the fantastic story of a person who one day found a 'shape-object' in front of him/her and had a dialogue with it. In both cases, none of these possible concrete experiences accounts for the condition inaugurated by Odradek, who breathes eternally in the narrative. There, in this appeared world, the world of the fairy tale lives and breathes, repeatedly, in absent eternity, the unrecognizable figure of this entity, who, when asked about its being, answers with the sound that sounds like Odradek. This, then, Odradek, exists there and in that world. Its existence is dependent on the existence of the worldly integrity of its context. However, Odradek, who is not recognized within the established edges of meaning, complexifies its abnormality through the description that is made, that is, given, of its form. In the assemblage of its world, which is the story, there is a correlative description of its shape. Odradek has a form that does not belong to the animal world, the plant world, or the mineral kingdom. It does not seem to be a constituent of any realm of the animate. Instead, it appears to be a living inanimate, i.e., a form afflicted by an anima. In the text, which is its world, or at least, we can now stipulate, a world that can be defined as our only window into its world, of which we know nothing and can never know anything, Odradek figures unsteadily. The description is the following:

At first glance it looks like a flat star-shaped spool for thread, and indeed it does seem to have thread wound upon it; to be sure, they are only old, broken-off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colors. But it is not only a spool, for a small wooden crossbar sticks out of the middle of the star, and



another small rod on one side and one of the points of the star on the other, the whole thing can stand upright as if on two legs.<sup>161</sup>

It looks like a piece of furniture entangled by the invariance of its trajectory. Yet, perhaps because of Kafka's own failure to translate the idea for us, or as a momentary trap to account for the modes of consciousness, as if the Father of the family were an analytical philosopher, we are told near the end: 'the whole can stand as if on two legs.' This vagueness of correlation hardly allows us to understand what Odradek is. In this case, I will dwell on an ephemeral condition that, I judge, operates transcendently on its whole world: we have, from the story, the certainty that Odradek engages in a conversation. At least for the narrator, we assume this interrelation, this communicative exchange, existed.

Beyond the strangeness of its form, an uncanniness validated in the transcendental of the human-Western world, Odradek responds reliably to the concrete and ontological questions posed to it. Odradek not only answers but, through its answers, gives an account of its understanding of human speech, indeed, of the German language at the beginning of the 20th century. Odradek understands the words, the argument of the question, and the reference they impose, and in this respect, cordially, as far as we know, it answers them. Moreover, it answers all those questions. To the first, authoritative one, which seeks to understand its worldly determination immediately, from the name, the entity responds Odradek. The original justification for this primary question is the supposed kindness implied by the Father of the Family. Seeing Odradek's size relative to

161 Franz Kafka, 'The Cares of a Family Man,' in *The Complete Stories*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken Books, 1971, 428.

his erect human figure, the Father speaks to it 'as if he were a child.' As a child, Odradek is asked 'easy' questions, like its name. 'Well, what's your name?' Odradek, the entity, answers with the sound Odradek, which will always be the name that finds the entity's ontology. Secondly, the question is rather impertinent: 'Where do you live?' to which, almost like an excellent illegal entity, because it is not part of the normalized world of the Western-analytical-philosophy, Odradek answers, with no small amount of derision: 'No fixed abode' or, rather, undomiciled. No address, no specific place of reference. After answering, we are notified that Odradek 'laughs.'<sup>162</sup>

There are then three data of the existence, the intelligible localization, of this entity: 1) that of its form, defined by the adjusted world of the synthetic correlation of the Father; 2) its name, or rather the sound that follows the question of the name; and 3) its condition of undomiciled. These three pieces of information give a certainty, for what is presented as Law, of the creature's existence as anomalous. Nevertheless, outside these data of subjection, what is recognized in Odradek's declaration is insubordination, an insurrection. Suppose Odradek comes into existence as an unusual excess, of which there is no way of apprehension except and only through the same rules in which the state maintains its own becoming of meaning. In that case, Odradek is that which, not being possible to obtain for a pre-established world or worlds, happens as pure difference. Odradek is the Other. As Other, it can enter a relational circuit with that which defines itself as a rule. However, such condescension towards the Law does not speak of its stay as diagonal. Odradek is a subtraction. Odradek flees subtractively from the imaginary homogeneity of the Law. Odradek breaks the fiction of a performativity that dominates the mundane. Its becom-

162 Ibid. 428.

ing, this being in flight, is not only a trajectory shaped externally to Odradek's body, to what we identify here as the cut-out closure of its figure, but it is composed in part of that infinity that as a whole makes its appearing composable, that is, the trajectorial oscillation. The hollowness thus understood, not as an intuitive projection of a front of the path, but as the plane of oscillation belonging to the entity, Odradek itself being its movement, is a tendency of an infinity. Its anomaly is this otherness, not as a repetitive sameness, annulled in its dialectical operation, but by a there that overflows the event. In this hollowness, which gives way to Odradek's operative activity, its 'abandonment' of the certain, the veridical demonstrable, Odradek suspends itself in order to bend on a plane of infinity, and its form takes here the shape of a force-form.

Trajectorial, its location availability is undomiciled. The action of art inhabits this condition of Odradek. Its own self-naming, in the efficiency of the modulation of its name, in that sonorous articulation subsequent to the question of its name, is where an instituting domiciliate is already primarily rooted, which is exposed from the very materiality, from the exact form of the work, and which moves over itself in its composition. The action of art, inhabitant then of this precipitating wandering, is made visible from a concept of 'terme évanouissant,' a vanishing term, a concept developed from the notion of clinamen:

The clinamen is a-specific, beyond necessity, absolutely out-of-place, unplaceable, unfigurable: chance.

It is not for nothing that chance comes back as a major category for Mallarmé. Chance is a key concept in any structural dialectic. For Lacan, under the name of Fortune, it is nothing less than the real.

(...)

The clinamen is outside time, it does not appear in the chain of effects. All effects are subject to the law. The clinamen has neither past (nothing binds it) nor future (there is no more trace of it) nor present (it has neither a place nor a moment). It takes place only in order to disappear, *it is its very own disappearance*.<sup>163</sup>

The undomiciled is the mark of this being-in-disappearance as the only locality, as Odradek's own vanishing. This domicile is traceable only in the trace that is produced between the movement of the evanescent corporeality of the action itself and the same saying that it institutes in its articulation. This property of *undomiciliarity* is also referable in Badiou's philosophy when he says of dance:

La danse est comme un poème ininscrit, ou détracé. Et la danse est aussi comme une danse sans danse, une danse dédancée. Ce qui se prononce ici est la dimension soustractive de la pensée. Toute pensée véritable est soustraite au savoir où elle se constitue. La danse est métaphore de la pensée précisément en ceci qu'elle indique par les moyens du corps qu'une pensée dans la forme de son surgissement événementiel est soustraite à toute préexistence du savoir.<sup>164</sup>

163 Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. by Bruno Bosteels. New York: Continuum, 2009, 59-62.

164 Alain Badiou, *Petit Manuel d'Inesthétique*, 104. Earlier in the same text Badiou commented: 'La danse figure la traversée en puissance de l'innocence. Elle manifeste la virulence secrète de ce qui apparaît comme fontaine, oiseau, enfance. En réalité, ce qui fonde que la danse métaphorise la pensée est la conviction de Nietzsche que la pensée est une intensification. Cette conviction s'oppose principalement à la thèse qui voit dans la pensée un principe dont le mode de réalisation est extérieur. Pour Nietzsche, la pensée ne s'effectue pas ailleurs que là où elle se donne, la pensée est effective 'sur place', elle est ce qui s'intensifie si l'on peut dire sur soi-même, ou encore le mouvement de sa propre intensité.'

# The permanent oscillation

Awayness is a form of wandering, an aberrant movement. This operative distancing, which occurs in the very occurrence of these works that I will present, generates this annulling spacing of the current, or vulgar, perception of the use of the aesthetic doxa. What is said here does not imply a cancellation of these philosophies or reflections on the artistic phenomenon, but rather a cancellation of the cancellation of this thought by the institutional forms of control, namely the art market, in the first instance, and its interpretative prurientes of contractual valuation, namely particular writing of art history and specific formulas of epistemopolitical interpretation 'operative' in the curatorial or 'theoretical' sphere.

Suppose appearing is a logical question of availabilities and the trajectorial relationship they form for the subsequent intelligibility that resists the imposed blindness or objective destruction. In that case, the construction of the event's actuality, its attraction in absence, alien to all mimesis, appears as such during the diagonal tracing. Now, what do we name construction here? To an intense insistence, as much in an apparently indiscreet or dissimulated march as would be, to stay in the classic Badiounian referential tenor, the Duchampian interdiction, or the Mondrianist placeness. What do I mean? Whether the mark of the Duchampian event, its constitutive allocation, the agency of un-disposing the space for the inauguration of an absent micro-contextual dislocation, or the Mondrianist mark, which subordinates the infinite to the conjunction of a strict geometry of lines and the precarious optics of colors as the subjection of everything possible, both marks maintain a landscape of parallax, available for use, without necessarily contradicting or correlating their statutes. The construction of actualization, which is ultimately the composition of an indication in the

last instance, operates the affirmative resilience of the event that cannot be corroborated.

Badiou's philosophy makes it possible to say what one cannot but decide its existence to affirm axiomatically. If what is left to philosophy is the suspension of an insistence to effectively give it a place on the horizon of the indicated impossibility, then what is left to philosophy is absolute unavailability. What is this absolute unavailability? Badiou has referred in an interview to what is demanded of art. Here, we already understand those forms of procedures or strategies, compositions, and constellations that, in one way or another, end up conjugating through the institutional rupture composed by the avant-gardes in the first instance and by the cultural responses obtained through political articulations, it demands the obtaining of new utopias. This is what I call absolute indisposition. Why? Because the composition of utopia, that is, of that which does not exist in terms of the given existent, presupposes a constant, an invariant availability to the impermanence of the present from which it is postponed. Utopia would thus be not only an anticipated representation of the to-be but also the imposture of a forcing by which what is presented is already the de-formation of the present state. In other words, it makes, actualizes, and realizes an immediate anomaly.

The appearing of this unusual effect proposes the composition of certain alliances that allow its abysmal composability. Hence the wandering that characterizes them. Hence, there are aberrancies that they summon in their circulation. In this case, what appears in these works that have lived in philosophical research as their own excess, as the echoicity of an event of which there is no 'photograph' but only a resonance, is absolute unavailability for the existent. This is the inauguration of the symptomatology that afflicts corporeality. It is this that oscillates scintillating. What hangs absent aberrates

from these points of oscillation proper to a specific logic that ruins poetry, writing, in its account-for-one.

When it happens, the corporeality of the work, pure anomaly, presents the unnameable, an insistence towards its loss. In the sphere of the construction of fidelity, the apparition is an anomaly summoned and constructed. Gathered to be part of an unfinished constellation, there is no certainty because until it has been realized, there are not yet the spheres of its possible participation to be traced to belong to the event: the work flees in its appropriate anabasis. It attracts the event. It is there, in this punctual summons, that the body echoes because it presents all the symptoms of the anomalous. The anomalous now appears where the body acts, and in this creative abnormality, insofar as creation is the composition of the amorphous itself, the body burns indeed. This burning is the trace already in formation. The burn actualizes there and leaves the mark of inexistence. How could the mark of the inexistent present itself? How does it operate in fidelity if not by means of the trace of its being out of place? This appearing is disposed of in its function. What emerges is what is exposed in the possible degrees of identity. Therefore, being inexistent, its existence is arranged in relation to the trajectories composed between other actualizations, including those to which there is no reference and those that do not consider it part of them.





# EPILOGUE

Ich glaube meine Stellung zur Philosophie dadurch zusammenge-  
abt zu haben, indem ich sagte: Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich  
nur *dichten*.<sup>165</sup>

Art happens, whatever the case of its phenomenon, in an other-  
ness, that is to say, in an otherness of an unusual place, a world that,  
in happening, immediately expropriates itself of the existing sense  
of categorization. We can say that art exists, and we can empirically

165 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 24, in David Schalkwyk, 'Wittgenstein's 'Imperfect Garden', The ladders and labyrinths of philosophy as *Dichtung*', in John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer, *The Literary Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2004, 56. Marjorie Perloff, in 'Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Wittgenstein's Literary Syntax,' works out this succinct and difficult-to-translate passage. In another footnote Perloff explains: 'Wittgenstein's proposition, as I have noted elsewhere ('But Isn't the Same at Least the Same?' Wittgenstein and the Question of Poetic Translatability,' in Gibson/Huemer 2004, 53n12) is all but untranslatable, because there is no precise English equivalent of the German verb *dichten* – a verb that means to create poetry but also, in the wider sense, to produce something fictional, as in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where fiction is opposed to truth. My own earlier translation: "Philosophy ought really to be written as a *form of poetry*" (Perloff 1996, xviii and passim) is not quite accurate, since there is no reference to *form of writing* here. Peter Winch, whose first edition of CV renders Wittgenstein's sentence as "Philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*," revises it for the 1998 edition to read "Really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem." The word "poem" is misleading – Wittgenstein did not, after all, write poems – and perhaps the most accurate translation is David Schalkwyk's: "Philosophy should be written only as one would write poetry" ("Wittgenstein's 'Imperfect Garden': the Ladders and Labyrinths of Philosophy as *Dichtung*", in Gibson/Huemer 2004, 56). Or, to be even more colloquial, one can follow David Antin's "One should really only do philosophy as poetry" (Antin 1998, 161).' Perloff, Marjorie. 'Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Wittgenstein's Literary Syntax.' Part 2 Signs, Minds and Actions. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2010, 277-296. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110330571.277>.

prove it: some institutions and characters fulfill the functions of its existence. They bear witness to that existence. It is de facto impossible to deny the existence of that art. However, despite this, I affirm that some art practices inexistent. This inexistence does not imply overcoming the old world. The inexistence of art happens in the anarkh-history that can be traced from its trajectories. As inexistence, any totalizing opportunity is canceled and abandoned in advance. The axiomatic declaration of the inexistence of art operates as an act of flight, a subtraction as an operative condition.

The commodity, that fateful cloistered appearance of economic technique, that mechanism of valuation that equates everything to the democratic horizontality of a tabular exchange, has become the functional currency of use, here without metaphor, of what exists. This 'everything goes' like a constantly expanded field deactivates the artistic procedure's capacity. Invalidated by its undifferentiation, art has, it seems, nothing left for thought. This would not be a merely sociological consideration of the phenomenon of contemporary art but an intra-philosophical one, which must force us to detach ourselves from opinions or interpretations of the art market as such. To say, therefore, that art inexistent means that its existence is of the minimum degree in relation to the established conditions of existence.

The belonging or exclusivity of existence defined by the laws proper to or self-given by the situation, as they are pre-established, do not operate here. Why do they not operate? We are dealing with the appearance of an entity that, even participating in the looseness of the meaning of the term art, does not correspond to that which is, subsequently, the annihilation or appeasement of that initial rupture. Art, as a practice, is based on the formation of a crisis that defines the symptomatic emergence of the artistic practice: a constant openness to the wandering that it acquires in its distancing. The contemporary art practice oscillates in a permanent crisis as

the immobile motor of its worldly self-acquaintance. An oscillation at the peak point of imbalance. In this sense, what operates in the work of art is its own split from the given. A contemporary practice imposes on itself a penitent condition of dissonance.

In Badiou's philosophical program, inconsistency is operative and fundamental. Erected from the mathematical context, it allows ontological thought before the count-by-one.

Before the constitutive consistency of what exists there, the unthinkable inconsistency is the operator of the idea of a multiplicity of infinite multiplicities. The cut appears as a mediating part, a procedure of acquisition by the field of its dissidence. Even if it is mere appearance, a simulacrum of dissidence, this acquisition of that which is part happens through a mechanism of 'appeasement,' through a process of 'stilling,' of disarticulation, and even through a revelation, a re-occurrence of what is veiled, here in the sense of a repetitive pocketing. The metaphor of the bag is that of the sack in which everything fits. The bag is flexible when it comes to containing what is added to it. The shape of what is included in it deforms the bag, but at the same time, it acquires the internal dimensions of the bag, and in this way, its limits are resized to what is to be done with the bag. However radical the rupture may be, it remains engulfed in its mediated valuation.

This fictitious, simulated totality operates as a revelation, wrapping everything in the same. This abject democracy, which secretly forces disappearance, dissolves paradigmatic procedures by assimilating them as part of the return of the spectacular.

Nevertheless, even so, art happens. An art that emancipates, as a tool without any context of valuation, on the conformation of an otherness. Sometimes, art happens indeterminately. Nothing foreshadowed Guernica's arrival. Moreover, having occurred the tragic and abominable event, the actual bombardment of Guernica, only

the artistic gesture could give visibility, not only now, to the despicable event, but also witness to a world that was approaching. The bombs falling today again, televised and remote-controlled from cabins lost in deserts, continue. Guernica is suspended, insisting beyond cultural metaphor, so much so that even its copy has had to be veiled. This veiling of even a copy accounts for the inexistence of art.<sup>166</sup>

It is through another blind bard, Jorge Luis Borges, who, in the story *El Inmortal*, his character accidentally reminds one of the immortals of his true name. A name that attracts memory through echoes: 'Argos.' He calls him Argos, and that name makes the one who is now named remember and there to sustain the reverberance of that echo. To sustain not only the fragment that he is but the whole to which he belongs, the story he had composed about another (im)possible original Argos. He, now called Argos, recognizes through his given name, by chance, his true unnameable name: Homer, who had once asked the Goddess to sing of Achilles' rage.

Badiou's philosophy appeals to this immortality. He aims to go against the culture of death we live in. For Badiou, it is a question of affirming the possibility of immortality, that is to say, of naming

166 I refer here to the enigmatic situation that occurred during Colin Powell's false testimony before the United Nations Assembly, where he advocated the justification of the American invasion of Iraq. Once outside the Assembly, Powell had to comment on the facts to the journalistic community. A copy of Picasso's work, now returned to Spain, still exists on the site. Given the incongruence between endorsing the bombing of cities in Iraq and the image referred to in Picasso's Guernica, the work was "diplomatically" veiled with a blue curtain, the blue of the UN flag. "The tapestry itself became embroiled in controversy just before the outbreak of the Iraq war, in February 2003, when it was covered with a curtain before Colin Powell, the then US secretary of state, addressed the UN." Maev Kennedy, 'Picasso tapestry of Guernica heads to UK,' *The Guardian*, January 26, 2009, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jan/26/picasso-tapestry-guernica>.

new Argos. As a philosophy, it is indicative, humble, and ascetic. It is not up to it, to philosophy, to create any event. However, it is more difficult in a world dominated by finitude to resist by indicating the existence of truths, like a pale and cold star that appears repeatedly on the horizon. I appeal here to the final image of Luchino Visconti's film *Morte a Venezia* (1971), based on Thomas Mann's novel *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912), in which the composer Gustav von Aschenbach, a figure bearing the image of a Europe in decline, in the final sequence, watches, at the last moment of his life, at the stage of dying, the classical Hellenistic body of the adolescent Tadzio, entering the sea. While the sun falls in the sunset of the gods, the body figure of Tadzio-Idea points to a horizon that no longer exists. All that remains is the foam that disappears from the gesture towards the horizon, towards the unrealized. Visconti's work here is palimpsest: Tadzio-Argos is searching for the idea as the event of unattainable perfectibility.

Western philosophy has been circumscribed to this wandering. A series of earthquakes have shaken this intellectual edifice, yet the beauty invented in that place of history resists and shines forth. There is nothing wrong with it. Nevertheless, it is also there that the intention of the teacher-composer endures: to reach and retain, to archive that fugitive instant through the spurious act of the gaze. Being part of that tradition of endings, Badiou's philosophy presents an oscillation that simultaneously detaches itself. This detachment surrenders to the unimaginable multiplicity itself, which awaits, of that which intensely insists on the inexistent. An embodied thought is an intensification of that inexistent.

Art is made in militancy. Undomesticated artistic practices are multiple, infinite, and emancipatory. From these practices, we can extract the substance for an infrapolitical anarchitecture that works in the construction of a future yet to be imagined. We are bodies that allow

resonances to continue their trajectory. Another world is possible, of course. We must continue to whisper that other worlds are possible because we are already participants in that memory to come.

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Luis Guerra

On gestural apparatuses for a memory to come  
Art theoretical writings from the Academy of Fine Arts (18)

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El Niño y la Casa, 2024, detail. Oil on canvas, 190 x 140 cm.  
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What is the form of that which can hold, size, and measure what is happening? Are there some gestures that can, in some sense, size what is occurring in absolute fragility? We trace forms that, suddenly, sometimes, can grasp in a vanishing present what cannot be grasped by any other means. Certain art practices can sustain and give shelter, for a while, to an echo of that multiple and unending past. These practices inexist. These inexistences compose artistic configurations, of which the artworks referred to in this book are outstanding examples. The axiomatic declaration of the inexistence of art operates as an act of flight, a subtraction.

Undomesticated artistic practices are multiple, infinite, and emancipatory. From these practices, we can find the substance for an infrapolitical anarchitecture that works in constructing a future yet to be imagined. Another world is possible, of course. We must continue to whisper that other worlds are possible because we are already participants in that memory to come.

On Gestural Apparatuses works as a mechanism of delay that aims to indicate an operative movement within artistic thinking.

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